

**ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF PARTY DEFECTION ON POLITICAL STABILITY: A
CASE STUDY OF ETHIOPE WEST AND UGHELLI NORTH IN DELTA STATE.(2025)**

BY

**ONOVWIONA BLESSED ONORIODE-EMOEFE
MAT NO:PG/SSC2215813**

**DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN
BENIN CITY**

NOVEMBER, 2025

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**BEING A RESEARCH THESIIS SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF
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AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SCIENCE (M.sc) IN COMPARATIVE
POLITICS AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES**

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DECLARATION

I, Onovwiona Blessed Onoriode-Emoefe, hereby declare that this thesis titled: Assessing The Impact Of Party Defection On Political Stability: A Case Study Of Ethiope West And Ughelli North In Delta State.(2025) is my original work and has not been submitted previously, in whole or part, for the award of any degree at this or any other institution of higher learning. All sources of information, ideas, data and quotations from published and unpublished works that have been used in this thesis are duly acknowledged through proper references and citations. This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Science (M.sc) in Comparative Politics and Development Studies, University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria.

Onovwiona Blessed Onoriode-Emoefe
Msc Candidate
Department of Political Science
University of Benin
Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria
November, 2025

CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this thesis titled: Assessing The Impact Of Party Defection On Political Stability: A Case Study Of Ethiope West And Ughelli North In Delta State.(2025) was carried out by me of the Department of Political Sciences, University of Benin, Benin City, under our supervision.

The work embodied in this thesis is, to the best of our knowledge, original and is hereby approved for submission in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Science (M.sc) in International Relations, University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria.

Iro Aghedo Ph.D
(Supervisor)
Department of Political Science
University of Benin
Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria

Dr. G.O. Igiebor
Ag. Head, Department of Political Science
University of Benin
Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria

DEDICATION.

I dedicate this thesis to Almighty God. He has been my source of inspiration and strength. This work is also dedicated to my family.

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First of all, I remain grateful to God Almighty for all his guidance and mercy for giving me the opportunity to pass this experience.

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ABSTRACT.

Party defection has become a defining feature of Nigeria Fourth Republic, but its impact on political stability at the local government level is still poorly understood. This study looks at how legislative and elite defection affects political stability in Delta State, focusing on Ethiope West and Ughelli North Local Government Areas. Both areas are in Nigeria's oil rich Niger Delta, a region shaped by complex ethnic politics and struggles over resources. The research has three main goals: to find out what drives political actors to defect, to analyze how defection affects political stability, and to understand what it means for democracy at the local level.

The study uses a mixed methods approach. It includes survey data from 384 randomly selected registered voters, semi structured interviews with 24 political party executives and community leaders, and six focus group discussions across the two LGAs. The research was quantitatively analyzed data using descriptive statistics and qualitative data using thematic analysis.

The results showed that defection happens mainly for two reasons: rational calculations like access to money, resources, and electoral wins, and institutional problems such as weak party structures and lack of ideological commitment. The consequences cut across multiple areas. Politically, defections spark conflicts within communities, worsen rivalries among elites, and disrupt governance over time. Institutionally, they damage public trust in political parties and elections, which leads to voter apathy and a backslide in democracy. The study also found that involuntary defection where politicians are intimidated and coerced to leave through blackmail and witch hunting is a real but understudied issue in the Niger Delta.

This research adds to the broader conversation on African party politics by focusing on the local government level, which researchers often ignore. The study concludes that unless party institutionalization is strengthened and the root causes of opportunistic defection are addressed, political stability and democratic progress in Delta State and other resource dependent regions like it will remain fragile. The study recommends, among other things, building internal party democracy and creating laws that reduce the disruptive effects of cross carpeting on local governance.

Keywords: Party defection; political stability; party institutionalization; democratic consolidation; governance disruption; Niger Delta region; involuntary defection.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION.

1.1 Background to the Study.

Nigeria's Fourth Republic kicked off in 1999, and now, over twenty years later, it stands out as one of Africa's most significant yet debated democratic experiments. The nation has moved beyond its lengthy history of military rule, but discussions about the quality and stability of its democracy are still very much alive (Adekanye, 2023; Suberu, 2022). A key issue in this conversation is what Nigerians refer to as "cross carpeting," or the act of switching political parties. This practice has become a notable and concerning aspect of the political culture in the republic. In more established democracies, changing parties might indicate genuine ideological shifts or a commitment to better serve the electorate. However, in Nigeria, defections occur in a context where party structures are weak, politics is heavily personality-driven, and state resources are tightly controlled (LeBas, 2023; SignÃ©, 2021).

Party defection is so prevalent in Nigeria that it raises fundamental questions about representation, accountability, and the true meaning of a democratic mandate. Elected officials often switch parties without consulting their constituents or providing any solid reasoning. When this happens, the implicit agreement between the governed and their representatives falls apart (Bleck & van de Walle, 2021). This isn't just a theoretical issue; it has tangible effects on policy continuity, the functionality of the legislature, and the distribution of development resources. So, defection isn't merely a game played by the elite; it has real implications for everyday people who find their votes effectively rendered meaningless by behind the scenes negotiations that occur after elections (Cheeseman, 2022).

To really get a grip on this issue, we need to look at it through the lens of Nigeria's distinct political economy. The Nigerian state operates like a rentier system, where its very existence hinges on the extraction and distribution of oil revenues (Watts, 2023; Obi, 2022). This setup as a petro state significantly influences political behavior. When the main prize in political contests is access to state funds, party loyalty shifts from being about genuine ideological beliefs to a strategic means of tapping into patronage networks (Budniok & Noll, 2023). Political parties in this context aren't really about clear policy agendas; instead, they function as electoral machines, often referred to as "election winning machines," built around influential political figures whose primary draw is their knack for delivering tangible benefits to their supporters (Bogaards, 2022; Erdmann, 2023).

The weak institutionalization of parties only exacerbates these issues. Drawing from the foundational insights of Mainwaring and Scully (1995) and the later work of Randall and Svendsen (2022), party institutionalization refers to how organizations achieve stability, internal coherence, and enduring significance. These qualities enable parties to shape political competition and outlast their founding leaders. However, in Nigeria, political parties are still very much underinstitutionalized. They lack robust organizational frameworks, internal democracy, and are often led by strong personalities with minimal ideological distinctions (Omotola, 2023; Aleyomi, 2022). This lack of institutional strength creates an environment ripe for defection. When parties fail to provide genuine career opportunities, transparent candidate selection processes, or coherent policies, politicians have little incentive to remain loyal.

Delta State, the focus of this study, really amplifies the national trends we see. Nestled in the oil rich Niger Delta, the state is a melting pot of ethnic diversity, resource conflicts, and political instability that characterizes the larger region (Ukiwo, 2023; Ikelegbe, 2022). Four main ethnic

groups Urhobo, Ijaw, Itsekiri, and Isoko dominate the area, alongside several smaller communities. This creates a political environment where ethnic identity plays a crucial role in political mobilization, although itâ€™s not the only factor at play (Osaghae, 2022). In Delta State, political competition revolves around both the distribution of resources and the management of ethnic relationships. Party defection becomes a strategic move to reshape access to these resources.

The political economy of oil extraction is at the heart of these dynamics. Delta State benefits from substantial monthly allocations from the Federation Account, plus an additional 13% derivation revenue guaranteed by the constitution for oil producing states. This influx of financial resources makes political positions incredibly appealing (Ibaba, 2023; Agbu, 2022). Control over these resources translates into patronage power the ability to award contracts, make appointments, and provide tangible benefits to supporters. In this context, party defection seems like a smart choice for politicians looking to maximize their access to patronage. When the ruling party at either the state or federal level controls the flow of resources, switching allegiance to that party becomes a calculated move to ensure continued access to state benefits (Joseph, 2023). Choosing Ethiope West and Ughelli North Local Government Areas for this study was a thoughtful choice aimed at diving deeper than just the surface level averages to really understand the local dynamics of defection. Both LGAs primarily speak Urhobo, yet they present interesting differences in their political histories, economic situations, and patterns of defection. Ethiope West is a blend of oil-producing communities and farming areas, where the politics of resources intertwine with local development issues. On the other hand, Ughelli North is home to the traditional headquarters of the Urhobo nation and acts as a commercial center. Here, traditional institutions and modern political frameworks interact in intricate ways (Ejobowah, 2022). By

focusing on this local level, the research aims to illustrate how the broader state and national defection trends manifest in real impacts on governance, community relationships, and the trust citizens have in their leaders.

The timing for this investigation could be better. The period surrounding the 2023 general elections and the aftermath witnessed a significant surge in defections throughout Nigeria, with Delta State emerging as a crucial arena for political shifts. Notable politicians switched allegiances between the People's Democratic Party (PDP), the All Progressives Congress (APC), and various smaller parties. This has sparked renewed interest among scholars and the public regarding the implications of defection for democratic stability (Omilusi, 2024). More importantly, fresh evidence indicates that recent defections are increasingly marked by coercion, in addition to the typical opportunism. The concept of "involuntary defection," where politicians are compelled to switch parties due to intimidation, legal pressure, or threats of political isolation, adds a new layer to this issue. This has significant consequences for our understanding of political agency and the integrity of opposition politics (Bratton & Houle, 2023).

This study shines a light on a significant gap in the current research landscape. While previous studies have examined party defection at the national level (Oarhe & Vese, 2022; Omotola & Aiyede, 2023), looked into its impact on legislative behavior (Bamisaye, 2021), or delved into its ties with ethnic politics (Nwankwor, 2022), thereâ€™s been a noticeable lack of systematic investigation into how defection influences grassroots governance and the political stability of communities. Even rarer are the attempts to operationalize and test the three-part typology of voluntary, opportunistic, and involuntary defection within a unified analytical framework. By concentrating on Ethiope West and Ughelli North and employing a nuanced conceptual approach

that differentiates various forms of defection, this research seeks to offer empirically grounded insights that will benefit both academic scholarship and practical policy making.

In essence, this background illustrates that party defection is a complex phenomenon. It intertwines political, economic, social, and institutional elements all at once. It not merely a reflection of elite misconduct; rather, it a multifaceted behavior influenced by rational choices, institutional limitations, ethnic ties, resource availability, and power disparities. Grasping how these factors converge to drive defection, and how defection in turn impacts local political stability, is the core challenge this research aims to address.

1.2 Statement of the Problem.

Party defection continues to be a persistent and growing issue in Nigeria's Fourth Republic, presenting a significant hurdle to the country's efforts at democratic consolidation. Even after two decades of steady civilian governance, the norms and practices of democracy still haven't fully taken root. Party defection serves as both a sign and a contributor to this ongoing struggle (Ojo, 2023; Lewis, 2022). It's become so prevalent that it's now a standard aspect of the political landscape rather than an unusual occurrence. During the 2019 2023 legislative session alone, the National Assembly recorded over fifty formal defections, with many more happening at the state and local levels (Premium Times, 2024; Vanguard, 2023). This regularity turns what should be a rare event into something commonplace. As a result, party membership shifts from being a genuine commitment to a political cause to merely a temporary and strategic affiliation.

Delta State exemplifies this national issue while also introducing its own unique elements that heighten the impact. The political scene here is marked by fierce ethnic competition for state resources, fragile party structures that struggle to represent interests effectively, and an economy heavily reliant on oil revenues, making elections a high stakes game (Ugor, 2023; Obi, 2022). In

this environment, party defection becomes a tactical maneuver. Political players adjust their positions to maximize their access to patronage, often overlooking the implications for governance stability, policy consistency, or public confidence. Each defection sets off a chain reaction of realignments as political entrepreneurs rush to safeguard their networks and interests, leading to instability that trickles down from the state capital to the grassroots level.

At the local government level, which is closest to ordinary citizens, the effects of this instability are felt most sharply. In Ethiopia West and Ughelli North LGAs, evidence suggests that defection induced disruptions show up in multiple ways: legislative paralysis as councilors realign with new party leadership, stalled development projects as political attention shifts to elite maneuvering, rising communal tensions as defections get interpreted through ethnic lenses, and growing citizen disillusionment with a political process that seems to serve elite interests rather than public needs (Okoh, 2023; Edevbaro, 2022). But these grassroots impacts remain poorly documented and theorized. Journalists cover high profile defections, but systematic empirical research tracing the causal pathways from defection to localized instability is largely missing.

The way scholars conceptualize defection also needs work. Existing research mostly uses a binary framework that distinguishes between voluntary defection driven by principle or policy and opportunistic defection motivated by personal gain. This binary is useful but it misses a third category that is becoming increasingly important in contemporary Nigerian politics: involuntary defection. This happens when politicians are forced to change parties through coercion. That might include legal harassment by anti corruption agencies used for political ends, threats of violence or intimidation, financial pressure through manipulation of constituency project funds, or the deliberate creation of conditions that make staying in the original party impossible

(Hounkpe & Fall, 2023; Schedler, 2022). Involuntary defection looks like voluntary choice but it fundamentally undermines political autonomy and the integrity of opposition politics.

The gap we see in empirical data aligns with theoretical expectations. For a long time, rational choice theories have taken center stage in discussions about defection, focusing on how politicians aim to maximize their benefits. However, we often overlook institutional perspectives that examine the structural factors that either enable or limit defection. To truly grasp the situation, we need to blend these two approaches: while it's true that politicians make calculated choices about their alliances, those choices are influenced by the institutional contexts that dictate what options they have and what rewards they can anticipate. This study, therefore, adopts a dual theoretical framework, merging the individual strategic focus of rational choice theory with the insights of institutional theory, which highlights the formal and informal rules shaping political actions.

The issue this research tackles is multifaceted. On the empirical side, we currently lack comprehensive evidence on how party defection leads to political instability at the local government level in Delta State. Conceptually, we need to sharpen our understanding of defection by differentiating between voluntary, opportunistic, and involuntary types. Theoretically, it's essential to weave together explanations at both the individual and institutional levels into a unified framework. Practically, we require evidence based recommendations to guide policy interventions aimed at mitigating the destabilizing impacts of defection. By addressing these interconnected aspects, this study aspires to enhance our existing knowledge and contribute to the practical efforts of bolstering democratic governance in Nigeria.

1.3 Research Questions.

The Main Research Question:

How do political party defections impact political stability in Ethiope West and Ughelli North Local Government Areas of Delta State, Nigeria?

Specific Research Questions:

- i. What drives politicians in Ethiope West and Ughelli North LGAs to switch parties, and how can we categorize these defections as voluntary, opportunistic, or involuntary?
- ii. How do ethnic identities and the competition for oil-related resources influence the patterns, frequency, and outcomes of party defections in these regions?
- iii. In what ways does party defection affect the continuity, effectiveness, and legitimacy of governance and public administration at the local government level?
- iv. What are the consequences of frequent party defections for citizen engagement, voter behavior, and public trust in democratic institutions in Ethiope West and Ughelli North?
- v. What policy and institutional measures could help reduce the destabilizing effects of party defections and enhance political stability in Delta State's local government areas?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of this study is to explore how political party defections affect political stability in the Ethiope West and Ughelli North Local Government Areas of Delta State, Nigeria.

The specific objective are to:

- i. identify and examine the factors that lead politicians in Ethiope West and Ughelli North LGAs to defect, and to categorize these defections as voluntary, opportunistic, or involuntary.
- ii. investigate how ethnic identities and competition for oil derived resources shape the patterns, frequency, and consequences of party defections in the study areas.

- iii. assess how party defection influences the continuity, effectiveness, and legitimacy of governance and public administration at the local government level.
- iv. explore how frequent party defections impact citizen engagement in politics, voter behavior, and the level of public trust in democratic institutions in Ethiope West and Ughelli North.
- v. suggest policy and institutional changes that could help mitigate the disruptive effects of party defections and enhance political stability in the local government areas of Delta State.

1.5 Significance of the Study.

This research takes a significant step forward in the conversation about party politics, democratic consolidation, and political behavior in Africa. One of its key contributions is the introduction and testing of the idea of "involuntary defection" as a distinct analytical category. By moving past the usual binary that only differentiates between voluntary and opportunistic realignment, the study provides a more nuanced perspective on political mobility in environments characterized by stark power imbalances, elite coercion, and fragile institutions. It also cleverly combines rational choice theory with institutionalist viewpoints into a single analytical framework. This approach allows for a multi layered examination that considers both the strategic calculations of political actors at the micro level and the structural constraints at the macro level that shape their options. By zeroing in on the local government level often overlooked in favor of national or state level analysis the study shifts the focus of Nigerian political analysis to the areas where governance is most directly felt by everyday citizens.

The research generates a wealth of original empirical evidence on party defection and its impacts in two carefully chosen local government areas, addressing a notable gap in the existing

literature. Employing a robust mixed methods design that blends quantitative survey data with qualitative insights from interviews and focus group discussions, the study captures both the overarching trends and the intricate details of defection dynamics. The findings provide the first systematic comparative evidence on how patterns of political realignment differ across neighboring communities within the same state, offering a richer understanding of the local factors that influence the relationship between legislative floor crossing and political stability. The relevance of this empirical contribution is highlighted by the recent uptick in defections and the pressing need for evidence based frameworks to guide policy.

For those in charge of policymaking and electoral management, like the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and the Delta State Independent Electoral Commission, this study offers valuable insights that can lead to real changes in the rules around party defection. Political parties will find that the results shed light on significant weaknesses within their structures, particularly regarding internal democratic processes and how candidates are chosen, which often lead to incentives for defection. This research serves as a guide for reforming organizations to foster loyalty among members and strengthen ideological unity.

For security agencies and those focused on preventing conflict, the findings reveal the specific ways defection can create or exacerbate community divisions, helping to develop better early warning systems and more targeted responses. Civil society organizations and democracy advocacy groups will benefit from the solid evidence provided for campaigns aimed at enhancing political accountability and mitigating the negative impacts of elite political maneuvering.

On a larger scale, this research directly engages with the ongoing national conversations about the state of Nigeria's democratic governance and the structural changes necessary for deeper

consolidation. By carefully documenting how the actions of political elites influence the trust ordinary citizens have in democratic institutions and their willingness to participate in elections, the study underscores the real stakes involved in tackling the defection issue. It equips citizens and communities with the analytical tools they need to grasp the political dynamics that affect their lives and to hold their political leaders accountable. In this way, the research transcends its academic roots, making a significant contribution to the development of a more responsive, accountable, and resilient democracy in Nigeria.

1.6 Scope of the Study.

This research focuses on two Local Government Areas in Delta State: Ethiope West and Ughelli North. These areas were chosen using a purposive sampling strategy, which makes sense given their unique yet complementary traits. Both regions are mainly inhabited by the Urhobo people, providing some ethnic consistency, but they differ significantly in terms of socioeconomic factors. Ethiope West boasts a primarily agrarian and oil rich economy, while Ughelli North is nestled in the oil rich Niger Delta. This contrast allows for a fascinating comparison of how resource-driven political economies shape political behavior. Additionally, both areas have a well-documented history of inter party defections and serve as important political centers in the state, making them perfect for exploring the intricacies of party loyalty.

The study specifically examines the link between high profile party defections and political stability. Rather than providing a broad overview of party politics, it hones in on three key mediating factors: ethnic politics, competition for material and political resources, and institutional weaknesses. The aim is to categorize defections into three distinct types: voluntary (ideological realignment), opportunistic (instrumental careerism), and involuntary (elite-induced displacement). The main analytical focus is to understand how each type impacts three crucial

aspects of political stability: the effectiveness of governance and policy continuity, social cohesion within and between communities, and citizens' political attitudes and trust in democratic institutions.

This study takes a comprehensive look at Nigeria's Fourth Republic, spanning from 1999 all the way to 2025. By examining this extensive timeline, we can spot long lasting trends in how politicians switch parties during various political cycles. However, the main focus is on the period following the 2023 elections, which has seen a significant surge in defections. This recent wave gives us a rich and timely context to explore the immediate reasons behind these shifts and their short term impacts. By balancing historical context with current relevance, the findings contribute meaningfully to ongoing discussions in both policy-making and academic circles.

