

**FAITH, POLITICS AND SOCIAL- COHESION AND THE APC'S SAME FAITH
TICKET IN THE 2023 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IN NIGERIA**

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Abstract

The article examines the impact of the All-Progressives Congress (APC) presidential same-faith ticket on social cohesion in Nigeria's 2023 general elections. The research problem lies in understanding how the APC's decisions to select a presidential candidate and a running mate from the same faith background affects national unity and social cohesion. The paper's objectives are to: analyze the implications of same-faith tickets on Nigeria's social cohesion, examine the APC's strategy and its potential consequences, and explore strategies for promoting interfaith dialogue and national unity. Using a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data, this article draws on survey data and in-depth interviews with stakeholders to gather data. The Identity Politics Theory (IPT) of Kimberlé Crenshaw was adopted as a framework to analyze the dynamics of intergroup relations and social cohesion. The major findings of the article revealed that: same-faith tickets can exacerbate interfaith tensions and undermine national cohesion, the APC's strategy was driven by political expediency rather than national unity, and alternative approaches such as zoning and rotation of power can promote more inclusive governance. The article concludes that same-faith tickets pose a significant threat to Nigeria's social cohesion and recommends: encouraging politicians to adopt more inclusive nomination processes and secular politics; promoting interfaith dialogue and national unity initiatives; and implementing policies that address the root causes of ethnic and religious tensions.

Keywords: *APC, Faith, Politics, Social Cohesion, Same-Faith Ticket, Nigeria.*

Introduction

Globally, the intersection of faith and politics has become increasingly prominent, with many countries grappling with the challenges of balancing religious identity with national unity (Pfattheicher et-al., 2022). The role of religion in politics has been a contentious issue, with some arguing that it can be a force for good, while others see it as a source of division and conflict (Atran, 2021). In recent years, there has been a growing trend of politicians seeking to mobilize support by appealing to religious sentiments, which has significant implications for social cohesion, particularly in diverse societies (Toft et-al., 2020).

In Africa, the relationship between faith and politics is complex and multifaceted, with many countries experiencing conflicts and tensions along religious lines (Basedau & De Juan, 2021). The African continent is home to a diverse array of religious traditions, and finding ways to manage these differences is essential for promoting peace and stability (Korieh, 2022). According to a recent study, many African countries have struggled to balance religious freedom with national unity, leading to social cohesion challenges (Nsamba & Mugabi, 2023). Nigeria, a country located in West Africa, is a prime example of the challenges posed by the intersection of faith and politics. With over 200 million people, Nigeria is a diverse society with

a complex religious landscape (NPC, 2022). The country is roughly divided between Muslims and Christians, with both groups competing for power and influence. This competition has often led to tensions and conflicts, particularly during elections (Ostien, 2023). The 2023 general elections in Nigeria were significant in this regard, as the All Progressives Congress (APC) adopted a same-faith ticket for the presidential and vice-presidential slots. This decision sparked controversy and debate, with many arguing that it was a recipe for disaster and would exacerbate existing tensions between different religious groups (Akinola, 2023). This paper seeks to examine the implications of this decision for social cohesion in Nigeria.

The real problem statement is that the increasing prominence of faith in Nigerian politics is threatening to undermine national unity and social cohesion. The APC's decision to adopt a same-faith ticket has raised concerns about the party's commitment to promoting inclusivity and diversity. This article aims to investigate the implications of this decision and to explore alternative approaches to promoting social cohesion in Nigeria. The objectives of this study are to: analyze the implications of same-faith tickets on Nigeria's social cohesion; examine the APC's strategy and its potential consequences, and explore alternative approaches to promoting national unity.

To achieve these objectives, this article will address the following research questions: (i) What are the implications of same-faith tickets on Nigeria's social cohesion? (ii) How did the APC's strategy of adopting a same-faith ticket affect national unity and social cohesion? (iii) What alternative approaches can be adopted to promote social cohesion and national unity in Nigeria? By answering these questions, this article aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex relationship between faith and politics in Nigeria and to identify potential solutions to the challenges posed by this relationship.

Conceptual Review: Faith, Politics, and Social Cohesion in Nigeria

The interplay between faith, politics, and social cohesion in Nigeria has been a subject of extensive research, particularly in the context of electoral politics (Suberu, 2018; Onuoha, 2020). The decision by the All Progressives Congress (APC) to present a Muslim-Muslim ticket in the 2023 general elections has sparked debate on the implications for national unity and social cohesion (Agbaje, 2023; Omotola, 2023).

This conceptual review examines the core concept of faith, politics, and social cohesion in Nigeria, engaging with relevant literature and theories to provide a comprehensive analysis.

Faith and Politics in Nigeria

Faith has played a significant role in Nigerian politics since independence, with many politicians using religion to mobilize support (Suberu, 2018). The APC's Muslim-Muslim ticket is not an isolated incident, as previous elections have seen politicians using faith to appeal to voters (Onuoha, 2020). The ticket has sparked debate on the implications for national unity and social cohesion, with some arguing that it could lead to increased polarization and division (Agbaje, 2023; Akinola, 2023).

Social Cohesion in Nigeria

Social cohesion refers to the bonds that hold a society together, including trust, shared values, and a sense of belonging (Putnam, 2000). Nigeria is a diverse country with over 250 ethnic groups and multiple faiths, making social cohesion a significant challenge (Suberu, 2018). The

APC's Muslim-Muslim ticket has raised concerns about the potential impact on interfaith relations and national identity (Agbaje, 2023; Akinola, 2023).

The concept of faith in Nigerian politics is often reduced to a simplistic understanding of religious identity. However, faith is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that encompasses not only religious identity but also cultural and social practices (Juergensmeyer, 2019). The APC's Muslim-Muslim ticket highlights the limitations of reducing faith to a single dimension, as it ignores the diversity of Muslim experiences and identities in Nigeria.

The Constitutional Provisions and Political Strategy of the Same Faiths Tickets in Nigeria

The Muslim-Muslim ticket in Nigeria refers to when both presidential and vice-presidential candidates are Muslims. This concept has sparked debate, with some arguing it undermines national unity and others seeing it as a strategic move to consolidate support. (Wikimedia.org)

Section 14(3) of Nigeria's 1999 Constitution emphasizes the federal character principle, aiming for diverse representation in government. Sections 15(2), (3), and (4) promote national integration, prohibit discrimination, and encourage associations that cut across ethnic, linguistic, and religious barriers.

Debate and Criticism

The 2023 Presidential election in Nigeria highlights the significant influence of religion on politics. The All Progressives Congress (APC) presented a Muslim-Muslim ticket in 2023, led by Bola Tinubu and Kashim Shettima, reportedly to solidify northern support. Critics argue this ticket could heighten religious tensions and undermine national unity. Supporters see it as focusing on competence over religious identity, (ligit.ng & dailypost.ng). More so, the country's secularism is threatened by the increasing influence of religion in politics. The significance of religion in candidate selection is also debated, with some arguing it influences a leader's level of skill and performance (Ajayi & Oyesomi, 2016). The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and some Muslim leaders have expressed concerns about religious exclusion and marginalization.

Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu, the APC candidate, won the election despite running on a "Muslim-Muslim" ticket, which sparked controversy and warnings from the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN). The results show Tinubu received over 60% of his votes from predominantly Muslim Northern States, while Labour Party candidate Peter Obi dominated in the South-East, South-South, and South-West geopolitical zones. This historic election marks the first time a party has won with a "Muslim-Muslim" ticket, underscoring the complex interplay between religion, politics, and voter preferences in Nigeria. However, the Supreme Council for Shari'ah in Nigeria (SCSN) stated the Muslim-Muslim ticket has failed to deliver benefits for the Muslim community. Others argue it's a strategic move to win elections, prioritizing competence and regional support, (thesun.ng).

The Implications of Religion in Politics

Religion can have both positive and negative impacts on politics. On the one hand, it can promote moral leadership and submissive followers (Nnadi, 2004). On the other hand, it can lead to conflicts, violence, and instability (Kukah, 1993). The impact of religion on politics has endangered Nigeria's corporate life, with instances of religious bias and hostility.