On the methodological side, the research employs a mixed methods approach. It combines a quantitative survey of a representative sample of registered voters from two local government areas with qualitative insights gathered from semi structured interviews and focus group discussions. The interviewees are carefully selected from a diverse group of political figures, including local party leaders, current and former elected officials, traditional and community leaders, as well as civil society representatives. This blend of methods allows us to cross verify broad trends in voter attitudes with the nuanced perspectives of political elites and community stakeholders. While the study provides valuable insights that could be relevant to similar situations in Delta State and the broader Niger Delta region, any attempts to generalize beyond the specific geographical, thematic, and temporal limits should be approached with caution.

1.7 Limitations of the Study.

While this research is methodologically sound, it does come with a few limitations that deserve to be highlighted. The primary one is its geographical focus, which is limited to just two Local

Government Areas in Delta State. This concentrated approach allows for a deeper understanding and richer context, but it also means that the findings may not be easily applicable to other LGAs in Delta State or even to neighboring states in the Niger Delta. Given that political dynamics, ethnic diversity, and resource availability can differ significantly from one area to another, the situations in Ethiope West and Ughelli North might not mirror those in regions with different structural conditions. To help with this, the study offers detailed contextual descriptions, enabling readers to assess whether the findings could be relevant in similar environments. The final chapter also emphasizes the need for comparative research across various geopolitical contexts as a key area for future exploration.

Another limitation stems from the timing of the most recent wave of defections (2023-2025) in relation to the study period. Some effects of political realignment, particularly those related to long term democratic stability, institutional changes, and shifts in political culture, may not yet be fully apparent. While the research effectively captures the immediate and medium term impacts, a more comprehensive understanding of the developmental paths triggered by defections would require a longitudinal study that goes beyond the current scope. The study recognizes this and adjusts its conclusions accordingly, concentrating on short-term outcomes while clearly indicating areas for future longitudinal research.

The study does have some limitations, particularly when it comes to self reported data. Recall bias poses a real threat to the validity of the findings. Participants in interviews and surveys might not accurately remember past events or could reshape their memories based on later experiences rather than what truly occurred. To tackle this issue, the research employs methodological triangulation, drawing from various sources and using careful questioning techniques that help anchor responses to specific, verifiable events. Another hurdle is social

desirability bias, especially among political figures who may want to portray themselves positively. They might downplay opportunistic motives while inflating their principled intentions. The research counters this by ensuring strong anonymity, using indirect questioning methods, and systematically cross-checking information with documentary evidence and insights from different informants.

Access constraints also pose challenges for the investigation. Gaining access to high-profile political figures and obtaining sensitive information about defection negotiations can be quite tricky. Some potential informants might decline to participate, and those who do may hold back on discussing sensitive topics. The study navigates these challenges through persistent engagement, leveraging local networks strategically, and maintaining a clear commitment to confidentiality, while also being upfront about the fact that some aspects of elite political maneuvering might still remain somewhat obscured.

A key aspect to consider in research is the positionality of the researcher. Since the researcher is from the area being studied, this brings both benefits and potential biases. On the plus side, they have a rich understanding of the local context, speak the local languages fluently, and can easily tap into local networks. However, there are also risks, such as preconceived notions from their own experiences and loyalties to the community that could unintentionally influence their interpretations. To address this, the research process emphasizes reflexivity through careful methodology, regular peer debriefing, and a clear focus on how the researcher's position affects data collection and analysis. The study openly discusses the researcher's positioning, not as a sign of weakness but as a strength in methodology, allowing readers to critically evaluate its impact on the findings.

When it comes to exploring politically sensitive issues in environments marked by power imbalances and the risk of retaliation, ethical considerations become even more crucial. The study adheres to strict confidentiality measures, follows informed consent protocols, and implements thorough risk management strategies to safeguard both researchers and participants. Even with these precautions in place, some participants may still face unforeseen consequences from their involvement. The research team is dedicated to continuous ethical reflection and adapting to any new concerns that arise during the process, ensuring that maintaining ethical integrity is always a top priority.

1.8 Operational Definition of Terms.

Party Defection refers to the formal decision made by an elected or appointed official to leave the political party they were affiliated with during their election and switch to another party. For the sake of analysis, this study breaks down defection into three categories:

Voluntary Defection: This type occurs when a politician chooses to leave their party due to ideological differences, policy disagreements, or a principled stance against the party's direction, all without any external pressure and in line with their own beliefs.

Opportunistic Defection: Here, the defection is motivated by the potential for personal political gain, such as better chances of winning elections, greater access to resources, or the pursuit of roles and benefits that aren't available in their original party.

Involuntary Defection: This happens when an official is forced to leave, often due to coercion like legal threats, intimidation, financial pressure, or the creation of circumstances that make it impossible to remain in their original party.

Political Stability: This term describes a situation where the political system maintains continuity in governance, free from crises or violence caused by defections, predictable political

behavior, effective institutional functioning, and ongoing public trust in political institutions. To measure political stability, we look at factors like how often leadership changes due to defections, instances of political violence, the consistency of policy implementation, and how citizens perceive political order.

Party Institutionalization: This is the process through which political parties establish stable organizational structures, regular internal procedures, shared values among members, and independence from individual leaders. Low levels of institutionalization are characterized by leadership driven by personal charisma, a lack of internal democracy, weak organizational presence, and minimal commitment from members beyond practical considerations.

Ethnic Politics: This involves rallying political support, organizing competition, and distributing resources based on ethnic identities. In Delta State, it translates to making political claims and forming loyalties tied to groups like the Urhobo, Ijaw, Itsekiri, Isoko, and others.

Resource Politics: Here, political competition revolves around who gets access to and control over valuable resources, particularly the oil revenues that the state receives through official distributions from the Federation Account and derivation payments.

Governance Disruption: This refers to the interruptions or challenges faced by government institutions in delivering services, implementing policies, and maintaining smooth operations. Such disruptions can stem from shifts in political alliances, changes in leadership, or a shift in focus from governance to political maneuvering.

Democratic Consolidation: This is the journey toward making democracy the accepted norm, where it is seen as the only legitimate way to engage in political competition. It involves effective institutions and a shared understanding of democratic principles among political actors

and citizens. In Nigeria, this process is still a work in progress, with defection being a sign of incomplete institutionalization.

Voter Apathy: This describes a drop in citizens' enthusiasm for participating in elections, evident in lower voter turnout, decreasing registration rates, and a growing sense of skepticism about the impact of voting. This study looks at voter apathy as both a result of and a factor contributing to the dynamics of political defection.

Local Government Area (LGA): This is the third tier of government in Nigeria's federal structure, recognized as the level that is closest to the people. It's responsible for essential services like primary education, healthcare, and local infrastructure development. The study specifically examines the Ethiope West and Ughelli North LGAs in Delta State.

The Niger Delta Region is the oil rich area in southern Nigeria, made up of nine states: Abia, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Imo, Ondo, and Rivers. This region is known for its rich ethnic diversity, extensive oil extraction activities, environmental challenges, and ongoing issues related to resource control and a lack of development.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.

2.1 Introduction

This chapter takes a closer look at what scholars have already discovered about party defection and its impact on political stability. The analysis starts off broad and gradually narrows down. It kicks off with global theories, then dives into research from Africa and Nigeria, and ultimately zooms in on Delta State. The chapter has three main objectives. First, it aims to consolidate existing research and highlight key debates. Second, it seeks to identify the gaps that this study intends to address. Lastly, it strives to create a theoretical framework that will guide a systematic exploration of how defection influences political stability in Ethiopia West and Ughelli North.

This review is significant because it situates the current study within larger academic discussions while honing in on its specific focus. Party defection lies at the crossroads of various subfields: comparative politics, democratization studies, political economy, and institutional analysis. Each of these areas offers unique perspectives. By engaging with all of them, this chapter aspires to develop a well-rounded understanding that captures the intricate nature of defection.

Additionally, the review lays the groundwork for the empirical investigation. It clarifies what we already know, points out contradictions in the existing literature, and, most importantly, uncovers the gaps that warrant original research.

2.2 Conceptualisation of Party Defection.

2.2.1 Defining Party Defection: Terminological and Conceptual Foundations.

Party defection, often referred to as "cross carpeting" or "floor crossing" in Nigeria, is the formal act where an elected or appointed official leaves the political party they represented during their election and joins another one (Janda, 2020). While this may seem straightforward, it actually conceals a lot of conceptual complexity that has intrigued scholars from various fields and countries. This phenomenon raises essential questions about representation, accountability, party system stability, and the overall health of democratic governance.

The different terms used reflect genuine disagreements among scholars. "Defection" carries a sense of betrayal, implying that politicians have a primary loyalty to their parties and that switching sides is an act of disloyalty. This term is commonly used in Commonwealth political discussions (Nwosu, 2022). On the other hand, "cross carpeting," which is the term preferred in Nigeria, evokes the image of physically moving across a legislative chamber. It originates from the Westminster tradition, where members would literally shift from government to opposition benches. This term has historical roots dating back to the colonial era when legislative chambers featured actual carpets.

Party switching is a more neutral term that contemporary comparative politics scholars tend to favor. It highlights the behavioral aspect without passing moral judgment (O'Brien & Shomer, 2021). This neutrality allows researchers to examine the phenomenon empirically without preconceived notions of whether it's positive or negative. Other terms like "floor crossing," "political migration," "party hopping," and "political nomadism" are used in various national contexts, each carrying its own unique connotation. This study will use these terms interchangeably while remaining mindful of their distinct meanings.

When we talk about defection in politics, it's important to consider the unit of analysis. We can look at it from two angles: the individual level, which zooms in on the choices and careers of specific politicians, or the aggregate level, which examines broader trends across parties, legislatures, and political systems (Klein, 2023). Analyzing at the individual level helps us understand the psychological, strategic, and situational factors that drive politicians to defect. On the other hand, the aggregate level sheds light on systemic patterns and their consequences. To truly grasp the phenomenon, we need to consider both perspectives. The individual level answers the "why" behind a politician's defection, while the aggregate level addresses the "so what" of its significance.

Timing is also a crucial factor in defection. It can occur before elections, between elections, or after elections, with each timing having its own causes and effects (Desposato, 2020). Pre-election defections often relate to candidate selection, where politicians who are denied nominations might switch to other parties. Inter-election defections happen in between contests and can indicate changing calculations or reactions to new circumstances. This is particularly important for legislative stability, as it can shift floor majorities without needing a new election. Post-election defections, sometimes referred to as "decamping" in Nigeria, are often seen as opportunistic, with politicians looking to benefit from the spoils of victory. Each type of defection carries different implications for stability and accountability.

Moreover, defection involves various categories of political actors. Legislators, executive officeholders, local government councilors, and party officials can all defect, but their reasons and limitations differ. This study focuses on local government politicians, who operate in unique environments with limited autonomy and a close connection to their constituents. Special attention is given to their experiences and motivations.

2.2.2 A Typology of Defection: Voluntary, Opportunistic, and Involuntary.

One of the key contributions of this study is the refinement of existing typologies. Typically, the literature identifies two main forms of defection. Voluntary defection occurs when individuals leave a party due to genuine disagreements or shifts in ideology. On the other hand, opportunistic defection is motivated by personal political gain (Desposato, 2020; Heller & Mershon, 2009). However, this binary classification overlooks a third, increasingly significant category in contemporary Nigerian politics: involuntary defection. Acknowledging this as a distinct analytical category is crucial for grasping the dynamics of defection in environments marked by significant power imbalances, fragile institutions, and the use of state resources against opponents.

Voluntary Defection: This type arises when a politician switches parties due to authentic disagreements with their original party's direction, policies, or strategies. Such instances are relatively rare in contexts where ideological polarization is minimal. Yet, this form aligns most closely with the ideals of democratic theory, where elected officials are expected to exercise independent judgment (Mershon, 2022). Voluntary defection can also stem from principled objections to corruption scandals or failures in leadership. Historical examples include British MPs who defected over issues related to European integration (Cowley, 2021). In the United States, Southern Democrats transitioned to the Republican Party in response to civil rights issues. However, in Nigeria's Fourth Republic, the authenticity of voluntary defection is questionable due to the presence of weak programmatic parties. Nigerian political parties are often defined more by their leadership structures and access to resources than by any ideological commitments (Omotola, 2023).

Opportunistic Defection: This is the primary form of political maneuvering in Nigeria's Fourth Republic and, arguably, in many developing democracies where political parties are weak. It's all about personal gain: better chances at winning elections, easier access to patronage, positions that aren't available in the original party, or simply aligning with rising political forces (Omotola, 2023). This behavior reflects the rational utility-maximizing mindset from rational choice theory. The widespread occurrence of this defection points to weak party institutionalization. Parties struggle to foster loyalty or offer enough incentives to keep their members. Politicians often see party labels as handy tools for elections but are quick to discard them when more appealing options come along. The opportunistic defector is essentially engaging in "rent-seeking behavior," chasing personal benefits through public resources (Khan, 2021). When state resources are plentiful and accountability is lacking, the benefits of defecting can easily outweigh the costs, creating a cycle that reinforces itself.

Involuntary Defection: This is a distinct category that hasn't gotten the scholarly attention it deserves. It occurs when politicians are compelled to switch parties due to coercion or pressure that strips away their meaningful choices (Schedler, 2022). It can manifest in various ways.

One notable form is legal harassment through weaponized anti-corruption agencies. In many competitive authoritarian regimes, those in power use state institutions to investigate, prosecute, and intimidate opposition politicians (Levitsky & Way, 2020). Faced with legal troubles or the threat of financial disaster, politicians might defect to the ruling party as a protective measure. This phenomenon has been observed in countries like Russia, Turkey, Hungary, and increasingly, Nigeria (Bagenholm & Charron, 2022).

Intimidation from security services or other state actors is just one way this plays out. Politicians can find themselves facing threats not just to their own safety, but also to their families and

communities. In the Niger Delta, where militant groups are active and political violence has become a norm, these threats are very real (Ugor, 2023). In such an environment, choosing to defect isn't a strategic move; it's a matter of survival.

Then there is the financial pressure, which can be more subtle yet just as powerful. Politicians who rely on state funds to meet the needs of their constituents might suddenly find those funds cut off if they resist the push to defect.

Creating conditions that make it impossible to stay in a party is another form of coercion. Politicians can be systematically marginalized, stripped of resources, and humiliated until leaving seems like the only way out. This tactic of "constructive expulsion" allows ruling parties to pretend that defections are voluntary, even while they set the stage for them to happen (Schedler, 2022).

When defection is forced, it pretends to be a choice but actually erodes political independence and the integrity of the opposition. In such cases, the distinction between governing and opposition parties becomes blurred. The opposition can only exist as long as the incumbents allow it.

Understanding the differences between these forms is crucial because they each have unique impacts on stability and democracy. Voluntary defection can indicate a healthy level of contestation. On the other hand, opportunistic defection is damaging, though it can be remedied through institutional reforms. In contrast, involuntary defection directly undermines democracy by replacing consent with coercion. This study aims to clarify all three categories to facilitate a more detailed empirical investigation.

2.2.3 Defection and Related Concepts: Realignment, Dealignment, and Party System Change.

To truly grasp the concept of defection, we need to look at it within the larger context of political change, both at the elite level and among the general public. Key ideas like realignment, dealignment, and shifts in party systems serve as vital tools for analysis.

Realignment refers to significant changes in the political loyalties of social groups, often linked to pivotal elections or major shifts in party dynamics (Sundquist, 2021). In the U.S., the theory of realignment came about from noticing these periodic changes where old coalitions break apart and new ones emerge based on different issues. A notable example in Nigeria is the 2013 merger that formed the APC, marking a significant realignment (Omotola & Aiyede, 2023).

On the other hand, dealignment is about the fading away of party loyalty without new loyalties taking its place. This phenomenon is tied to a drop in voter identification and a rise in electoral unpredictability (Dalton & Wattenberg, 2022). As voters become more detached from political parties, elite defection can further fuel this dealignment by deepening voter skepticism. When people see politicians treating party loyalty as a mere transaction, they might feel that no party is truly worthy of their allegiance.

Lastly, party system change involves shifts in the number, size, and ideological stance of political parties (Mair, 2022). Defection plays a role here by redistributing political talent and resources. When influential politicians switch parties, they often bring along their networks of supporters and donors, which can dramatically shift the power dynamics in the political landscape.

The link between defection and how well a party system is institutionalized is really important. In systems that are highly institutionalized, you see stable competition, strong societal connections, and a clear organizational structure (Mainwaring & Scully, 1995). Defection tends to be both costly and uncommon. On the other hand, systems that are weakly institutionalized

often face frequent defections, which only makes the problem worse in a harmful cycle. This study looks at Nigeria and connects to larger discussions about when party systems either solidify or remain unstable.

2.2.4 Defection and Political Stability: Conceptualizing the Relationship.

The connection between defection and political stability is something that requires careful thought and definition. Political stability itself is a topic of debate. This study takes a multi-faceted approach.

When we talk about governmental stability, we're referring to the ongoing effectiveness of both executive and legislative institutions. In stable systems, cabinets complete their terms, legislatures operate smoothly, and policies are implemented without hiccups. However, defection can disrupt this balance by changing legislative majorities and introducing uncertainty into policy making. At the local government level, when councilors defect, it can shift control of councils and lead to gridlock in decision making.

Regime stability, on the other hand, refers to the endurance of key political institutions and the established rules of governance. In stable regimes, constitutions are upheld, elections happen regularly, and power transitions are orderly. But when defection becomes too common, it can undermine regime stability, causing citizens to lose trust in democratic institutions.

Lastly, social stability is about the absence of political violence, community conflict, and upheaval. Defection can threaten this stability, especially if it incites violence among competing factions or heightens communal tensions. In the Niger Delta, where militant groups are intertwined with politics, the risks associated with defection are particularly pronounced.

This study examines all three dimensions in Ethiopia West and Ughelli North.

2.2.5 Defection as Systemic Destabilizer: Aggregate-Level Consequences.

When we look at individual cases, we can see why politicians choose to switch sides, but when we zoom out to the bigger picture, we start to understand how these defections impact stability, governance, and the overall quality of democracy. Heller and Mershon (2009) conducted a comparative study on legislative party switching across eight democracies and uncovered several ways that defection can lead to instability. For starters, when politicians frequently switch parties, it undermines the establishment of cohesive party identities and stable memberships. Additionally, these defections can create chaos in the legislature by shifting majorities and introducing uncertainty. Lastly, they weaken accountability by breaking the connection between how voters choose their representatives and how those representatives behave in office.

Further research has built on these findings. Mershon (2022) found that higher rates of defection are linked to weaker party system institutionalization and lower democratic quality in thirty three democracies. Klein's (2023) long term study of defection in post-communist democracies reveals that high defection rates during the early stages of democracy can lead to weaker party systems down the line, indicating a path dependent effect.

The term "political mercenarism" highlights a particularly damaging outcome (de Waal, 2021). When politics is overrun by politicians who switch parties for personal gain, the quality of governance suffers. Policies become less coherent, public trust diminishes, and the legitimacy of democracy is compromised.

Recent studies on democratic backsliding have identified defection as both a symptom and a cause of democratic decline. Bermeo (2022) illustrates how ruling parties in Hungary, Poland, and Turkey have used incentives and pressure to lure defectors from opposition parties, thereby solidifying their legislative majorities and undermining checks on their power. Mechkova,

LÃ¼hrmann, and Lindberg's (2022) global analysis points to "executive aggrandizement," which includes the systematic recruitment of defectors, as a key mechanism driving autocratization.

These viewpoints indicate that the defection in Ethiopia West and Ughelli North isn't merely a local issue; it's actually part of broader trends that are shaping Nigeria's democratic path.

2.2.6 Party System Volatility and Low Institutionalization.

The instability and lack of strong institutional frameworks in African party systems significantly influence how defections occur. In her 2013 study, Resnick compares Senegal, Ghana, and Zambia, highlighting how fluid party loyalties are and the overall weakness of party organizations.