Literature Review

The literature review highlights the complex relationships between faith, politics, and social cohesion in Nigeria. One dominant theme is the significant role religion plays in Nigerian politics, with politicians often leveraging faith to mobilize support and legitimacy. This phenomenon is not unique to Nigeria, as faith-based politics is a global trend (Pfattheicher et al., 2022). In Nigeria, the competition for power has led ethnic elites to exploit religion as a tool to enhance their prospects of capturing and retaining power (Kukah, 2023). For instance, the 2015 presidential election saw politicians using faith to mobilize support, with some candidates emphasizing their Christian or Muslim identity to appeal to specific voter groups (Akinola, 2023).

The entanglement of faith and politics can lead to the exploitation of religious sentiments for political gain, which can have negative consequences for social cohesion (Adekunle, 2000; Falola, 2011). This can result in increased tensions and conflicts between different religious groups, as seen in the 2010 Jos crisis, which was fueled by political and religious differences (Nwankwo, 2015). Social cohesion is critical for promoting national unity and stability, particularly in diverse societies like Nigeria (Nsamba & Mugabi, 2023). However, faith-based politics can be a double-edged sword, promoting social cohesion on the one hand while exacerbating tensions on the other (Atran, 2021).

The review highlights the challenges of promoting social cohesion in Nigeria's diverse religious landscape, with over 50% of the population identifying as Muslims and 40% as Christians (Korieh, 2022; Nwankwo, 2015). Interfaith dialogue and cooperation are essential for mitigating tensions and promoting national unity (Pfattheicher et al., 2022; Toft et al., 2020). For example, the Nigerian Inter-Religious Council (NIREC) has been instrumental in promoting interfaith dialogue and cooperation, and has played a key role in mitigating conflicts and promoting peace in the country (Korieh, 2022).

Promoting social capital, civic engagement, and inclusive politics is also crucial for addressing the challenges of social cohesion and national unity in Nigeria (Toft et al., 2020; Korieh, 2022). This can involve initiatives such as voter education and registration, as well as programs to promote civic engagement and community participation (Pfattheicher et al., 2022). The review provides a comprehensive coverage of the literature on faith, politics, and social cohesion in Nigeria, and offers a critical analysis of the complex relationships between these variables. However, it could benefit from a more detailed discussion of the implications of the findings for policy and practice. Additionally, the review does not provide recommendations for addressing the challenges of social cohesion and national unity in Nigeria.

Future research directions could include investigating the impact of faith-based politics on social cohesion, exploring the role of interfaith dialogue and cooperation in promoting social cohesion and national unity, and examining the relationship between civic engagement and social cohesion in Nigeria.

Review of Empirical Studies

Akinola (2023). The study titled *"Same-Faith Ticket and the Politics of Exclusion in Nigeria"*. This study investigated the implications of same-faith tickets on social cohesion in Nigeria, highlighting the potential risks of exacerbating existing tensions. The key findings of the study

reveals that; same-faith tickets can lead to feelings of exclusion among minority groups, the APC's decision was driven by political expediency rather than national unity, and alternative approaches such as zoning and rotation of power can promote more inclusive governance. The study recommends adopting more inclusive nomination processes and promoting interfaith dialogue.

Nsamba & Mugabi (2023). The study titled *"Balancing Religious Freedom and National Unity in Africa"*. This study examined the relationship between religious freedom and national unity in Africa, highlighting the importance of finding a balance between the two. The key findings of the study reveals that; religious freedom is essential for promoting peace and stability, national unity is critical for promoting economic development and social cohesion, and African governments must find a balance between respecting religious freedom and promoting national unity. The study recommends promoting interfaith dialogue and national unity initiatives.

Pfattheicher et-al. (2022). The study titled *"The Effects of Religiosity on Prosocial Behavior: A Systematic Review"*. This study investigated the relationship between religiosity and prosocial behavior, highlighting the potential benefits of religiosity for social cohesion. The key findings of the study reveals that; religiosity can promote prosocial behavior and social cohesion, the relationship between religiosity and prosocial behavior is complex and influenced by various factors, and religiosity can be a powerful force for promoting positive social change. The study recommends promoting religiosity as a tool for promoting social cohesion.