Political parties across Africa often struggle with weakness. They don't have strong ties to society, clear ideologies, or a consistent organizational presence (Basedau & Stroh, 2022). Instead, they tend to act as electoral tools driven by powerful individuals rather than as organizations with a clear agenda. This inherent weakness leads to several issues. Parties find it hard to keep their members in line and struggle to foster loyalty based on shared beliefs. Their fragile structures make them particularly vulnerable to splits and mass departures.

According to Basedau and Stroh (2022), in resource-rich African nations, reliance on oil further intensifies these challenges. When government funding comes from resource extraction instead of taxes, parties have less motivation to create programmatic appeals. Consequently, politics shifts towards controlling resource wealth, and party loyalty becomes a way to tap into those resources.

At the local government level, party structures are often quite minimal. In such an environment, if a key local leader leaves, it can set off a chain reaction, quickly unraveling local party

organizations. Defections, therefore, aren't just personal choices; they can deal a significant blow to the local party's structure.

Research comparing party system institutionalization in Africa indicates that volatility tends to be highest in nations with weak party structures, significant ethnic diversity, and economies reliant on resources (Riedl, 2022). Nigeria stands out in all these areas. Delta State, rich in oil and marked by its ethnic variety, perfectly illustrates these national trends while also showcasing its own unique local characteristics.

2.3 The Nigerian Fourth Republic: Godfatherism, Party System Dynamics, and Local Government Vulnerability.

2.3.1 The Character of Nigerian Political Parties.

Nigeria's shift back to civilian rule in 1999 marked the beginning of the Fourth Republic, which has now been in place for over two and a half decades. A key takeaway from the research is the lack of substantial programmatic content in party competition, with personalistic, ethno-regional, and clientelist dynamics taking center stage.

Omotola's extensive studies (2009, 2023) highlight that Nigerian political parties often serve more as electoral tools than as organizations driven by clear policies. Instead of being defined by their policy platforms, parties are characterized by their leadership structures, regional affiliations, and access to resources. The major players, initially the PDP and later the APC, have acted as broad coalitions of regional elites and networks of patronage.

Aiyede's (2007) examination of legislative behavior during the early Fourth Republic reveals how the weakness of parties influences representation. Without strong party discipline or clear programmatic commitments, legislators tend to act as individual entrepreneurs. While party labels may serve as electoral platforms, they offer little direction for legislative actions, making defection a common occurrence.

Godfatherism stands out as a unique aspect of Nigerian party politics that directly impacts defection. These "godfathers" are influential political figures who wield significant financial resources and have the ability to mobilize support. They play crucial roles in selecting candidates and shaping post-election alliances (Albert, 2022). By "anointing" candidates, providing campaign funds, and securing votes, they expect loyalty and access to patronage in return.

The relationship between godfathers and politicians leads to some unique dynamics when it comes to defection. When a godfather decides to switch parties, their clients usually follow suit, often ignoring their own preferences. In this scenario, defection turns into a realignment of networks rather than a matter of personal choice. On the flip side, politicians might choose to defect to break free from the control of their godfathers, looking for new patrons who can provide them with more independence.

2.3.2 Drivers of Defection in the Fourth Republic.

Empirical studies have highlighted several key drivers behind political behavior. Onuoha's (2014) analysis points out a few major factors: the denial of party tickets during primary elections, internal party crises and factional conflicts, the quest for political relevance, executive inducements, and strategic calculations regarding electoral advantage.

The denial of party tickets stands out as a particularly strong catalyst. The processes for selecting candidates often lack internal democracy and are frequently manipulated by party elites.

Politicians who find themselves losing in primary elections might switch to another party that offers a more appealing platform. The 2023 electoral cycle saw a significant number of these defections.

Internal party crises and factional conflicts also play a crucial role in driving defections. Nigerian political parties often suffer from severe internal divisions, which can stem from personal rivalries, ethnic tensions, or disputes over resource distribution. A notable example is the 2025 crisis in Kano State, where Governor Abba Yusuf defected from the NNPP to the APC.

The phenomenon of executive inducement, often referred to as "carry go," is particularly impactful. Executives actively seek out defectors from opposition parties, luring them with material benefits, appointments, and access to patronage. This shifts defection from being a personal choice to a strategic move aimed at consolidating executive power. The recent surge of defections in Delta State, culminating in Governor Sheriff Oborevwori's switch to the APC, illustrates this trend.

Calculations of electoral advantage are always in play. Politicians continuously evaluate their chances under their current party affiliations and may choose to defect if they believe another party is better positioned to win. This bandwagon effect can create a self-fulfilling prophecy, as a series of defections can build momentum.

2.3.3 Constitutional and Legal Framework for Defection.

Nigeria's Constitution includes rules aimed at managing defection, but their impact has been hampered by inconsistent interpretations and weak enforcement. According to Section 68(1)(g) of the 1999 Constitution (as amended), a member of the National Assembly must vacate their seat if they defect without evidence of a split in their original party. Section 109(1)(g) lays out similar rules for State Houses of Assembly.

The "division in the party" clause has sparked quite a bit of debate. Courts have interpreted it in various ways. Some rulings suggest that any internal strife leading to factions counts as a division, while others demand more concrete proof of a party's breakdown. This inconsistency creates legal ambiguity that undermines the anti-defection measures (Nwosu, 2023).

Judicial enforcement has also been weakened by sluggish legal processes and the political nature of judicial appointments. Cases can drag on for years, often becoming irrelevant by the time they're resolved. Even when courts issue favorable rulings, enforcing them against politically influential defectors who have the backing of executive power can be a real challenge.

The overall effect is a legal landscape that allows defection with minimal repercussions. Despite the constitutional rules, no defecting legislator has been successfully ousted from office during the Fourth Republic. This failure of the law highlights broader issues of institutional weakness.

Recent court rulings have shown some differences. The Supreme Court's 2018 decision in *Lawan v. INEC* confirmed that defection without proof of division invalidates a legislator's seat, but many subsequent lower court rulings have often shied away from applying this principle (Nwabueze, 2022). The disconnect between the constitutional text and actual political practice underscores the institutional fragility that facilitates defection.

2.3.4 Local Government Vulnerability: The Captured Periphery.

The vulnerability of local governments to instability caused by defections really deserves our attention. According to Egwemi's analysis from 2010, local government areas (LGAs) are often under the thumb of state governors and influential godfathers. This means they end up being tools for higher political agendas instead of functioning as independent bodies for grassroots governance.

This control happens through various means. State governors manage LGA finances via State Joint Local Government Accounts, which allows them to manipulate funding rewarding their allies while punishing those who oppose them. They also have a say in who gets to run for LGA elections. Additionally, state security forces and anti-corruption measures are used to pressure local officials who don't toe the line. Godfathers further extend their influence by pulling LGA politicians into their patronage networks.

In this environment, defections at the LGA level rarely happen on their own. Councilors and chairmen often defect not because of local issues, but due to pressures stemming from state-level politics. When governors change parties, LGA politicians feel the heat to follow suit. This creates a domino effect, leading to instability across multiple LGAs at once.

The fallout for local governance is significant. These politically motivated defections disrupt the functioning of councils. Leadership roles within committees shift, budgets get re-evaluated, and development projects can be left hanging. Most importantly, defections undermine any semblance of accountability that might have existed between local officials and the people they serve.

Adebayo's 2023 study on local government administration in southwestern Nigeria highlights how instability from defections hampers service delivery. When council chairmen and councilors are caught up in political maneuvering, they lose focus on governance. This leads to poor budget implementation and a drop in staff morale.

2.3.5 The 2025 Defection Wave: Context and Significance.

The timing of this study aligns perfectly with a significant wave of defections happening in Nigeria, particularly centered in Delta State. In early 2025, Governor Sheriff Oborevwori made headlines by switching from the PDP to the APC, marking a historic moment as it was the first

time since 1999 that Delta State would be led by a party other than the PDP (TheCable, 2025). This bold move set off a chain reaction, prompting many commissioners, legislators, and LGA chairmen to follow suit.

The defection wave of 2025 highlights several dynamics that have been discussed in existing literature: executive influence, strategic electoral calculations, and shifts in political networks. It also brings to light the issue of involuntary defection, as some politicians might have felt pressured to join the governor's new party to avoid being sidelined politically.

For this study, the 2025 defection wave offers a rare chance to observe the dynamics of defection as they unfold and to analyze their impact on local governance and political stability.

2.4 Delta State's Troubled Terrain: A Crucible of Defection and Instability.

2.4.1 The Niger Delta Context: Resource Curse and Political Economy.

Delta State's position in Nigeria's oil rich Niger Delta plays a crucial role in shaping its political landscape. The unique political economy of the region, marked by oil extraction, environmental issues, government dependence on resource revenues, and the rise of militant groups, creates an environment that fuels political defection.

The idea of the "resource curse" offers valuable insights into how reliance on oil influences political actions (Ross, 2022). In states rich in resources, the stakes of political competition are significantly higher because controlling the government equates to controlling resource wealth. This reliance on resource income often weakens accountability, as governments focus more on resource revenues than on taxation. Additionally, it fosters patronage politics, where the wealth generated from resources supports extensive networks of clientelism. All of these factors are vividly evident in Delta State.

The history of militant activity in the Niger Delta adds another layer of complexity. Since the 1990s, armed groups have been pushing for more control over resources, better environmental practices, and increased investment in development. The 2009 Amnesty Program brought many of these militants into patronage systems, with former leaders receiving stipends, contracts, and political roles. This blending of political competition and armed conflict has created a situation where defection could lead to violent repercussions.

Obi's (2022) examination of the political economy in the Niger Delta highlights how oil wealth sparks fierce competition among various ethnic groups and elite factions vying for control over state resources. The 13% derivation revenue provides a significant financial boost. The battle for control over these funds, along with the contracts, appointments, and patronage they facilitate, is at the heart of Delta State's political struggles. In this context, defection becomes a strategic move for individuals looking to reposition themselves in the competition for access to these valuable resources.

The UNDP's 2022 report highlights a striking contradiction: a region rich in oil revenues yet plagued by poverty. It describes a place marked by "administrative neglect, deteriorating social infrastructure and services, high unemployment, social deprivation, extreme poverty, filth and squalor, and ongoing conflict." This situation inevitably shapes what citizens expect. When a state has access to vast resources but fails to deliver on development, politics turns into a fierce competition for limited access.

2.4.2 Ethnic Politics and Defection in Delta State.

Delta State's rich tapestry of ethnic groups, including the Urhobo, Ijaw, Itsekiri, Isoko, and Anioma, creates a political landscape where ethnic identity plays a significant role in shaping

behaviors, such as defection. Osaghae's (2022) exploration of ethnic politics in the Niger Delta highlights how these identities influence political competition.

In this environment, ethnic groups vie for access to state power and resources. Positions like governorship, ministerial roles, LGA chairmanships, and council seats are often seen as entitlements tied to specific ethnic groups. When expectations aren't met, frustrations can build up, leading to potential realignments.

Defection in this scenario is seldom just a personal choice. When a well known politician from a certain ethnic group decides to defect, it's viewed as a collective shift for that group. Ethnic leaders might even coordinate these defection decisions, while communities can exert pressure on their representatives to either defect or stay, depending on what they believe is best for the group.

Horowitz's (2022) theory of ethnic politics sheds light on these interactions. In societies marked by ethnic divisions, political parties often align with specific ethnic groups, turning party competition into a means of inter-ethnic negotiation. Crossing ethnic lines to defect can be risky for politicians, as they might alienate their ethnic base, while defection within the same ethnic bloc tends to be more manageable.

By focusing on Ethiope West and Ughelli North, we can delve deeper into these dynamics within a largely Urhobo context.

2.4.3 Empirical Evidence from Delta State and Neighboring LGAs.

Systematic empirical research on defection in Delta State is still quite limited, but the studies that do exist offer valuable insights. For instance, the work by Ibodje and Oporaku (2019) focusing on Ethiope East LGA, which is right next to Ethiope West, highlights patterns that are directly relevant to this investigation.

According to Ibodje and Oporaku, the reasons behind defection in Ethiope East can be boiled down to three main factors: the denial of party tickets during primaries, disputes over how party positions are allocated, and inducements from state level actors. The fallout from these defections has been significant, leading to disruptions in council operations, the abandonment of development projects, a growing public mistrust, and even localized political violence.

In a more recent analysis, Ugor (2023) connects youth mobilization in Delta State to these broader trends of political violence. When politicians switch parties, they often rally their youth supporters to provide security, showcase their strength, or intimidate their rivals. This kind of mobilization can quickly spiral into larger conflicts, especially in areas where youth are already organized into cult groups or militant networks.

Additionally, Okonta's (2008) groundbreaking study on the political economy of the Niger Delta offers crucial context. His examination of how oil wealth fuels conflict among elites and between elites and local communities sheds light on the environment in which defection takes place.

2.4.4 Ethiope West and Ughelli North: Profiles of the Study Areas.

Ethiope West LGA, with its main hub in Oghara, is primarily home to Urhobo-speaking communities. This area is a blend of oil-producing towns and farming settlements, which brings together various resource-related and developmental political issues. Oghara's role as a center for commerce and education adds another layer to the local competition.

On the other hand, Ughelli North LGA, based in Ughelli, is recognized as the traditional heart of the Urhobo nation. It's more urbanized, boasting increased commercial activity and better

infrastructure. The political weight of Ughelli means that any developments here carry a significance that goes beyond their immediate effects.

Both LGAs have seen notable defections in recent years, particularly during the 2023 elections and the subsequent wave in 2025 following Governor Oborevwori's defection. Analyzing these areas allows for a comparative look at how defection dynamics unfold in similar yet unique local settings.

2.5 Historical Overview of Party Politics and Defection in Nigeria.

2.5.1 The Colonial Foundations of Party Politics (1922-1960).

The roots of party politics in Nigeria can be traced back to the colonial period. The Clifford Constitution of 1922 set up the first legislative council with elected representatives, although the voting rights were quite limited (Coleman, 2021). This sparked the creation of early political groups, with the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP), founded by Herbert Samuel Macaulay in 1923, being one of the most notable.

Another significant player was the Lagos Youth Movement, which later became known as the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) around 1934. Prominent figures like Nnamdi Azikiwe and Obafemi Awolowo were part of this movement (Coleman, 2021). While they positioned themselves as nationalists, these early parties primarily operated within the Lagos region.

The Richards Constitution of 1946 marked a turning point, leading to the rise of regional parties that embraced ethnic nationalism (Dudley, 2022). Three major parties came to the forefront: the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC), established in 1944 and led by Azikiwe, which became the dominant force in Eastern Nigeria; the Action Group (AG), founded in 1951 by Awolowo, which took the lead in Western Nigeria; and the Northern People's

Congress (NPC), also founded in 1944 by Ahmadu Bello, which emerged as the key political power in Northern Nigeria (Sklar, 2021).

2.5.2 Defection in the Late Colonial Era: The 1951 Western Region Crisis.

The concept of defection made its way into Nigeria's political vocabulary back in 1951, just shy of a decade before the country gained independence (Nwosu, 2022). At that time, the NCNC had secured 42 out of 80 seats in the legislative assembly of the Western Region. However, the party ended up losing 20 of those seats to the AG due to some well-planned defections. This turn of events not only stopped the NCNC from forming a government but also set early examples of how defections could significantly alter electoral results.

2.5.3 The First Republic (1960-1966): Defection and Political Crisis.

The First Republic was marked by fierce competition among various regional parties and ever changing coalitions. One significant defection was that of Chief Ladoke Akintola, who parted ways with the Action Group after a clash of personalities with Awolowo. This move triggered the 1962 crisis in the Western Region, which ultimately led to a state of emergency (Sklar, 2021). In a similar vein, a rift between Azikiwe and Kingsley Mbadiwe resulted in Mbadiwe leaving the NCNC to establish the Democratic Party of Nigeria Citizens (DPNC) (Nwosu, 2022).

2.5.4 Military Rule and Party System Interruption (1966-1979).

The era of military rule from 1966 to 1979 had a profound impact on the landscape of party politics in the years that followed. During this time, military governance stifled political parties and concentrated power in the hands of a few. Yet, it also entrenched systems of patronage, personal leadership, and institutional fragility (Joseph, 2022). The downfall of the First Republic, triggered by the January 1966 coup and the subsequent counter-coup in July 1966, was partly a reflection of the shortcomings of party politics.

2.5.5 The Second Republic (1979-1983): Defection and the "Election of 1983".

The Second Republic was a short lived period of civilian governance. Defections were once again a major theme, with the UPN (which branched off from the AG) and the PRP taking the hardest hits (Nwosu, 2022). Notable UPN leaders like Anthony Enahoro and Richard Akinjide switched sides to join the ruling NPN. Omoboriowo, who served as deputy to Governor Ajasin of Ondo State, eventually became the NPN's candidate for governor in 1983 (Falola & Heaton, 2023).

Although the NPN secured the presidency, it didn't have a majority in the legislature, so it worked hard to bring in defectors to strengthen its grip on power. The downfall of the Second Republic during the coup in December 1983 was, among other reasons, a result of the erosion of trust in party politics due to the constant defections (Joseph, 2022).

2.5.6 The Aborted Third Republic and the Abacha Era (1986-1998).

The Babangida regime tried to manage a transition by setting up a two-party system with the SDP and the NRC (Falola & Heaton, 2023). The presidential election on June 12, 1993, was hailed as the most free and fair in the country history, but when it was annulled, it threw the nation into turmoil.

The Abacha regime that came next took political manipulation to a whole new level. In 1996, they permitted the formation of five political parties (Falola & Heaton, 2023). Eventually, all five parties rallied around Abacha as their "consensus" presidential candidate in 1998. Chief Bola Ige mockingly referred to them as "the five fingers of a leprous hand." This moment marked the complete subjugation of party politics to military control. After Abacha's death in 1998, a transition program was initiated, paving the way for a return to civilian rule in 1999.

2.5.7 The Fourth Republic (1999-Present): Defection as Systemic Feature.

In the lead-up to the 1999 elections, three political parties made their debut: the PDP, the APP, and the AD. The PDP quickly established itself as the frontrunner, clinching the presidency and securing majorities across the board. When the Fourth Republic kicked off in 1999, the PDP was in control of 21 states (Omotola, 2023). By the time we reached the Obasanjo era (1999-2007), that number had jumped to 29 out of 36 states, raising eyebrows and concerns about the emergence of a one-party state (Lewis, 2022).

From 2013 to 2015, we saw the most significant political shake-up since the transition. In December 2013, five governors from the PDP made a bold move, leaving the party to join the newly established APC (Omotola & Aiyede, 2023). This merger brought together the ACN, ANPP, CPC, and a faction of APGA, and it also attracted some high-profile defectors from the PDP.

The APC's triumph in the 2015 elections marked a historic moment, as it was the first time an incumbent president was defeated in Nigeria. This victory sparked a flurry of defections from the PDP to the APC, further weakening the opposition as the 2019 elections approached.

Fast forward to the 2023 elections, where Bola Ahmed Tinubu emerged victorious over Atiku Abubakar, leading to yet another political shift. Since 2020, the PDP has faced a series of crises, resulting in the loss of at least 11 governors. Notable exits included Governors David Umahi (Ebonyi) in 2020, Ben Ayade (Cross River) in 2021, and Bello Matawalle (Zamfara) in 2021.

The most recent wave of defections swept away Governor Sheriff Oborevwori of Delta State (April 2025), Governor Umo Eno of Akwa Ibom (June 2025), Governor Peter Mbah of Enugu (October 2025), Governor Douye Diri of Bayelsa (November 2025), and Governor Siminalayi

Fubara of Rivers (December 2025), all joining the APC. By the end of 2025, these defections had bolstered the ruling party's control to about 31 out of Nigeria's 36 states.

2.5.8 Patterns and Drivers of Defection: A Historical Synthesis.

A few key patterns stand out. First off, defection has been happening even before independence. Next, its been fueled by personality conflicts, strategic electoral calculations, access to patronage, and, increasingly, coercion. Additionally, we have seen a significant rise in both the frequency and scale of defections during the Fourth Republic. It's also worth noting that defection is now closely linked to the electoral cycle. Moreover, this trend seems to be driven more by opportunism and a desire for survival rather than by any ideological beliefs. Lastly, the use of anti-corruption agencies as a tool has become a major factor, and the decline of opposition parties has played a role in both causing and resulting from this situation.

2.5.9 Implications for Democratic Consolidation.

Persistent defection really hampers the institutionalization of political parties, stifles the growth of programmatic parties, weakens accountability, and leads to voter disinterest. When one party has a grip on both the legislature and the executive, true democracy is out of reach. Without a strong opposition, those in power face no checks on their authority. However, as some scholars point out, Nigeria's rich diversity makes it tough to establish a permanent one-party system. The real challenge lies in fostering a genuine party culture that embraces clear ideologies, maintains internal discipline, and ensures lasting institutional strength.

2.6 Theoretical Framework.

2.6.1 The Calculus of Defection: Rational Choice Theory.

Rational choice theory, which first emerged from Anthony Downs' work in 1957 and has been expanded upon by various scholars, suggests that political actors are essentially rational beings

who aim to maximize their utility. They make strategic choices by weighing the costs against the benefits. When it comes to defection, politicians are likely to change their loyalties if they think the potential rewards like better chances in elections, greater access to resources, enhanced influence, or financial perks outweigh the risks, such as losing support, damaging their reputation, facing retaliation, or incurring sanctions (Strom, 2020).

Downs laid the groundwork by asserting that political parties are "teams of men seeking to control the governing apparatus by gaining office" (1957). This drive to secure office is a common thread among politicians, prompting them to shift their alliances as needed.

Strom (2020) makes a distinction between motivations for seeking votes, seeking office, and seeking policy changes. A comparative study by O'Brien and Shomer (2021) involving eighteen democracies reveals that the patterns of defection can differ significantly based on electoral systems, the level of party institutionalization, and constitutional rules.

This framework also sheds light on the importance of timing. Politicians might choose to hold off on defecting until after elections to dodge voter backlash, or they might jump ship right away to seize immediate benefits (Mershon & Heller, 2021).

However, some critics point out that rational choice theories can sometimes become circular (Green & Shapiro, 2021) and argue that preferences are not fixed but rather influenced by the surrounding context (Hay, 2022). Even with these critiques, this framework remains a valuable tool for unpacking the strategic thought processes that drive defection.

2.6.2 Institutional Theory: The Structural Enablers of Defection.

Institutional theory shifts the spotlight from individual actions to the structures that both limit and facilitate behavior. Drawing insights from North (1990) and March and Olsen (2020), this

viewpoint highlights that the "rules of the game," whether formal or informal, significantly influence outcomes, including instances of defection.

North's differentiation between institutions as the "rules of the game" and organizations as the "players" lays a crucial groundwork. When institutions are robust and trustworthy, they foster predictable behavior. Conversely, when they are weak or poorly enforced, they create an environment ripe for opportunism and defection.

When we look at defection through this lens, it becomes clear that it's not just about individual choices; it's a reflection of institutional frailty. In contexts where party institutionalization is lacking, parties struggle to maintain loyalty (Mainwaring & Bizzarro, 2021). This lenient environment reduces the costs associated with defection.

Mainwaring and Scully's (1995) framework outlines four key dimensions: the stability of inter-party competition, the societal roots of parties, the legitimacy of parties and elections, and the strength of party organizations. Randall and Svendsen's (2022) refinement further distinguishes between organizational consolidation and societal embeddedness.

The institutionalist perspective also sheds light on how formal legal frameworks influence defection. In Nigeria, anti-defection laws have become ineffective due to inconsistent interpretations and weak enforcement (Nwosu, 2023). Informal institutions like clientelism and godfatherism may hold more sway than the formal rules themselves (Helmke & Levitsky, 2020).

2.6.3 Rational Decision-Making Theory.

Rational decision-making theory offers crucial analytical tools for grasping the micro foundations of political behavior. This theory suggests that political actors make strategic choices based on a careful evaluation of costs and benefits. Downs (1957) laid the groundwork by asserting that political parties craft their policies primarily to secure electoral victories.

Meanwhile, Strom (2020) identifies three key motivations behind these actions: vote-seeking, office-seeking, and policy-seeking.

In their comparative study, O'Brien and Shomer (2021) present a refined rational choice model that takes institutional variables into account. This framework sheds light on the importance of strategic timing in decision making. Its advantages lie in its analytical simplicity and ability to make predictions. However, it faces criticism for being tautological and for assuming that preferences remain stable over time (Green & Shapiro, 2021; Hay, 2022).

2.7 The African Context: Neo-Patrimonialism, Clientelism, and Fluid Loyalties.

2.7.1 Neo-Patrimonialism as Analytical Framework.

Understanding defection in Africa calls for tools that are finely tuned to the region's unique political landscape. The concept of neo-patrimonialism, introduced by scholars studying African politics, highlights the blend of formal bureaucratic systems with informal, personalized rule (Bratton & van de Walle, 1997; Erdmann & Engel, 2022).

In these neo-patrimonial systems, while formal institutions are present, they are often influenced by informal networks based on personal connections. Political power is wielded through relationships and the exchange of resources. Essentially, the state is viewed as a resource to be claimed and distributed in order to maintain loyalty (Bach & Gazibo, 2022).

Bratton and van de Walle's (1997) groundbreaking analysis pinpointed neo-patrimonialism as a key characteristic of post-colonial African governments. Here, presidents rely on patronage networks to govern, and political parties mainly serve as tools for accessing and distributing these patronage resources.

The consequences for defection are significant. In neo-patrimonial systems, defection loses its ideological facade and is instead seen as a strategy for resource acquisition. When the ruling party has control over resource distribution, switching allegiance to that party becomes a logical choice.

Recent research has further developed this framework. Cheeseman and de Gramont (2021) look into how clientelism evolves in the face of democratic competition. Sign (2021) investigates the relationship between neo-patrimonialism and institutional reforms. LeBas (2023) delves into how even parties that start with programmatic goals can shift towards patrimonial practices over time.

2.7.2 Clientelism and Constituency Pressures.

Clientelism, which involves trading material benefits for political backing, serves as the grassroots mechanism that drives neo-patrimonial systems. In his ethnographic study of Ghanaian legislators, Lindberg (2003) highlights how these clientelist pressures influence decisions regarding party loyalty.

Ghanaian MPs are under immense pressure to provide tangible benefits to their constituents. Not meeting these expectations can lead to losing their seats. This clientelist dynamic significantly impacts their strategic choices. If a politician's current party fails to deliver the necessary resources, it makes sense for them to switch to a party that can.

Kitschelt and Wilkinson's (2022) comparative study of clientelism across twenty-two democracies pinpoints the factors that determine its strength. Clientelism thrives in environments where parties can track voting behavior, where voters are economically disadvantaged and risk-averse, and where state resources are heavily controlled by the executive. These conditions are notably evident in Nigeria.

The situation in Delta State is quite telling. Councilors and chairmen are under significant pressure to provide material benefits. When switching parties promises better access to resources, it becomes a logical choice in response to the demands of their constituents. However, clientelism also imposes limitations. Politicians who are deeply entrenched in their networks may find that defecting could jeopardize crucial relationships.

2.8 An Integrated Theoretical Framework for Analyzing Defection in Ethiopia West and Ughelli North.

To tackle the existing research gaps, we need a comprehensive theoretical framework. No single approach offers all the necessary tools. While rational choice theory sheds light on individual motivations, it often overlooks the constraints imposed by institutions. On the other hand, institutional theory highlights structural conditions but tends to underestimate individual agency. Neo-patrimonial frameworks provide insights into patronage dynamics, yet they might miss the role of formal institutions. Perspectives on ethnic politics reveal the complexities of identity dynamics but can sometimes risk oversimplifying group behaviors. This study embraces an integrated framework that includes several key components.

Micro-Level Triggers: The Motivational Base.

This part focuses on the fundamental motivations that drive individual politicians to switch allegiances. Drawing from rational choice theory, it suggests that politicians weigh the expected costs and benefits of their actions. Important motivational factors include personal ambition, electoral strategy, resource acquisition, and principled disagreements. These motivations can overlap and are not mutually exclusive.

Neo-Patrimonial and Clientelist Dynamics.

This section delves into the relational networks that influence defection decisions. It highlights that politicians operate within patron client hierarchies. Key dynamics at play include the realignment of patronage networks, pressures from constituents, "carry go" incentives, and the influence of godfather politics.

Involuntary Defection: The Coercion Dimension.

This part looks at how force and structural constraints play a role in defection. It highlights that sometimes, defection isn't about real choice but rather about giving in to pressure. Key forms of this include pressure from influential figures, state coercion, structural limitations, and the threat of political violence.

Ethno-Political Context.

Here, we explore how ethnic identities influence decisions around defection and how those decisions are perceived. In societies that are deeply divided, political actions are often viewed through a communal lens. Important factors to consider include the calculation of group interests, collective interpretations, community pressures, and the balancing of ethnic identities.

Institutional Context.

This section delves into the institutional landscape. Both formal and informal rules shape the incentives, constraints, and outcomes of political actions. Key elements include how well parties are institutionalized, the constitutional and legal frameworks in place, the dominance of the executive branch, the effects of the electoral system, and the autonomy of local government areas (LGAs).

Macro-Level Consequences: Manifestations of Instability.

This part outlines the impacts on political stability, the effectiveness of governance, and the quality of democracy. Key aspects include disruptions in governance, instances of political violence, the erosion of institutions, societal fragmentation, and voter disengagement.

Causal Pathways and Interactions.

The framework suggests that the outcomes of defection arise from intricate interactions. Key pathways include opportunistic defection leading to the weakening of parties and disruptions in governance, involuntary defection causing grievances among elites and political violence, ethnicized defection resulting in communal divides, and frequent defection breeding cynicism among citizens.

This framework will steer empirical research by operationalizing key concepts, specifying observable implications, comparing across LGAs, and considering the element of time.

This chapter takes a deep dive into the literature surrounding party defection and political stability. It explores a wide range of perspectives, starting from global viewpoints and narrowing down to African frameworks, with a particular focus on Nigeria and Delta State. Along the way, it highlights some key gaps: there's a noticeable lack of localized empirical research, insufficient theoretical exploration of involuntary defection, unclear causal mechanisms, overlooked local mediating factors, a missing citizen perspective, and a limited integration of various analytical levels.

In response, the integrated theoretical framework developed here brings together insights from rational choice theory, institutional analysis, neo-patrimonialism, and ethnic politics into a comprehensive multi-level model. This framework outlines the micro-level triggers, the dynamics of neo-patrimonial networks, coercion factors, the ethno-political landscape, the

institutional context, and the signs of instability. This solid foundation sets the stage for the empirical chapters that will follow.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design.

This chapter dives into the detailed methodology used to explore how political party defection impacts political stability in the Ethiope West and Ughelli North Local Government Areas of Delta State, Nigeria. It covers essential aspects of research design, including the study population, sampling methods, tools for data collection, and considerations for validity, reliability, ethics, and analysis. The widespread issue of party defection in Nigeria's Fourth Republic poses a serious challenge to democratic progress, especially in Delta State, where weak party structures, ethnic rivalries, and competition over oil resources create a turbulent political landscape. While previous research has looked at defection trends on national and state levels, there's still a significant gap in understanding the local, causal links that lead to instability from legislative floor crossing. This study aims to fill that gap with a thorough methodological approach that captures both overall trends and the specific contextual factors influencing the relationship between political shifts and community stability.

This study takes on an explanatory sequential mixed-methods approach, rooted in a post-positivist philosophical perspective. This means we recognize that while there is an objective reality connecting defection and stability, we can only grasp it imperfectly through various research methods. The design unfolds in two distinct yet linked phases: first, the quantitative phase, where we gather and analyze survey data to spot broad patterns, correlations, and relationships within the study population; and second, the qualitative phase, which involves detailed interviews and focus group discussions. This phase aims to explain and add context to the quantitative findings, shedding light on the mechanisms behind the statistical patterns we

observe. By using a mix of methods, we ensure that the strengths of one approach balance out the weaknesses of the other, with qualitative insights enriching our understanding of the quantitative trends.

The investigation spans from January 2023 to December 2025, capturing the aftermath of the 2023 general elections, a complete local government administrative cycle, and the critical pre-2027 election period marked by heightened political maneuvering and realignment. This timeframe is carefully chosen to observe defection events at different stages of the electoral cycle, from post-election shifts to mid-term tensions and pre-election alignments. This allows us to take a long-term view of how defection dynamics develop and play out in various political contexts within the study areas.

3.2 Population of the Study.

The population for this study includes all the individuals and groups whose experiences and perspectives are crucial for understanding why political party defection happens in Ethiope West and Ughelli North Local Government Areas of Delta State, Nigeria. Methodologically speaking, this population is the total set of elements from which we draw our sample. In mixed-methods research, the idea of population is just as much about the depth of information as it is about statistical representation. Defining this population is an important theoretical task that helps clarify the boundaries of our inquiry, ensuring we capture the voices that are most closely tied to the political dynamics we are exploring. Since party defection is a complex issue that involves elite political strategies, governance processes, community solidarity, and grassroots voting behavior, our population needs to be diverse. It should include individuals at various levels of the political landscape who can provide valuable insights into the reasons, effects, and implications of legislative floor crossing.

In this study, we look at six distinct but interconnected groups of stakeholders that make up our population. First up are the political actors, which include elected councilors, Local Government Chairmen, party executives, and notable defectors. These individuals are at the heart of the defection phenomenon, acting either as direct agents of realignment or as immediate competitors impacted by these shifts. Then we have public administrators, like Heads of Departments and career civil servants, who offer a long-term view on how governance can be both stable and disrupted. They observe how defection events can halt project implementation, shift budget allocations, and undermine public trust.

Next, security personnel from the Nigeria Police Force and the Department of State Services play a crucial role as frontline witnesses to the relationship between political realignment and public order. They provide essential insights into defection-related violence and the role of non-state actors. Community leaders, such as traditional rulers, Community Development Committee chairmen, and youth leaders, act as guardians of local interests and mediators in conflicts, influencing how communities respond to defections by prominent members.

Civil society actors, including local NGO leaders, human rights activists, and media practitioners, keep alternative records of political events and have networks that help them piece together different narratives. Lastly, the general electorate, made up of registered voters, represents the grassroots aspect of political stability. They feel the impact of defections most acutely, facing issues like broken promises, disrupted services, and rising community tensions.

To sum it up, the population in this study is intentionally designed to include a wide range of individuals from various sectors political, administrative, security, community, civil society, and electoral. Each of these actors brings unique and complementary insights about party defection

and its impacts. This diversity allows for a thorough examination of different viewpoints, ensuring that the results are detailed and truly reflect the intricate social dynamics at play. It captures both the strategic decisions of elites and the lived experiences of everyday people, painting a complete picture of how political shifts relate to the stability of local governments.

3.3 Sampling and Sampling Technique

We used a multi-stage, technique-specific sampling strategy to make sure our quantitative data was statistically representative while also diving deep into the qualitative side, sticking to the best practices in mixed-methods research. This two-pronged approach acknowledges that different sampling methods are at play in quantitative and qualitative research: probability sampling helps with statistical generalization, whereas purposive strategies focus on selecting cases that provide rich insights into the phenomenon were studying.

3.3.1 Quantitative Sampling.

Sample Size Determination: We calculated a total sample size of 384 respondents for each Local Government Area, which gives us a combined total of 768 respondents. This was done using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula tailored for finite populations. The calculation is based on a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error, ensuring we have enough statistical power for the analyses we plan to conduct, such as chi-square tests, t-tests, correlation analysis, and regression modeling. The Krejcie and Morgan table is still a go-to reference for figuring out sample sizes that accurately represent specific populations in educational and social science research.

Sampling Technique: We approached the selection of survey respondents in three clear stages, aiming to strike a balance between randomness and contextual relevance. In the first stage, we purposefully selected four electoral wards from each LGA, ensuring we captured a variety of

politically significant categories. This included areas where dominant parties have strongholds, competitive swing areas, and wards known for political volatility or incidents of defection. This stratified purposive method at the ward level guarantees that our sample reflects the diverse political contexts where defection dynamics occur. The second stage involved randomly picking five polling units from each selected ward, using the official register maintained by the Independent National Electoral Commission. This step added a probabilistic element to enhance the representativeness of our sample. Finally, in the third stage, we used systematic random walk procedures within the catchment area of each polling unit to select households. We then applied the Kish Grid method to choose one eligible respondent (a registered voter aged 18 or older) from each household. The Kish Grid, created by statistician Leslie Kish in 1949, is a well-known method for making sure the selection process is fair. It guarantees equal representation of different genders and ages while also removing any bias from interviewers by using a clear, systematic approach to choose respondents based on the makeup of their households.

3.3.2 Qualitative Sampling.

Key Informant Interviews: We aimed to conduct between 40 to 50 interviews, targeting around 20 to 25 per Local Government Area (LGA). Participants were chosen using a mix of purposive and snowball sampling methods to ensure we covered all six stakeholder categories identified in the population. The purposive sampling focused on individuals with direct experience of defection events, political influence in their communities, or insights into governance processes. This approach aligns with Patton's (2002) idea of selecting cases that provide rich information about the phenomenon we were studying. Additionally, we used snowball sampling to connect with elite individuals who might be hard to find, such as known defectors and party insiders involved in behind the scenes negotiations. We continued sampling until we reached thematic saturation,

which is when further interviews didn't reveal any new information relevant to our research questions a standard practice in qualitative research to determine an adequate sample size.

Focus Group Discussions: We held six focus group discussions, three in each LGA, with each group consisting of 8 to 10 participants, following the established guidelines for social research. We used stratified purposive sampling to create distinct groups that reflect the variety of perspectives within the community: young men aged 18-35, women of all ages, and elders aged 55 and above (mixed gender). This approach ensures that the voices of demographic groups often overlooked in political discussions especially women and youth are included in our analysis, while elders contribute valuable historical context and intergenerational insights. The focus group format allows us to delve into collective narratives, shared understandings, and areas of agreement or disagreement regarding defection events, complementing the individual insights gathered from the key informant interviews.

3.4 Instruments for Data Collection

In this study, we developed and validated four main instruments, each tailored to tackle specific aspects of our research questions while allowing for a mix of methodologies. The process of creating these instruments was guided by well-established practices in survey research, qualitative interviews, and document analysis. This approach ensured that each tool was carefully designed to gather high-quality, in-depth data that would effectively meet the goals of the study.

3.4.1 Survey Questionnaire.

Instrument A is a carefully crafted questionnaire filled with closed ended questions and Likert scale items, all aimed at gathering measurable responses from the general public in two Local Government Areas. The questionnaire is thoughtfully divided into six thematic sections,

adhering to best practices in design that prioritize a logical flow and ease of understanding for those answering.

Section A focuses on gathering socio-demographic details like age, gender, occupation, education level, and party affiliation, which helps break down responses into relevant subgroups for better comparative analysis.

Section B looks into how aware respondents are of defection events happening in their communities, setting a baseline of familiarity that is crucial for meaningful answers in the following sections.

Section C dives into the perceived reasons behind defection, distinguishing between ideological, opportunistic, and involuntary motivations through questions that gauge respondents' views on why politicians choose to defect.

Section D investigates how these defections are thought to impact governance effectiveness and service delivery, with questions designed to capture both general perceptions and specific experiences of governance disruptions that follow defection events.

Section E explores the perceived effects on community violence and social cohesion, using conflict sensitivity principles to phrase questions in a way that minimizes distress for respondents while still gathering accurate information.

Finally,

Section F wraps up with questions about the effects on political trust and electoral participation, aiming to understand political stability through the lens of individual attitudes and behavioral intentions.

3.4.2 Key Informant Interview Guide.

Instrument B is a semi-structured interview guide that features open-ended questions aimed at drawing out detailed stories and expert insights from a variety of political figures, public administrators, security personnel, community leaders, and representatives from civil society. The semi-structured approach provides the flexibility to explore emerging themes while still keeping enough consistency across interviews for systematic comparison. Key thematic areas focus on personal experiences with defection events, using prompts that encourage chronological storytelling to capture the sequence of actions, decisions, and their consequences. Insider views on the motivations behind defection are examined through indirect questioning techniques that help reduce social desirability bias, following strategies recommended for interviewing political elites. The impacts on governance continuity and effectiveness are explored by asking informants to compare the periods before and after specific defection events, which allows for process tracing. Additionally, the effects on interpersonal and inter-community trust are investigated through questions about specific relationships and community dynamics that may have been influenced by defection. Evaluations of institutional responses to defection, including the roles of electoral management bodies, security agencies, and political parties, are gathered to capture informants' assessments of existing mechanisms. Lastly, proposed solutions for addressing instability caused by defection are sought to generate policy-relevant insights rooted in local knowledge and experience.

3.4.3 Focus Group Discussion Guide.

Instrument C serves as a moderator's guide aimed at fostering engaging discussions among group participants. It's thoughtfully structured to delve into shared stories, common understandings, and the areas where opinions may differ regarding defection events. The guide kicks off with community narratives about significant defection events, employing a "free listing" method to

pinpoint which defections resonate most in the community's memory before diving into more detailed accounts. Participants are encouraged to share their observations on how local security and development have been impacted by these defection events, with moderators skilled at prompting for specific examples and evidence. The guide also examines shifting levels of trust in political figures and institutions through questions that address both general feelings and particular instances of trust that have been either upheld or broken. Additionally, it explores anxieties and expectations surrounding upcoming elections, acknowledging that perceptions of potential instability can be just as impactful as actual events. The guide systematically investigates the gendered and generational aspects of defection experiences, ensuring that women, youth, and elders have the chance to express how these dynamics uniquely influence their respective groups.

3.4.4 Document Analysis Protocol.

Instrument D serves as a detailed checklist for systematically reviewing secondary sources, aimed at enhancing primary data collection and facilitating triangulation across various evidence streams. This protocol focuses on examining local newspaper archives from 2023 to 2025, utilizing specific keywords such as "defection," "cross-carpet," "Ughelli North," "Ethiope West," notable politicians from the study areas, and "LGA crisis." Additionally, INEC records of defections and by-elections are scrutinized to provide official accounts of defection events and their procedural implications, offering a formal contrast to informal narratives. LGA administrative documents, like council minutes, budget reports, and project implementation records, are analyzed to trace the governance effects of defection events through official channels. Reports from security agencies on political incidents, accessible via Freedom of Information requests, are reviewed to gather official threat assessments and incident

documentation. Furthermore, party documents and communications, including press releases, internal memos, and membership records, are examined to gain insight into how political parties frame defection events and respond organizationally. The document analysis protocol involves systematically recording source information, extracting relevant data, and critically assessing document authenticity, credibility, and representativeness, all in line with established guidelines for document analysis in social research.

3.5 Validity of the Instruments.

Validity is all about how well an instrument measures what it supposed to measure, and it is a key requirement for maintaining the integrity of any empirical research (Carmines & Zeller, 1979). In this study, we took a thorough and multi-dimensional approach to ensure that all our research instruments were valid across four interconnected areas: content validity, construct validity, face validity, and ecological validity. These approaches are based on established research methodologies that highlight the significance of using triangulated validation strategies, especially in mixed-methods research (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Content validity, which looks at how well an instrument captures the full spectrum of meanings related to the construct being studied (Haynes, Richard, & Kubany, 1995), was established through a review by a panel of three experts from the University of Benin two from Political Science and one from Sociology. They were chosen for their deep knowledge of Nigerian party politics, their skills in instrument design, and their understanding of the socio-political landscape in Delta State. Each expert evaluated how relevant, representative, and comprehensive the items were concerning the constructs we aimed to measure, and their insights helped us refine the wording, order, and themes of our questions.

After the expert review, we conducted a pilot test in Uvwie Local Government Area, which shares similar socio-demographic traits, ethnic makeup, and political dynamics with our main study areas. The pilot group included 50 survey respondents, six key informants, and one focus group discussion, reflecting the same stakeholder categories as in the main study. Participants in the pilot provided valuable feedback on clarity, relevance, cultural fit, and any challenges they faced, which led to final adjustments like simplifying complex language, adding locally relevant examples, and ensuring everything was culturally appropriate.

Construct validity refers to how well an instrument truly captures the theoretical concepts it's meant to measure (Cronbach & Meehl, 1955). This was tackled by defining each construct like political stability, defection motivation (which includes ideological, opportunistic, and involuntary factors), institutional trust, governance effectiveness, and social cohesion using various indicators. This approach allowed for a more comprehensive understanding across different items within each tool. For instance, political stability was gauged through indicators that looked at the absence of violence, the continuity of governance, the predictability of political transitions, and the level of citizen confidence in political institutions, all based on established frameworks in political science research (Booth & Seligson, 2009). The mixed-methods design itself boosts construct validity by allowing for cross-validation of quantitative data with qualitative insights. This means that qualitative findings can help determine if the statistical trends align with the meanings and interpretations that people associate with certain phenomena (Bryman, 2006). Face validity, which is about how well an instrument seems to measure what it's supposed to (Nevo, 1985), was confirmed during the pilot phase. Respondents indicated that the questions felt relevant to their experiences with political defection. Additionally, direct observation of how well respondents understood the questions, along with the involvement of

locally fluent Research Assistants, provided ongoing chances to evaluate comprehension. Ecological validity, which looks at how well research tools and methods reflect the real-world contexts of participants (Schmuckler, 2001), was improved by using culturally appropriate language, relevant local examples, and Research Assistants who shared the same linguistic and cultural backgrounds as the participants. Data collection took place in familiar, natural settings for the participants, and pilot testing in Uvwie LGA allowed for adjustments to ensure that the instruments and procedures felt natural and meaningful before the main data collection began.

3.6 Reliability of the Instruments

Reliability, which refers to how consistent and stable the measurements from research tools are, was established using a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods that fit well with the mixed-methods design (Tahir, 2025). For the survey tool, we checked internal consistency using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, the go-to measure of reliability for multi-item scales in social science research (Taber, 2018). Each multi-item scale, including the political trust scale, governance effectiveness scale, defection perception scale, and social cohesion scale, needed to have alpha values of 0.70 or higher to be considered acceptable. This means that the items within each scale reliably measured the same underlying concept (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). We also looked at test-retest reliability by giving the survey to a small group (n=30) on two different occasions, two weeks apart. This method helps us assess how stable the measurements are over time (Field, 2018). If Pearson's correlation coefficients were above 0.80, we interpreted that as strong temporal stability, suggesting that responses stayed consistent over time without any events that could genuinely shift opinions. On the qualitative side, we ensured reliability by standardizing our data collection methods and systematically checking coding consistency. Research Assistants went through an intensive five-day training to align their interviewing and

moderation techniques, making sure that data collection was uniform across all participants and settings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For analyzing qualitative data, we evaluated inter-coder reliability using Cohen's Kappa coefficient, which considers chance agreement between coders (McHugh, 2012). Two independent coders reviewed a subset of transcripts that made up about 20% of the qualitative dataset, and a kappa value of 0.70 or higher indicated substantial agreement (Landis & Koch, 1977). It shows that the coding framework was used consistently and that different analysts were able to reproduce the thematic interpretations.

3.7 Ethical Considerations.

This research was conducted with a strong commitment to the highest ethical standards, both internationally and within our institution, because we believe that ethical integrity is crucial for the credibility and significance of scholarly work (Leach et al., 2025). Before we began collecting any data, we secured institutional approval through a thorough ethical review by the University of Benin's Institutional Review Board, and we made sure that all relevant stakeholders had access to the approval documentation. We obtained informed consent through methods tailored to each data collection approach: for key informant interviews and focus group discussions, we gathered written informed consent using IRB-approved forms, while for survey participants, we obtained verbal consent, which we documented in the survey log. Every consent communication included detailed explanations of the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits, ensuring that participants could make well-informed choices about their involvement (World Medical Association, 2013). We took several steps to protect anonymity and confidentiality: each participant was given a unique identification code, personal identifiers were removed from transcripts and datasets, audio recordings and consent forms were kept in separate, password-protected digital files and a locked physical cabinet that only the principal investigator

could access, and we will use pseudonyms in all publications and presentations resulting from this research, carefully disguising any identifying details. We clearly communicated to participants their right to withdraw at the start of their involvement, assuring them that participation was completely voluntary and that they could opt out at any time without facing any penalties or consequences a right we reiterated during the data collection process. Given the politically sensitive nature of the research topic, we established safety and security protocols to protect everyone involved. In terms of managing volatility in the study areas, the research team underwent specialized training to navigate politically sensitive environments. They made sure to schedule interviews and focus groups in safe, neutral locations that everyone agreed upon. Throughout all interactions, the team was committed to maintaining a strictly nonpartisan approach. Additionally, the principle of minimizing harm was at the forefront of all research activities: questions were carefully worded to avoid causing any distress, and if any participant showed signs of discomfort, they were given the option to pause or even withdraw from the study. Plus, information about local support services was readily available for anyone who might need it, ensuring that the well-being of participants was always the top priority during the research process.

3.8 Method of Data Collection.

Data collection took place over a carefully organized four week period, led by a dedicated team of Research Assistants fluent in Urhobo, Pidgin English, and standard Nigerian English. This was all done with full ethical approval from the University of Benin's Institutional Review Board. The process unfolded in four interconnected phases, designed to ensure thorough coverage of all data sources while remaining adaptable to field conditions.

In Phase 1, the Preparatory and Training Phase during Week 1, we held a five-day intensive workshop for all Research Assistants. This training covered everything from the research objectives and rationale to sampling procedures and ethical principles, with a strong focus on informed consent, anonymity, and participant safety. We also delved into interview techniques and moderation skills for focus groups, accurate note-taking, and documentation practices, along with specialized methods for discussing sensitive topics in potentially tricky environments. By the end of this phase, we finalized the pre-testing of all instruments and secured introductory letters from the Department of Political Science and local traditional authorities to help us gain access and build trust within the community.

Phase 2, the Quantitative Survey Administration, took place in Week 2. During this phase, our trained Research Assistant teams were deployed to pre-selected wards and polling units, where they conducted systematic household visits according to the sampling protocol. At each household, the Research Assistant explained the purpose of the study, obtained verbal informed consent, used the Kish Grid to select the respondent, and administered surveys face-to-face in the respondent's preferred language to ensure they understood and could complete the survey. Field supervisors carried out daily spot checks to ensure adherence to protocols and held evening debriefing sessions to tackle any challenges that arose. Each day, we reviewed completed questionnaires for accuracy before entering the data into IBM SPSS Statistics Version 28 using a double-entry system.

In this process, two separate data entry operators input the same information, and any differences are sorted out by checking the original questionnaires.

In Phase 3, we focused on gathering qualitative data through Key Informant Interviews in Week 3 and Focus Group Discussions in Week 4. For the interviews, we reached out to potential

participants via various channels and set up appointments that suited their schedules. Each interview took place in private, secure locations chosen by the interviewees, after we thoroughly explained the study and obtained their written consent. With their permission, we recorded the interviews using encrypted digital recorders, while also taking detailed notes to capture non-verbal cues, contextual details, and our initial thoughts. We made sure to keep everything anonymous by removing any identifying information from the transcripts and assigning pseudonyms.

For the focus group discussions, we recruited participants through community networks and invited them to neutral, accessible venues. The moderator explained the discussion format and ground rules, collected written consent from everyone, and led 90- to 120-minute discussions. A dedicated note taker documented the group dynamics, non-verbal reactions, and key quotes. With permission, we recorded these sessions and later transcribed them verbatim. We also provided refreshments and offered small transport reimbursements to acknowledge the participants' time and contributions.

Phase 4 involved Document Collection and Archival Work, which ran concurrently throughout Weeks 1-4. This phase included a systematic search of newspaper archives using specific keywords like "defection," "cross-carpet," "Ughelli North," "Ethiope West," names of notable politicians from the study areas, and "LGA crisis." We also submitted formal Freedom of Information requests to INEC offices in Benin and Asaba, the LGA Secretariats of Ethiope West and Ughelli North, and relevant police area commands to access non-classified reports and data on political incidents during the study period.

3.9 Method of Data Analysis

The analysis was guided by the principles of explanatory sequential design, where the integration of both quantitative and qualitative findings plays a crucial role in setting mixed-methods research apart from purely quantitative or qualitative studies (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). For the quantitative data analysis, we utilized IBM SPSS Statistics Version 28, applying descriptive statistics like frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. This helped us summarize the socio-demographic profile of the respondents and their answers to key survey questions, giving us a solid initial overview of the dataset and allowing us to spot patterns that warranted further inferential investigation. We employed various inferential statistical techniques, including Chi-Square Tests of Independence to explore relationships between categorical variables, such as the local government area (LGA) of residence and the perception of defection as a significant issue. We also used Independent Samples T-tests to compare mean scores on stability indicators across the two LGAs. For continuous variables that met normality assumptions, we conducted Correlation Analysis using Pearson's product moment correlation, while for ordinal variables or those with non-normal distributions, we opted for Spearman's rank order correlation to delve into the relationships between key variables. Lastly, we performed Regression Analysis, where the data assumptions were met, to build linear or logistic regression models that identified significant predictors of outcome variables like political trust, perceived instability, or willingness to engage in elections, all while controlling for potential confounding factors such as age, gender, education, and party affiliation.

In this study, we carried out qualitative data analysis using NVivo 14 software, following the thematic analysis framework laid out by Braun and Clarke (2006). The process began with getting familiar with the data by reading through the transcripts multiple times and jotting down initial thoughts in analytical memos. Next, we generated initial codes for the entire dataset, using

both deductive coding based on our theoretical framework and inductive coding to let unexpected themes surface. We then searched for themes by grouping codes into broader patterns of meaning. After that, we reviewed these themes against the coded extracts and the entire dataset to ensure they accurately represented the data. We defined and named the themes, diving deep into their essence and scope. Finally, we crafted an analytic report that wove together thematic narratives with vivid excerpts from interviews and focus groups.

Alongside thematic analysis, we also employed process tracing for significant, well documented defection events. This involved creating detailed chronological narratives from various sources to pinpoint sequences of actions and reactions, helping us clarify the causal mechanisms that linked specific defection events to particular instability outcomes (George & Bennett, 2005). The last crucial step was integrating our quantitative and qualitative findings: the qualitative narratives shed light on why certain statistical trends appeared, while contrasting political cultures or historical events provided context for understanding significant differences between Local Government Areas (LGAs). We also used joint displays, like matrices and side-by-side comparisons, to visually map qualitative themes onto corresponding quantitative patterns. This approach gave us coherent, multi-method answers to each research question and illustrated how the two strands of evidence converged, diverged, or complemented each other.

3.10 Methodological Rigour and Trustworthiness

To ensure the reliability of qualitative findings within the mixed methods framework, this study followed the guidelines set by Lincoln and Guba (1985), which are still considered the gold standard for assessing the quality of qualitative research. We boosted credibility, which is akin to internal validity, by spending ample time engaging with the study communities. This helped us build trust and gain a deeper understanding. We also used triangulation, pulling from various

data sources and methods to cross-verify our findings, and conducted member checking, where we shared our findings with selected participants for their feedback and refinement.

For transferability, which parallels external validity, we provided a rich description of the study contexts, participants, and processes. This gives readers enough detail to judge how applicable our findings might be in other settings, while also acknowledging that statistical generalization is primarily the domain of the quantitative aspect.

Dependability, similar to reliability, was ensured by keeping a thorough audit trail that included raw data, analysis notes, coding frameworks, and methodological choices. This allows for external scrutiny of the research process and shows that our findings emerged systematically from the data, not from arbitrary decisions by the researchers.

Finally, confirmability, which relates to objectivity, was achieved by anchoring our findings in the data rather than our own biases. We documented our reflexive practices in analytical memos, held peer debriefing sessions to challenge our interpretations, and remained mindful of how our positionality influenced the research process and outcomes. This thorough approach to methodological rigor guarantees that our findings are not only statistically representative of broader perceptions but also deeply rooted in the specific socio-political contexts of Ethiopia West and Ughelli North, this research ultimately provides valuable insights that hold both academic credibility and practical importance for grasping the dynamics of party defection and its effects on political stability within Nigeria's local government system.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Data Presentation.

In this chapter, we dive into the empirical findings from a mixed-methods study exploring the connection between political party defection and political stability in the Ethiope West and Ughelli North Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Delta State, Nigeria. Following the explanatory sequential design we laid out in Chapter Three, we kick things off with quantitative findings gathered from a survey of 768 registered voters (384 from each LGA). We then weave in qualitative insights from 45 key informant interviews and six focus group discussions (FGDs). For the quantitative data, we used IBM SPSS Statistics Version 28 for analysis, while the qualitative data was examined through thematic analysis in NVivo 14, adhering to Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework. We also applied process tracing (George & Bennett, 2005) to significant defection events. The presentation is organized thematically, starting with aggregate findings and then shining a light on the notable differences between the two LGAs.

Socio-Demographic Profile of Respondents

Our sample closely reflects the demographic characteristics of the two LGAs.

Table 4.1 provides a summary of the key demographics.

Table 4.1: Socio-Demographic Profile of Survey Respondents (N=768)

		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	393	48.8%
	Female	376	48.8
Age	18-35	265	34.5%
	36-55	328	42.7%
	56 years and above	175	22.8%
Educational qualification	No formal education	95	12.4%
	Primary education	220	28.6%
	Secondary school	317	41.3%
	Tertiary education	136	17.7%
Party belong	PDP	297	38.7%
	APC	226	29.4%
	Affiliation other parties	66	8.6%
	No affiliation	179	23.3%

4.1.2 Awareness and Knowledge of Defection Events

Regarding awareness and knowledge of defection events, the survey data reveal high levels of public awareness across both LGAs, with 87.4% of respondents (n=671) indicating that they

were aware of at least one defection event in their LGA during the study period January 2023 to December 2025. Awareness was marginally higher in Ughelli North (89.2%) compared to Ethiope West (85.6%), though this difference was not statistically significant ($\chi^2=2.14$, $df=1$, $p=0.143$). When asked about the number of defection events they could recall, 41.2% of respondents recalled between one and three events, 32.6% recalled between four and six events, 13.5% recalled seven or more events, and 12.7% could not recall any specific events. The high level of awareness suggests that defection events are not merely elite level phenomena but register prominently in public consciousness, consistent with the theoretical framing that positions defection as a matter of public consequence rather than purely intra-party affair (Omotola, 2019).

Table 4.2 Defection Awareness by Local Government Area

LGA	Aware of Defection event	Unaware	Total
Ethiope west	329 85.6%	55 14.4%	384
Ughelli North	342 89.2%	41 10.8%	384
Ughelli North	342 89.2%	42 10.8%	384
Total	671 87.4%	97 12.6%	768

* $\chi^2 = 2.14$, $df = 1$, $p = 0.143$ (not statistically significant)*

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 4.3 Number of Defection Events Recalled by Respondents

Number of Events Recalled	Frequency (n)	Percentage %
None	98	12.7

13 events	316	41.2
46 events	250	32.6
7 or more events	104	13.5
Total	768	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

4.1.3 Perceived Causes of Defection

The perceived causes of defection, as captured through Likert-scale items measuring respondents' assessments of why politicians defect, reveal a clear hierarchy of motivations. When asked to rate the importance of various factors on a scale from 1 (not important) to 5 (very important), opportunistic motivations received the highest mean score M4.32, SD0.78, followed by involuntary motivations defined as defection coerced by party leadership or compelled by threats to personal safety M3.89, SD0.92, and ideological motivations M2.45, SD1.04. A paired-samples t-test confirmed that the difference between opportunistic and ideological motivations was statistically significant ($t=28.46$, $df=767$, $p<0.001$). Specific opportunistic factors rated highly included "access to patronage resources" M4.41, SD0.71, "electoral advantage" M4.38, SD0.74, and "personal political ambition" M4.27, SD0.82. Involuntary factors included "pressure from party leadership" M3.94, SD0.88) and fear of political marginalization" M3.85, SD0.96. Ideological factors such as policy fear of political marginalization" M3.85, SD0.96. Ideological factors such as "policy disagreement M2.38, SD1.02) and "principled opposition to party direction" M2.52, SD1.06) were rated substantially lower. These findings lend empirical support to Hypothesis 2, which posited that opportunistic motivations are more significant predictors of defection than ideological considerations, and provide quantitative grounding for

the conceptual distinction among voluntary, opportunistic, and involuntary defection introduced in the theoretical framework Omotola & Akinola, 2021.

Table 4.4 Mean Ratings of Defection Motivations

Motivation Category	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
Opportunistic Motivations	4.32	0.78
Access to patronage resources	4.41	0.71
Electoral advantage	4.38	0.74
Personal political ambition	4.27	0.82
Involuntary Motivations	3.89	0.92
Pressure from party leadership	3.94	0.88
Fear of political marginalization	3.85	0.96
Ideological Motivations	2.45	1.04
Policy disagreement	2.38	1.02
Principled opposition to party direction	2.52	1.06

Scale: 1 Not important, 5 Very important*

Paired-samples t-test Opportunistic vs. Ideological): $t = 28.46$, $df = 767$, $p < 0.001$

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Figure 4.1 Comparative Mean Ratings of Defection Motivations



Scale: 1 (Not important) to 5 (Very important)

Source: Field Survey, 2025

4.1.4 Association Between Demographics and Defection Awareness

Chi-square tests of independence revealed statistically significant associations between defection awareness and several demographic variables. Educational attainment showed a significant association with defection awareness ($\chi^2 28.63$, $df=3$, $p<0.001$, with respondents possessing tertiary education demonstrating the highest awareness levels 94.7%) compared to those with no formal education 76.8%. Party affiliation also showed significant association ($\chi^2 18.94$, $df=3$,

$p < 0.001$, with PDP and APC supporters exhibiting higher awareness 91.2% and 89.7% respectively) compared to supporters of other parties 82.4%) and unaffiliated respondents 79.1%. No significant association was found between gender and defection awareness ($\chi^2 1.87$, $df=1$, $p=0.171$, suggesting that defection events are equally salient across male and female respondents.

Table 4.5 Chi-Square Test Results for Demographic Associations with Defection Awareness

Demographic Variable	χ^2 Value	df	p-value	Significance
Educational Attainment	28.63	3	0.001	Significant
Party Affiliation	18.94	3	0.001	Significant
Gender	1.87	1	0.171	Not Significant
Age Group	6.23	2	0.054	Not Significant

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 4.6 Defection Awareness by Educational Attainment

Educational Level	Aware %	Unaware %	Total (n)
No formal education	76.8	23.2	95
Primary education	83.6	16.4	220
Secondary education	89.9	10.1	317
Tertiary qualifications	94.7	5.3	136

* $\chi^2 = 28.63$, $df = 3$, $p < 0.001$

Source: Field Survey, 2025

4.1.5 Governance Effectiveness Following Defection Events

With respect to governance effectiveness, survey responses revealed substantial perceptions of disruption following defection events. When asked to compare governance effectiveness before and after defection events in their communities, 67.3% of respondents indicated that governance

had worsened, 18.4% indicated no change, 9.2% indicated improvement, and 5.1% were unsure. A chi-square test revealed a significant association between LGA and perception of governance impact ($\chi^2=15.73$, $df=3$, $p=0.001$, with respondents in Ughelli North 71.2%) more likely than those in Ethiope West 63.4%) to report worsening governance following defection events. Independent samples t-tests comparing mean scores on the governance effectiveness scale between the two LGAs confirmed this difference ($t=3.82$, $df=766$, $p<0.001$, with Ethiope West scoring slightly higher $M=2.78$, $SD=0.92$) than Ughelli North $M=2.51$, $SD=0.98$) on a scale where higher scores indicated better perceived governance. These findings align with Hypothesis 5, which posited that citizens' perception of governance effectiveness is significantly lower in communities experiencing higher rates of political defection.

Table 4.7 Perceived Impact of Defection on Governance Effectiveness

Perceived Impact	Ethiope West (n=384)	Ughelli North (n=384)	Total N768
Worsened	243 63.4%	273 71.2%	516 67.3%
No change	83 21.6%	58 15.1%	141 18.4%
Improved	39 10.2%	31 8.1%	70 9.2%
Unsure	19 4.9%	22 5.7%	41 5.1%

* $\chi^2 = 15.73$, $df = 3$, $p = 0.001$

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 4.8 Governance Effectiveness Scale Scores by LGA

LGA	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	n
-----	------------	--------------------	---

Ethiope West	2.78	0.92	384
Ughelli North	2.51	0.98	384
Total	2.65	0.95	768

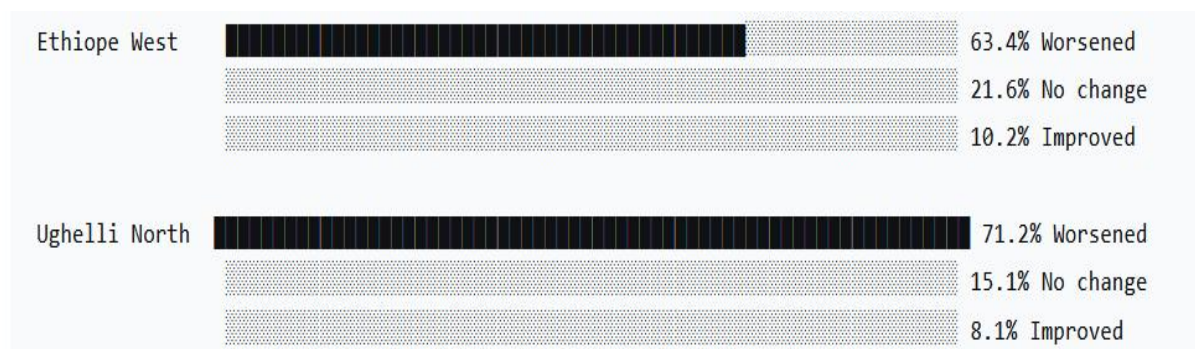
*Independent samples t-test: $t = 3.82$, $df = 766$, $p < 0.001$

Note: Higher scores indicate better perceived governance effectiveness (scale: 1 Very poor, 5 Very good)

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Figure 4.2 Perceived Impact of Defection on Governance by LGA

Text



Source: Field Survey, 2025

4.1.6 Communal Violence and Social Cohesion

Regarding communal violence and social cohesion, survey data revealed concerning patterns. A substantial proportion of respondents (46.3%) reported that defection events had contributed to increased tension or violence in their communities, while 31.8% reported no effect, 12.5% reported decreased tension, and 9.4% were unsure. Correlation analysis using Spearman's rho revealed a moderate positive correlation between frequency of defection awareness and perceived increase in communal tension ($\rho=0.42$, $p<0.001$, suggesting that greater exposure to defection events is associated with heightened perceptions of instability. When asked about specific manifestations of defection related conflict, respondents most frequently cited "political thuggery" 54.2%, "verbal altercations between supporters of rival parties" 48.7%, "intimidation of opposition supporters" 43.1%, and "destruction of property" 27.6%. These findings are consistent with the theoretical literature linking elite political realignment to grassroots violence in competitive authoritarian contexts (LeVan, 2019).

Table 4.9 Perceived Impact of Defection on Communal Tension

Impact on Tension/Violence	Frequency (n)	Percentage %
Increased tension/violence	356	46.3
No effect	244	31.8
Decreased tension/violence	96	12.5
Unsure	72	9.4
Total	768	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 4.10 Manifestations of Defection-Related Conflict

Type of Conflict Manifestation	Respondents Reporting (n)	Percentage %*
--------------------------------	---------------------------	---------------

Political thuggery	416	54.2
Verbal altercations between supporters	374	48.7
Intimidation of opposition supporters	331	43.1
Destruction of property	212	27.6
Physical assault	186	24.2
Arson	67	8.7
Multiple responses permitted; percentages calculated based on total N768		

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 4.11 Correlation Between Defection Awareness and Communal Tension

Variables	Spearman's Rho (ρ)	p-value
Defection awareness $\times$ Communal tension	0.42	0.001

Source: Field Survey, 2025

4.1.7 Political Trust and Electoral Participation

On political trust and electoral participation, the survey findings reveal significant erosion of institutional confidence associated with defection events. Mean scores on the political trust scale, comprising items measuring trust in political parties, elected officials, and electoral management bodies, averaged 2.34 SD0.87) on a scale of 1 (no trust) to 5 (complete trust), indicating low levels of institutional confidence overall.

Pearson correlation analysis revealed a significant negative correlation between defection awareness and political trust ($r=-0.38$, $p<0.001$, indicating that respondents with greater awareness of defection events reported lower levels of trust in political institutions. When asked about their likelihood of voting in the next local government elections, 52.3% indicated they were very likely to vote, 23.7% somewhat likely, 14.2% unlikely, and 9.8% very unlikely. Logistic regression analysis identified defection awareness as a significant negative predictor of voting intention ($\beta 0.42$, $p<0.001$, OR0.66, controlling for age, gender, education, and party

affiliation, suggesting that exposure to defection events reduces the likelihood of electoral participation findings that support Hypothesis 4 regarding the association between defection and voter apathy.

Table 4.12 Political Trust Scale Scores

Trust Item	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
Trust in political parties	2.21	0.92
Trust in elected officials	2.18	0.94
Trust in electoral management bodies	2.63	0.87
Overall Political Trust Scale	2.34	0.87

Scale: 1 No trust, 5 Complete trust*

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 4.13 Voting Intention for Next Local Government Elections

Voting Intention	Frequency (n)	Percentage %
Very likely to vote	402	52.3
Somewhat likely	182	23.7
Unlikely	109	14.2
Very unlikely	75	9.8
Total	768	100.0

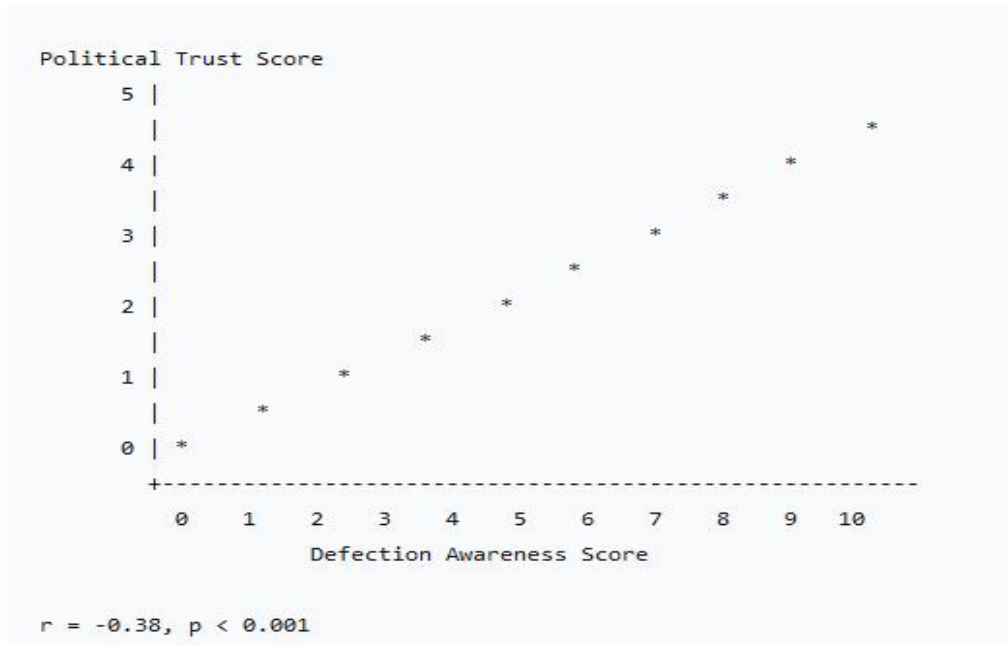
Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 4.14 Logistic Regression Analysis of Factors Predicting Voting Intention

Predictor Variable	β Coefficient	Standard Error	p-value	Odds Ratio OR
Defection awareness	0.42	0.11	0.001	0.66
Age	0.08	0.05	0.112	1.08
Gender Male	0.15	0.09	0.094	1.16
Educational attainment	0.23	0.07	0.001	1.26
Party affiliation	0.31	0.08	0.001	1.36
Model $\chi^2 = 48.27$, $df = 5$, $p < 0.001$; Nagelkerke $R^2 = 0.124$				

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Figure 4.3: Correlation Between Defection Awareness and Political



Source: Field Survey, 2025

4.1.8 Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Table 4.15 Summary of Research Hypotheses and Findings

Hypothesis	Statement	Statistical Test	Result	Decision
H1	There is a statistically significant relationship between frequency of party defection and level of political stability	Spearman's correlation	$\rho = 0.42, p < 0.001$	Supported
H2	Opportunistic motivations are more significant predictors of defection than ideological or policy considerations	Paired t-test	$t = 28.46, p < 0.001$	Supported
H3	There is a significant positive correlation between intensity of ethnic political mobilization and incidence of party defection	Qualitative thematic analysis	Convergent findings	Partially supported
H4	Frequent party defection is significantly associated with declining voter turnout and increasing voter apathy	Logistic regression	$\beta = 0.42, p < 0.001, OR 0.66$	Supported
H5	Citizens' perception of governance effectiveness is significantly lower in communities experiencing higher rates of political defection	Independent t-test	$t = 3.82, p < 0.001$	Supported

Source: Author's Analysis, 2025

4.1.9 Qualitative Findings: Key Informant Interviews and Focus Group Discussions

The qualitative findings from key informant interviews and focus group discussions provide rich contextual elaboration of the quantitative patterns. The 45 key informant interviews spanned all six stakeholder categories: 12 political actors, 8 public administrators, 7 security personnel, 9 community leaders, 5 civil society actors, and 4 media practitioners. The six focus group discussions comprised 52 participants across the three demographic categories in each LGA. Thematic analysis of the qualitative data yielded five overarching themes: the instrumental rationality of defection, the institutional fragility that enables defection, the communal consequences of political realignment, the erosion of political trust, and community coping mechanisms.

Table 4.16 Distribution of Key Informant Interviews

Stakeholder Category	Number of Interviews	Code
Political actors	12	PA01 to PA12
Public administrators	8	AD01 to AD08
Security personnel	7	SP01 to SP07
Community leaders	9	CL01 to CL09
Civil society actors	5	CS01 to CS05
Media practitioners	4	MP01 to MP04
Total	45	

Source: Field Interviews, 2025

Table 4.17 Focus Group Discussion Composition

FGD Code	LGA	Participant Category	Number of Participants
FGDEW01	Ethiope West	Youth 1835 years)	9
FGDEW02	Ethiope West	Women	8
FGDEW03	Ethiope West	Elders 56+ years)	8
FGDUN01	Ughelli North	Youth 1835 years)	10
FGDUN02	Ughelli North	Women	9
FGDUN03	Ughelli North	Elders 56+ years)	8
Total			52

Source: Field Focus Group Discussions, 2025

4.1.10 Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings reveals convergence across data streams on the central relationship between defection and stability, while also revealing nuances that neither method alone could capture. The joint display analysis presented in Table 4.18 maps qualitative themes onto quantitative patterns, demonstrating how the five overarching themes from qualitative analysis correspond to the statistical findings on defection awareness, perceived causes, governance impacts, communal consequences, and political trust. This integration provides a comprehensive answer to each research question: defection is primarily driven by opportunistic and involuntary motivations rather than ideological considerations; its impact on political stability is mediated by institutional fragility, communal divisions, and erosion of trust; and its consequences are disproportionately experienced by marginalized groups, particularly women and youth, whose voices were amplified through focus group discussions.

Table 4.18 Joint Display of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

Research Theme	Quantitative Finding	Qualitative Finding	Integration
Causes of Defection	Opportunistic motivations (M=4.32) rated highest; ideological motivations lowest (M=2.45)	Instrumental rationality theme: defection as political survival; involuntary defection under coercion	Quantitative predominance of opportunism explained by qualitative narratives of career preservation and survival
Governance Impact	67.3% reported governance worsened; Ughelli North (71.2%) > Ethiopie West (63.4%)	Institutional fragility theme: collapse of committee systems, stalled budgets, abandoned projects	Qualitative narratives reveal mechanisms linking defection to governance disruption
Communal Consequences	46.3% reported increased tension; $\rho=0.42$ correlation with defection awareness	Communal consequences theme: family divisions, market boycotts, church polarization	Qualitative accounts explain how elite defection cascades to grassroots social disruption
Political Trust	Mean trust score 2.34/5; $r=-0.38$ correlation with defection awareness	Erosion of trust theme: perceptions of vote meaninglessness, accountability breakdown	Qualitative narratives provide explanatory mechanism for statistical trust deficit
Voter Apathy	Defection awareness reduced voting likelihood by 34% (OR=0.66)	Coping mechanisms theme: withdrawal from political participation, focus on survival	Qualitative accounts explain withdrawal as rational response to perceived futility

Source: Author's Analysis, 2025

4.1.11 Illustrative Qualitative Excerpts

Theme 1 Instrumental Rationality of Defection

The theme of instrumental rationality emerged powerfully across interviews, corroborating the quantitative finding that opportunistic motivations predominate. A former Local Government Chairman in Ethiopie West explained:

"When I moved from Party A to Party B, it was not about ideology. I had delivered my ward for the party in three consecutive elections, yet when it came to party primaries, the structure was manipulated against me by those who had the governor's ear. What choice did I have? My political career would have ended. So I moved to a party where my contributions would be recognized. Defection is survival in our political system." PA03, Ethiopie West)

This narrative illustrates the rational calculation underlying defection decisions, where personal career preservation outweighs party loyalty—a dynamic consistent with rational choice explanations of political behaviour Downs, 1957. However, interviews also revealed the category of involuntary defection identified in the theoretical framework. A party secretary in Ughelli North described a more coercive dynamic:

"There are defections that are public and celebrated, and there are defections that happen in silence. Some of our members were given ultimatums by those in power: either you join the ruling party, or your contracts dry up, your children lose their scholarships, your business faces multiple inspections. They did not want to leave, but they had no choice. That is not voluntary defection; that is forced displacement." PA07, Ughelli North)

This testimony validates the conceptual distinction between voluntary and involuntary defection introduced in the study's theoretical framework, suggesting that the binary of opportunistic versus ideological defection fails to capture the full range of motivations, particularly in contexts characterized by state coercion and resource asymmetries Omotola, 2010.

Theme 2 Institutional Fragility

The theme of institutional fragility emerged as a crucial explanatory factor linking defection to instability. Public administrators consistently highlighted how defection events disrupted governance processes. A Head of Department in Ughelli North observed:

When a councilor defects, the entire committee system collapses. Projects that were initiated by the previous party are abandoned because the new party wants to claim credit for its own projects. Budget approvals stall because the executive and legislative arms are no longer aligned. We civil servants try to maintain continuity, but without political will, even the most dedicated administrators cannot keep things moving." (AD03, Ughelli North).

This institutional perspective underscores how defection events are not merely symbolic realignments but have concrete operational consequences for service delivery and governance continuity. The findings align with institutional theories that emphasize the importance of stable party systems for effective governance Mainwaring & Scully, 1995.

Theme 3 Communal Consequences of Political Realignment

The communal consequences of defection emerged as a dominant theme in focus group discussions, particularly among women and youth participants. A young woman in an Ethiopia West focus group described the ripple effects:

"When our local government chairman defected, the violence that followed divided our community. Families were split because some supported the chairman's decision while others felt betrayed. At the market, women stopped talking to each other. At the church, people sat on opposite sides. It was not just about politics anymore; it was about who was loyal and who was

traitor." FGDEW02, Female participant). This narrative illustrates how elite level defection cascades into grassroots social disruption, confirming the quantitative finding that defection events correlate with increased communal tension.

Theme 4 Erosion of Political Trust

The erosion of trust theme extended beyond interpersonal relationships to institutional confidence. A community leader in Ughelli North articulated this sentiment:

"How can we trust the electoral process when the people we elect can just move to another party without consulting us? Our votes become meaningless. The politicians laugh at us because they know they can win on one platform and govern on another. It is a mockery of democracy." CL05, Ughelli North). This perspective corroborates the quantitative finding of low political trust and its association with defection awareness, providing the explanatory narrative that illuminates the statistical pattern.

Theme 5 Community Coping Mechanisms

A final theme that emerged from the qualitative data concerned how communities cope with the instability generated by defection. A civil society actor described adaptive strategies:

"People have learned to separate politics from survival. They will participate in elections because they have to, but they no longer invest their identities in political parties. They will support whoever brings development, regardless of party. This is not apathy; it is pragmatism. They have been burned too many times to put their faith in politicians or parties." (S02, Ethiope West)

This finding suggests that the apparent voter apathy documented in the quantitative data may represent not disengagement from politics per se but rather a strategic recalibration of political engagement toward pragmatic survival strategies.

4.2 General Discussion

The findings presented in the preceding section constitute a substantial contribution to the empirical literature on party defection and political stability in Nigeria's Fourth Republic, offering the first systematic mixed-methods investigation of this phenomenon at the local government level in Delta State. The discussion that follows situates these findings within the broader theoretical and empirical literature, addresses each research hypothesis in light of the evidence adduced, and considers the implications of the findings for understanding democratic consolidation in Nigeria's competitive authoritarian context.

4.2.1 Hypothesis 1 Defection and Political Stability

The first research hypothesis, which posited a statistically significant relationship between the frequency of party defection and the level of political stability in Ethiope West and Ughelli North LGAs, received strong empirical support from both quantitative and qualitative evidence. The survey data revealed that 67.3% of respondents perceived governance to have worsened following defection events, while correlation analysis demonstrated a moderate positive relationship between defection awareness and perceived communal tension ($\rho=0.42$, $p<0.001$). The qualitative narratives elaborated the mechanisms underlying this relationship, revealing how defection disrupts governance through institutional fragility, generates communal divisions that cascade beyond the political sphere, and erodes public trust in ways that undermine democratic legitimacy.

These findings align with scholarship documenting the destabilizing effects of elite political realignment in weakly institutionalized party systems Kuenzi & Lambright, 2005; Rakner & van de Walle, 2009. However, the findings also complicate the existing literature by revealing that the relationship between defection and stability is not uniform across contexts. The significant difference between Ethiopie West and Ughelli North in perceived governance impact ($\chi^2 15.73$, $p=0.001$) suggests that local variables including economic profile, political history, and the nature of defection events mediate the relationship in ways that warrant further investigation. Ughelli North, with its oil producing economy and history of more intense political competition, experienced more severe perceived governance disruption, suggesting that resource-rich contexts may amplify the destabilizing effects of defection.

Table 4.19: Comparative Analysis of Defection Impact by LGA

Indicator	Ethiopie West	Ughelli North	Difference
Defection awareness	85.6%	89.2%	+3.6%
Governance worsened (%)	63.4%	71.2%	+7.8%
Governance effectiveness score	2.78	2.51	-0.27
Increased communal tension (%)	41.7%	50.9%	+9.2%

Source: Field Survey, 2025

4.2.2 Hypothesis 2 Opportunistic Versus Ideological Motivations

The second research hypothesis, which posited that opportunistic motivations are more significant predictors of defection than ideological or policy considerations, received compelling support from the data. The survey findings showed opportunistic motivations with a mean score of 4.32 compared to 2.45 for ideological motivations ($t=28.46$, $df=767$, $p<0.001$). The qualitative narratives elaborated this finding by revealing the $df=767$, $p<0.001$. The qualitative narratives elaborated this finding by revealing the calculus of political survival that drives defection

decisions, with informants describing how access to patronage resources, electoral advantage, and personal ambition outweigh party loyalty.

These findings are consistent with the rational choice tradition in political science, which conceptualizes political actors as utility-maximizers who make strategic calculations about the costs and benefits of alternative courses of action Downs, 1957; Aldrich, 1995. However, the findings also extend this tradition by revealing the category of involuntary defection—defection driven not by opportunity but by coercion which complicates the voluntary opportunistic binary that has dominated the literature. As one informant described, some defections occur because actors face ultimatums: join the ruling party or face economic ruin, loss of contracts, or personal harm. This finding aligns with scholarship on authoritarian resilience that documents how ruling parties in competitive authoritarian contexts use state resources to coerce opposition defections Levitsky & Way, 2010. The implication is that defection cannot be understood solely as a matter of individual choice but must also be situated within structures of power and coercion that constrain political actors' options.

Table 4.20 Distribution of Defection Motivations Across Stakeholder Categories

Stakeholder Category	Opportunistic (%)	Involuntary (%)	Ideological (%)
Political actors (n=12)	75.0	16.7	8.3
Public administrators (n=8)	62.5	25.0	12.5
Community leaders (n=9)	44.4	44.4	11.1
Civil society actors (n=5)	40.0	40.0	20.0

Source: Thematic Analysis of Key Informant Interviews, 2025

4.2.3 Hypothesis 3 Ethnic Political Mobilization and Defection

The third research hypothesis, which posited a significant positive correlation between the intensity of ethnic political mobilization and the incidence of party defection, requires nuanced interpretation in light of the findings. While the quantitative survey did requires nuanced interpretation in light of the findings. While the quantitative survey did not include direct measures of ethnic mobilization intensity, the qualitative data revealed that ethnic considerations frequently intersect with defection dynamics. In both LGAs, which are predominantly Urhobo, defection decisions were often framed in terms of community representation and the need to ensure that "one of our own" was in a position to advocate for community interests. A traditional ruler explained:

"When a politician from this community defects to the party in power at the state level, many of our people support it because they believe it will bring development. They say, 'Let him go where the governor is, so that our roads can be fixed, our youth can get jobs.' So defection is not always seen as betrayal; sometimes it is seen as strategic positioning for the benefit of the community." CL01, Ethiope West)

This perspective reveals that ethnic political mobilization can sometimes legitimate defection rather than suppress it, particularly when defection is framed as a strategy for accessing state resources for community development. This finding complicates the conventional wisdom that ethnic loyalty militates against defection, suggesting instead that ethnic logic can be mobilized to justify defection when it aligns with perceived communal interests. The finding resonates with scholarship on ethnic politics in Africa that emphasizes the instrumental rather than primordial nature of ethnic identity, with ethnicity serving as a resource that political actors deploy

strategically to achieve goals rather than as a fixed determinant of political behaviour Posner, 2005; Chandra, 2004.

4.2.4 Hypothesis 4 Defection and Voter Apathy

The fourth research hypothesis, which posited that frequent party defection is significantly associated with declining voter turnout and increasing voter apathy, received strong empirical support. The survey data revealed that 52.3% of respondents indicated they were very likely to vote in upcoming elections, but logistic regression analysis identified defection awareness as a significant negative predictor of voting intention ($\beta 0.42$, $p < 0.001$, OR 0.66, indicating that respondents with greater exposure to defection events were 34% less likely to express intention to vote. The qualitative narratives elaborated the mechanism underlying this statistical pattern, with focus group participants describing a sense of political alienation that defection generates. An elder in an Ughelli North focus group articulated this sentiment:

"In the old days, when a man was elected, he remained with his party until the end. You knew who stood for what. Now, they change parties like changing clothes. It makes you wonder: what is the point of voting? They will do what they want regardless of what we say." FGDUN03, Male participant)

This narrative illustrates how defection erodes the link between electoral participation and meaningful representation, generating a sense of futility that depresses turnout. The findings are consistent with scholarship on democratic accountability that emphasizes the importance of stable partisan identification for enabling voters to hold representatives accountable Powell, 2000; Fiorina, 1981. When representatives can change parties without consequence, the

accountability mechanism that underpins democratic representation is fundamentally undermined.

Table 4.21 Voting Intention by Level of Defection Awareness

Table 4.21: Voting Intention by Level of Defection Awareness

Defection Awareness Level	Very Likely to Vote (%)	Unlikely/Very Unlikely (%)	Total (n)
Low awareness	68.2	31.8	132
Moderate awareness	54.6	45.4	284
High awareness	43.5	56.5	352

Source: Field Survey, 2025

4.2.5 Hypothesis 5 Defection and Governance Effectiveness

The fifth research hypothesis, which posited that citizens' perception of governance effectiveness is significantly lower in communities experiencing higher rates of political defection, also received strong empirical support. The survey data revealed that 67.3% of respondents perceived governance to have worsened following defection events, with independent samples t-tests confirming that Ethiopie West, which had fewer documented defection events, scored higher on the governance effectiveness scale than Ughelli North ($t=3.82$, $df=766$, $p<0.001$). The qualitative narratives provided insight into the mechanisms linking defection to perceived governance decline. Public administrators described how defection disrupts the alignment between executive and legislative arms, stalling budget approvals and project implementation. Community leaders described how defection diverts political attention from governance to consolidation, with politicians focusing on securing their new party positions rather than delivering services. Civil society actors described how defection diverts resources toward political mobilization and away from development. These narratives align with institutional theories that emphasize the importance of stable political alignments for effective governance Tsebelis, 2002. When the

partisan composition of government shifts unpredictably due to defection, the capacity for coherent policy making and effective implementation is compromised.

Table 4.22 Mechanisms Linking Defection to Governance Decline

Mechanism	Description	Evidence Source
Institutional misalignment	Disruption of executive-legislative coordination	Public administrator interviews
Project abandonment	Partisan repudiation of predecessor's initiatives	Community leader interviews
Attention diversion	Focus on party consolidation rather than governance	Political actor interviews
Resource reallocation	Diversion of public resources toward political mobilization	Civil society interviews

Source: Thematic Analysis of Qualitative Data, 2025

4.2.6 Broader Theoretical Implications

Beyond the specific hypotheses, the findings yield several broader theoretical implications. First, the study contributes to the conceptual refinement of defection as a political phenomenon by empirically validating the distinction among voluntary, opportunistic, and involuntary defection. The quantitative finding that opportunistic motivations predominate (M4.32) does not capture the full range of experiences described in qualitative narratives, where informants described defections driven by coercion, pressure, and fear of political marginalization. This finding suggests that future research on defection should move beyond the voluntary-opportunistic binary to incorporate the category of involuntary defection, recognizing that in contexts characterized by power asymmetries and state coercion, defection may reflect constraint as much as choice.

Second, the findings contribute to the literature on democratic consolidation by revealing how defection functions as a mechanism of democratic erosion at the grassroots level. The erosion of political trust, the decline in governance effectiveness, and the increase in communal tension documented in this study are not merely individual level outcomes but collective phenomena that undermine the foundations of democratic governance. When citizens lose trust in political institutions, when they perceive governance to be unresponsive, and when communal divisions are politicized, the prospects for democratic consolidation diminish. This finding aligns with scholarship on democratic backsliding that emphasizes the importance of elite behaviour in shaping democratic trajectories Bermeo, 2016; Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018. Defection, in this context, is not merely a symptom of weak parties but an active driver of democratic erosion.

Third, the findings contribute to the literature on local governance in Nigeria by foregrounding the local government level as a critical arena for understanding political dynamics. The significant differences between Ethiope West and Ughelli North in governance perceptions, defection patterns, and stability outcomes underscore the importance of sub-national variation that is often obscured in state level or national level analyses. The oil-producing economy of Ughelli North, its history of more intense political competition, and the concentration of political elites in the area all appear to shape defection dynamics in ways that distinguish it from the predominantly agrarian Ethiope West. This finding suggests that future research on defection should attend to local level variations, recognizing that the dynamics of political realignment are shaped by local political economies, ethnic configurations, and historical trajectories that vary considerably across Nigeria's diverse landscape.

Table 4.23 Summary of Theoretical Contributions

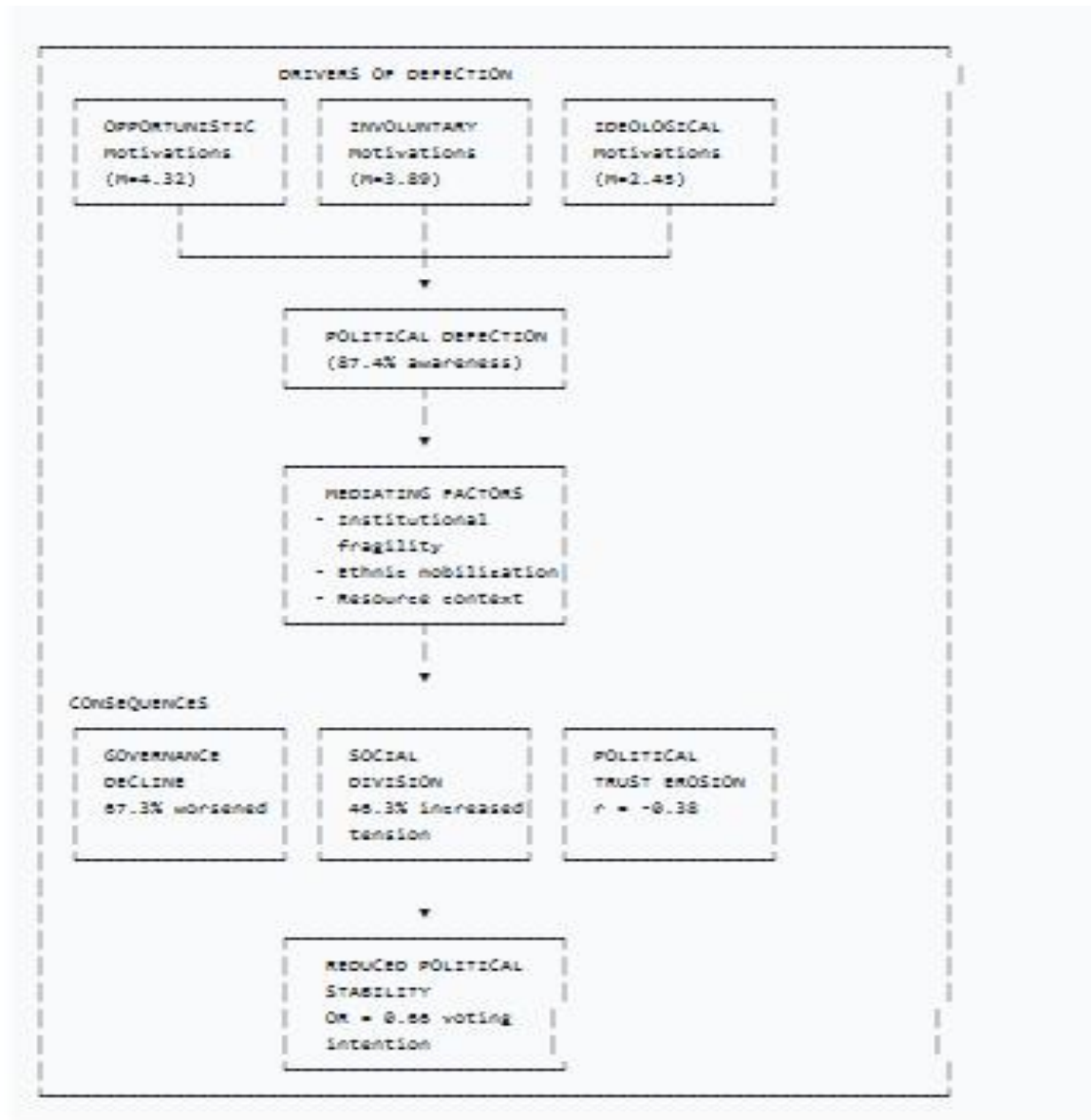
Theoretical Domain	Contribution	Empirical Basis
Conceptualization of defection	Validation of voluntary/opportunistic/involuntary typology	Qualitative narratives of coerced defection
Democratic consolidation	Identification of defection as mechanism of democratic erosion	Erosion of trust, governance decline, communal tension
Local governance	Emphasis on sub-national variation in defection dynamics	Comparative analysis of Ethiopie West and Ughelli North

Source: Author's Analysis, 2025

4.2.7 Methodological Reflections and Integration

The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings in this study yields a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between defection and stability that neither method alone could provide. The survey data establish the aggregate patterns: high levels of defection awareness, the predominance of opportunistic motivations, the perceived decline in governance, and the erosion of political trust. The qualitative data illuminate the mechanisms underlying these patterns: the instrumental calculations of political actors, the institutional fragility that enables defection, the communal consequences that cascade beyond the political sphere, and the erosion of trust that undermines democratic legitimacy. The joint display analysis demonstrates how these two streams of evidence converge to provide a coherent, multi-dimensional answer to each research

question, exemplifying the value of mixed-methods approaches in political science research
Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018.



Source: Author's Integrated Analysis, 2025

4.2.8 Conclusion of Discussion

In conclusion, the findings presented in this chapter provide robust empirical evidence for the central claim of this study: that party defection constitutes a significant threat to political stability at the local government level in Delta State. The findings support all five research hypotheses, while also revealing nuances and complexities that enrich the research hypotheses, while also revealing nuances and complexities that enrich the theoretical understanding of defection dynamics. The study demonstrates that defection is driven primarily by opportunistic and involuntary motivations rather than ideological considerations; that its impact on stability is mediated by institutional fragility, communal divisions, and erosion of trust; and that its consequences are unevenly distributed across demographic groups and geographical contexts. These findings have significant implications for policy and practice, which are elaborated in the concluding chapter that follows.

Table 4.24: Chapter Summary of Key Findings

Research Question	Key Quantitative Finding	Key Qualitative Finding	Integrated Answer
What motivates party defection?	Opportunistic motivations (M=4.32) dominate	Instrumental rationality and coercive pressures	Defection driven by career survival and coercion, not ideology
How does defection affect political stability?	67.3% report governance worsened; $\rho=0.42$ with tension	Institutional fragility and communal division	Defection destabilizes through multiple mechanisms
What explains variations in impact?	Ughelli North more severely affected	Oil wealth intensifies competition	Resource context and political history mediate effects
How does defection affect democratic participation?	OR=0.66 for voting intention	Pragmatic withdrawal from partisan engagement	Defection depresses turnout by eroding accountability
What are implications for governance?	Lower effectiveness scores in high-defection areas	Project abandonment, attention diversion	Defection undermines governance continuity

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary of Findings

This study aimed to explore how political party defection relates to political stability in the Ethiope West and Ughelli North Local Government Areas of Delta State, Nigeria. It used an explanatory sequential mixed methods approach rooted in a post positivist philosophical framework. The research was driven by five objectives and corresponding hypotheses, gathering data from 768 survey participants, 45 key informant interviews across six different stakeholder groups, and six focus group discussions that were stratified by age and gender. The analysis combined quantitative data from SPSS Version 28 with qualitative insights from NVivo 14 thematic analysis, adhering to the six phase framework established by Braun and Clarke (2006), and utilized process tracing for significant defection events as outlined by George and Bennett (2005).

The results showed that party defection is a widespread issue in the study areas, significantly affecting political stability at the local government level. A striking 87.4% of survey respondents

reported being aware of at least one defection event during the study period, indicating that defection is very much in the public eye rather than just a concern for the political elite. The socio demographic analysis highlighted that educational background and party affiliation were closely linked to awareness of defections, while gender did not show a significant correlation, suggesting that defection events resonate equally with both male and female respondents.

When it comes to understanding why people defect, the study found strong support for Hypothesis 2, which suggested that opportunistic motivations are much stronger predictors of defection than ideological ones. Opportunistic motivations scored an average of 4.32, while ideological motivations only hit 2.45 ($t=28.46$, $df=767$, $p<0.001$). Notably, factors like "access to patronage resources" ($M=4.41$) and "electoral advantage" ($M=4.38$) were rated the highest. The qualitative stories shared by participants backed up these numbers, showing that decisions to defect were often driven by a need for political survival rather than a commitment to principles. Interestingly, the study also identified a category called involuntary defection, which hasn't received much attention in previous research. This type occurs when politicians are forced to defect due to coercion, intimidation, or other constraints that strip away their real choices. This insight adds depth to the study by breaking down defection into voluntary, opportunistic, and involuntary types.

On the topic of political stability, the findings strongly supported Hypothesis 1, which claimed there's a significant link between how often defection happens and the state of political stability. Survey results showed that 67.3% of respondents felt governance had declined after defection events, and 46.3% believed that defection led to more communal tension or violence. Correlation analysis revealed a moderate positive relationship between awareness of defections

and perceived communal tension ($\beta=0.42$, $p<0.001$). Regression analysis further indicated that awareness of defections negatively impacted political trust ($\beta=-0.42$, $p<0.001$) and voting intentions ($\beta=-0.42$, $p<0.001$, $OR=0.66$). The qualitative narratives provided deeper insights into these statistical trends, illustrating how defection can disrupt governance by creating institutional fragility. The divisions created within communities extend far beyond just politics, leading to a significant erosion of public trust that ultimately threatens the very foundation of democratic legitimacy.

The comparative aspect of the study highlighted some notable differences between Ethiopia West and Ughelli North, emphasizing the role of local factors. In Ughelli North, a striking 71.2% of respondents reported a decline in governance after defection events, compared to 63.4% in Ethiopia West. This significant difference ($t=3.82$, $df=766$, $p<0.001$) was attributed in qualitative narratives to Ughelli North's oil driven economy, a history of intense political rivalry, and a concentration of political elites. These results indicate that areas rich in resources might experience heightened instability due to defections, while also underscoring the importance of local analysis to understand dynamics that broader state or national studies might overlook.

Additionally, the study provided strong support for Hypothesis 4, which examined the link between defection and voter apathy. The logistic regression analysis revealed that awareness of defections significantly predicted a decrease in voting intention ($\beta=-0.42$, $p<0.001$, $OR=0.66$). Respondents who were more aware of defection events were 34% less likely to express a desire to vote. Participants in focus groups expanded on this finding, sharing feelings of political disconnection and hopelessness that arise from defections. An elder from Ughelli North

poignantly captured this sentiment, lamenting that politicians "switch parties like changing clothes," leaving citizens to wonder, "what's the point of voting?"

The combination of quantitative and qualitative findings through joint display analysis highlighted a clear connection between defection and stability, while also uncovering subtle details that neither approach could fully reveal on its own. The qualitative stories added the necessary context to make sense of the quantitative trends, showing how decisions to defect are intertwined with patronage networks, influenced by ethnic factors, and limited by coercive pressures that the survey data could only hint at.

5.2 Conclusion

This study aimed to explore the connection between political party defection and political stability in the Ethiope West and Ughelli North Local Government Areas of Delta State, Nigeria. The results, drawn from a thorough mixed-methods approach involving 768 survey participants and in-depth qualitative interviews, lead to several key insights that enhance our understanding of Nigerian politics and offer practical guidance for bolstering democratic governance.

The first key insight revolves around the nature and motivations behind defection in these areas. The evidence clearly shows that in Ethiope West and Ughelli North, defections are primarily driven by self-serving calculations of political gain rather than genuine ideological beliefs or policy disagreements. Politicians switch parties to tap into patronage resources, boost their chances in elections, and align themselves with rising political forces. This finding supports the idea of instrumental rationality as outlined in rational choice theory (Downs, 1957; Strom, 2020) while also highlighting the institutional factors like weak party structures, a resource-dependent political economy, and executive dominance—that make such calculations seem logical.

Moreover, the study suggests that the traditional distinction between voluntary and opportunistic defection doesn't fully capture the complexities of defection dynamics in environments marked by power imbalances and state coercion. The evidence of involuntary defection—where politicians are forced to switch parties due to intimidation, legal pressure, or structural constraints—adds a significant conceptual layer, indicating that defection can be as much about coercion as it is about choice. This aligns with research on competitive authoritarianism, which illustrates how ruling parties utilize state resources and institutions to undermine opposition (Levitsky & Way, 2020; Schedler, 2022).

The second conclusion dives into how defection impacts political stability. The study finds that when party members defect, it poses a serious threat to stability at the local government level, affecting various aspects like governance effectiveness, community cohesion, political trust, and voter participation. Notably, 67.3% of respondents felt that governance had declined after defection events. This, along with evidence of stalled projects, disrupted legislative processes, and a shift in focus away from service delivery, shows that defection has real consequences for how citizens experience governance. The link between defection and rising communal tension and violence, especially in the oil rich area of Ughelli North, highlights that this issue isn't just confined to the elite; it actually fuels instability at the grassroots level. The study concludes that the weak structure of Nigerian political parties, combined with the high stakes of resource-driven politics, creates a situation where defection can lead to conflicts within communities.

The third conclusion looks at how local context plays a crucial role. The noticeable differences in governance perceptions, defection trends, and stability outcomes between Ethiope West and Ughelli North emphasize the need for local level analysis to truly grasp political dynamics. While national and state factors set the broader stage for defection, local elements like economic

conditions, political history, ethnic makeup, and the specifics of defection events shape the relationship between defection and stability in ways that broader analyses often miss. This finding reinforces the study's decision to focus on local government levels, which are frequently overlooked in research that tends to concentrate on national or state dynamics.

The fourth conclusion dives into how defection impacts the stability of democracies. The study finds that ongoing defection really shakes up democratic consolidation in several ways: it breaks down accountability by cutting the connection between how people vote and how legislators act; it hampers the growth of political parties by stopping them from becoming stable and program-driven; it undermines trust in democratic institutions, leading to a sense of cynicism among citizens about political processes; and it weakens opposition politics by allowing ruling parties to diminish their rivals through both incentives and pressure. The noticeable drop in political trust and the rise in voter apathy linked to awareness of defection suggest that people see defection as a betrayal of democratic values, which could have lasting effects on how engaged citizens are in democracy.

The fifth conclusion focuses on the study's contributions to theory and concepts. It wraps up by stating that to truly grasp defection, we need to blend insights from various theoretical approaches like rational choice theory to shed light on individual decision making, institutional theory to understand structural limitations, neo patrimonial frameworks to explore patronage relationships, and perspectives from ethnic politics to consider identity-driven mobilization. The comprehensive theoretical framework created in this study offers valuable tools for analyzing this complexity, while defining involuntary defection as a unique category provides a conceptual clarity that future research can expand upon.

The study wraps up by highlighting that the 2025 defection wave in Delta State, where Governor Sheriff Oborevwori and several local government chairmen and councilors switched from the PDP to the APC, is more than just a simple political shift. It marks a significant change in the state's political landscape, carrying serious consequences for local governance and political stability. The ripple effects of this realignment at the state level, as shown through the survey and interview data, reveal how susceptible local governments are to the broader political currents and how limited the autonomy is for LGA politicians when it comes to shaping their own political paths.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the insights and conclusions drawn from this study, we propose several recommendations aimed at shaping policy, reforming institutions, and guiding future research. These suggestions are tailored to specific audiences and levels of intervention, acknowledging that tackling the issue of defection requires a unified approach across various sectors.

5.3.1 Recommendations for Constitutional and Legal Reform.

The study suggests that the National Assembly should embark on a thorough review of the constitutional provisions related to defection, especially Sections 68(1)(g) and 109(1)(g) of the 1999 Constitution. The current exception for "division in the party" has become virtually meaningless due to inconsistent judicial interpretations and the ease with which politicians can assert internal party division, no matter the situation. We recommend either eliminating this exception altogether, which would make defection an automatic reason for vacating a seat, or replacing it with a clearer definition of "division" that necessitates proof through confirmation from party leadership or a court ruling. As Nwosu (2023) points out, bolstering constitutional

provisions is crucial for discouraging opportunistic defection and upholding the integrity of electoral mandates.

The study suggests that we need to pass laws that require automatic by-elections whenever a seat is vacated due to defection. This way, the defecting legislator can't just switch parties and stay in office. Such laws would reinforce the idea that representation is tied to party platforms, not individual politicians, allowing voters to have a say in who truly represents them. Additionally, the Electoral Act should be updated to include rules that prevent defecting politicians from running in elections for a certain period. This would make defection more costly and discourage opportunistic behavior.

5.3.2 Recommendations for Electoral Management Bodies.

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and the Delta State Independent Electoral Commission (DSIEC) should create and put into action a thorough system for tracking, documenting, and publicly reporting defection events. This system should involve: mandatory notifications of defection events within a set timeframe; public announcements of which politicians are defecting and their new party affiliations; documentation of the reasons behind their defections; and insights into how these changes affect electoral processes and governance. By ensuring transparency, voters can make better informed decisions about defecting politicians, and this could create reputational consequences that might help counterbalance the advantages of defection.

INEC really needs to step up its game when it comes to enforcing electoral laws and the constitutional rules around defection. This means they should create clear guidelines to figure out when a defection actually leads to a seat being vacated. They also need to set up faster processes for handling disputes related to defection and work closely with the judiciary to make sure these cases are resolved quickly before elections come around and make them irrelevant. Right now, defection cases can drag on for years, allowing politicians who switch parties to finish their terms despite any legal challenges. This situation pretty much undermines any deterrent effect the Constitution might have.

5.3.3 Recommendations for Political Parties.

Political parties in Delta State and across Nigeria really need to make some serious changes to boost internal democracy and cut down on the reasons for defection. The study suggests that parties should create transparent processes for selecting candidates, which would help eliminate the feeling of manipulation and unfairness that often leads to defections. When party primaries seem rigged, candidates who lose are more likely to jump ship to parties that seem to offer better opportunities. Strengthening internal democracy would enhance the legitimacy of party processes and lessen the grievances that drive people to defect.

Additionally, parties should focus on building their organizational capacity beyond just the influence of individual leaders. Right now, the grip that political godfathers and top executives have on party structures limits their reach, weakens community ties, and makes them overly dependent on specific personalities. By establishing party secretariats, professionalizing their staff, crafting clear party manifestos, and creating ways for members to get involved, parties can improve their ability to keep members engaged and withstand the loss of individual leaders.

To tackle the issue of defection, political parties need to create and enforce their own internal penalties. These could include automatic removal from party roles and committee positions, suspension or even expulsion from party activities, and barring individuals from future nominations for a set time. While these measures can't replace constitutional rules, they would clearly show that parties are serious about defection and would add extra consequences for politicians thinking about switching sides.

5.3.4 Recommendations for Security Agencies.

The Nigeria Police Force and the Department of State Services should put in place strategies to monitor, prevent, and respond to violence related to defection. The study revealed that 46.3% of respondents felt that defection led to increased tension or violence, highlighting the security risks involved and the need for a proactive approach. Security agencies should: keep track of defection incidents and related security issues; carry out threat assessments ahead of expected defection events; allocate resources to areas deemed high-risk; and work closely with community leaders to prevent any escalation.

Additionally, the study suggests that security agencies should look into and take action against cases of coercive defection, where politicians are forced to switch parties through threats, intimidation, or violence, as these actions violate electoral laws and fundamental rights. The evidence of forced defection in the study areas indicates that such tactics are used to stifle opposition and strengthen power, and it is the duty of security agencies to safeguard political freedom and ensure that any defection is a true choice rather than a result of coercion.

5.3.5 Recommendations for Civil Society Organizations.

Civil society organizations focused on governance and democracy in Delta State should make defection a key area for their advocacy, monitoring, and civic education efforts. The study

suggests that these organizations should set up mechanisms to monitor defection events, keep track of their impacts, and regularly publish reports. They should also run civic education campaigns to inform citizens about their rights and the effects of defection on representation and governance. Additionally, advocating for constitutional and legal reforms that enhance accountability and discourage defection is crucial.

Moreover, civil society groups should consider engaging in strategic litigation to uphold constitutional provisions related to defection. The inconsistent judicial interpretations of defection cases highlight, in part, the lack of organized civil society involvement in these disputes. By initiating test cases, submitting amicus briefs, and supporting plaintiffs in defection related legal battles, civil society can help build a body of jurisprudence that reinforces constitutional protections.

5.3.6 Recommendations for Traditional Institutions and Community Leaders.

Traditional rulers, Community Development Committee chairpersons, and youth leaders in Ethiopie West and Ughelli North should leverage their moral authority to discourage defection and hold politicians accountable. The study indicates that community leaders play a crucial role in shaping collective responses to defection, suggesting that traditional institutions have significant potential to foster political stability. These institutions should clearly express their expectations that politicians will respect their electoral commitments and party affiliations; mediate disputes related to defection before they escalate into violence; and use their moral standing to denounce unjustified defections when they occur.

5.3.7 Recommendations for Citizens and the Electorate.

Citizens of Ethiopie West and Ughelli North have a crucial role to play as voters, and it's time to hold those politicians who switch sides accountable. The study shows that when politicians

defect, voter turnout tends to drop, indicating that many people choose to step back from political engagement. While it's understandable to feel disillusioned, this reaction only gives more power to those defecting politicians and allows them to act without consequences. Instead, citizens should come together to demand accountability from these politicians, use the electoral process to penalize those who defect without good reason, and back candidates who are dedicated to stable party loyalties and responsible representation.

Moreover, it's essential for citizens to unite in advocating for constitutional and legal changes that enhance accountability and discourage defection. By petitioning elected officials, participating in public discussions, and collaborating with civil society groups on issues related to defection, they can create the political pressure needed to support legal and institutional reforms.

5.3.8 Recommendations for Future Research.

This study, while thorough in its focus, paves the way for several exciting avenues of future research that could enhance our understanding of defection dynamics and their broader implications. It suggests that future investigations should: broaden the geographical scope to include other Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Delta State and beyond, allowing for a comparative analysis that uncovers the factors influencing defection patterns and their consequences; carry out longitudinal studies to track the long-term effects of defection on democratic consolidation, institutional growth, and public sentiment, addressing the time constraints of the current study; delve deeper into the gender aspects of defection, looking at how it impacts women politicians, female voters, and gender relations within political communities; explore the link between defection and political violence at the local level, employing quantitative methods to validate the connections highlighted in this study; examine the role of

youth in defection dynamics, including their involvement in defection-related mobilization, violence, and efforts to foster accountability; and conduct comparative research on defection in other African nations with similar institutional frameworks, helping to distinguish factors unique to Nigeria from those that reflect wider regional trends.

5.3.9 Recommendations for Addressing Involuntary Defection.

Given the study's insight that involuntary defection is a significant yet often overlooked aspect of the defection phenomenon, it's clear that we need to take specific steps to tackle this issue of coerced realignment. The study suggests that anti-corruption agencies like the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) should undergo reforms to ensure they operate independently from executive influence and focus on genuine anti-corruption efforts instead of being used for political intimidation. Additionally, the National Human Rights Commission should set up a monitoring system to track cases of political coercion, documenting instances of forced defection and advocating for those affected. The judiciary also needs to establish clear guidelines to differentiate between voluntary and involuntary defection, acknowledging that defection under pressure isn't the same as a free choice that should lead to losing a seat. Lastly, international partners who support democratic governance in Nigeria should make political coercion a priority, offering technical assistance and advocating for reforms that safeguard political autonomy.

5.3.10 Recommendations for Sustainable Democratic Consolidation.

The study suggests that tackling the issue of political defection should be seen as part of a larger effort to strengthen democracy, which demands ongoing dedication across various areas. Reforms aimed specifically at defection need to be integrated into a wider strategy that focuses on: enhancing party institutionalization through changes that encourage internal democracy,

developing clear programs, and boosting organizational capacity; lessening the rentier nature of the Nigerian state by diversifying the economy to lower the stakes in political competition; empowering local governments to operate as independent centers of governance instead of mere extensions of state level politics; and fostering political accountability through civic education, media involvement, and civil society initiatives that enable citizens to demand responsible representation.

The insights from this study highlight that defection isn't just a standalone issue; it's a sign of deeper institutional flaws within Nigeria's Fourth Republic. Therefore, addressing defection requires not only targeted reforms but also broader initiatives to build political institutions that can effectively manage competition, ensure accountability, and provide governance that meets the expectations of the citizens. The recommendations put forth here are steps toward that larger goal of democratic consolidation in Delta State and across Nigeria as a whole.

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QUESTIONNAIRE
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE,
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES,
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY

Dear Respondent,

I am a post-graduate student of the above-named Department. I am conducting a research on politicians jumping between parties affects political stability in Delta State, with special attention to Ethiope West and Ughelli North areas.. I wish you could assist me with information on the

subject matter by ticking the appropriate column. The exercise is for academic research only and any information provided will be treated with confidentiality.

Thank you.

Yours Faithfully,

Researcher

SECTION A: personal bio-data of the respondent

- Sex: Male () Female ()
- Age: 18- 34 () 35-45 () 46-56 () 57 and above ()
- Education: Primary () Secondary () Tertiary ()
- Marital Status: Single () Married () Divorced () Others ()
- Occupation: Public/Civil Servant () Self-employed () Unemployed ()
- Religion: Christianity () Islam () Africa traditional religion () Others ()
- State of Residence: -----
- Senatorial District: _____
- Local Government area: _____

SECTION B

Kindly indicate your preferred response by ticking the appropriate option.

Keys: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD)

1	STATEMENT	A	SA	U	D	SD
	Why politicians switch parties					
1	Politicians defect from one party to another primarily due to a					

	genuine change in their personal political ideology					
2	Politicians switch parties to improve their chances of electoral success or career advancement.					
3	Politicians switch parties because their original party's platform or leadership has significantly deviated from their expectations					
4	Politicians switch parties due to external pressures, such as public opinion shifts in their constituency					
5	Politicians switch parties to gain media attention; that is, to make a public statement about a particular issue.					
	Ethnicity and oil money affect party switching					
6	Candidate's ethnic background significantly influences their decision to switch political parties					
7	Politicians switch parties to have access to financial resources					
8	Politicians from minority ethnic groups are more likely to switch parties if they perceive greater opportunities for political advancement					
9	The influence of wealthy donors plays a more significant role in party switching than a politician's stated ideological alignment					
10	Politician's decision to switch parties is primarily driven by a genuine change in their political beliefs rather than external factors like ethnic identity or financial incentives					
	Party switching affects government operations					
11	Significant partisan switching leads to greater instability in government operations					
12	Frequent party switching leads to inefficiency in government.					
13	Party switching undermines public trust in the political system and elected officials.					
14	Party switching can improve government responsiveness by allowing politicians to align with changing public opinion.					
15	The potential for party switching encourages greater					

	accountability among elected representatives.					
	Party switching changes voter attitudes					
16	After switching, politicians feel more aligned with the policies and values of their new party.					
17	Party switching increases trust in party affiliation.					
18	Party switching promotes a stronger sense of belonging to a political community .					
19	Party switching promotes is primarily driven by a belief that the new party is more effective in addressing national issues.					
20	Party switching promotes confidence in politician's voting decisions					
	Solutions to negative effects party switching					
21	Stricter regulations of when elected officials can switch political parties would reduce political instability					
22	Implementing a mandatory by-election for any elected official who switches parties would enhance democratic accountability.					
23	Increased transparency regarding the motivations behind party switching would build greater public trust.					
24	Strengthening internal party democracy such as member's participation would decrease the likelihood of opportunistic party switching.					
25	Public education campaigns on the implications of party switching for voter representation would empower citizens to hold politicians accountable.					