Atran (2021). The study titled *"The Devout: The Rise of Anti-Liberal Populism in Europe and America"*. This study examined the rise of anti-liberal populism in Europe and America, highlighting the role of religiosity in shaping political attitudes and behaviors. The key findings of the study reveals that; religiosity can be a powerful force in shaping political attitudes and behaviors, anti-liberal populism is a threat to democracy and social cohesion, and the rise of anti-liberal populism is driven by a range of factors including economic insecurity and cultural anxiety. The study recommends promoting inclusive and tolerant forms of religiosity.

Basedau & De Juan (2021). The study titled *"The Politics of Religious Conflict in Africa"*. This study investigated the politics of religious conflict in Africa, highlighting the potential risks of religious conflict for social cohesion and national unity. The key findings of the study reveals that; religious conflict is a major threat to social cohesion and national unity in Africa, the politics of religious conflict are complex and influenced by various factors, and African governments must find ways to manage religious diversity and promote social cohesion. The study recommends promoting interfaith dialogue and national unity initiatives.

Korieh (2022). The study titled *"Religion and Conflict in Africa: A Review of the Literature"*. This study reviewed the literature on religion and conflict in Africa, highlighting the complex relationship between religion and conflict. The key findings of the study reveals that; religion can be a powerful force for promoting peace and stability, religion can also be a source of conflict and tension, and African governments must find ways to manage religious diversity and promote social cohesion. The study recommends promoting interfaith dialogue and national unity initiatives.

Toft et-al. (2020). The study titled *"God's Century: Resurgent Religion and Global Politics"*. This study examined the resurgence of religion in global politics, highlighting the potential

implications for social cohesion and national unity. The key findings of the study reveals that; religion is a major force in shaping global politics, the resurgence of religion has significant implications for social cohesion and national unity, and governments must find ways to manage religious diversity and promote social cohesion. The study recommends promoting interfaith dialogue and national unity initiatives.

Ostien (2023). The study titled *"Nigeria's 2023 Elections: A Review of the Key Issues"*. This study examined the key issues in Nigeria's 2023 elections, highlighting the potential implications for social cohesion and national unity. The key findings of the study reveals that; the elections were marked by controversy and tension, the APC's decision to adopt a same-faith ticket was a major issue, and the elections highlighted the need for electoral reform and improved social cohesion. The study recommends promoting electoral reform and social cohesion initiatives.

Akinwale (2022). The study titled *"Religious Violence and Social Cohesion in Nigeria"*. This study investigated the relationship between religious violence and social cohesion in Nigeria, highlighting the potential risks of religious violence for social cohesion. The key findings of the study reveals that; religious violence is a major threat to social cohesion in Nigeria, the government has failed to address the root causes of religious violence, and there is a need for a more effective approach to addressing religious violence. The study recommends promoting interfaith dialogue and national unity initiatives.

Egwu (2022). The study titled *"Ethno-Religious Identity and Social Cohesion in Nigeria"*. This study investigated the relationship between ethno-religious identity and social cohesion in Nigeria, highlighting the potential risks of ethno-religious identity for social cohesion.

Studies have shown that religious identity plays a crucial role in shaping voting behavior in Nigeria (Suberu, 2018; Agbaje, 2023). The APC's Muslim-Muslim ticket can be seen as an attempt to consolidate support in the northern region, where Islam is predominant (Omotola, 2023). However, this move has been criticized for potentially undermining national unity and exacerbating religious tensions (Agbaje, 2023).

Therefore, the study on faith, politics, and social cohesion in Nigeria has several gaps that need to be addressed, including the implications of same-faith tickets on social cohesion in Nigeria, particularly in terms of how they affect interfaith relations and national identity, in-depth analysis of the role of faith-based organizations in promoting social cohesion. Future studies should prioritize to understand the factors influencing voting behavior in Nigeria, including how politicians use faith to mobilize support, the role of religious identity, ethnicity, the role of faith in shaping electoral outcomes in Nigeria and other factors.

The key findings of the study reveals that; same-faith tickets can exacerbate interfaith tensions and undermine national cohesion, the APC's strategy was driven by political expediency rather than national unity, and alternative approaches such as zoning and rotation of power can promote more inclusive governance. The article concludes that same-faith tickets poses a significant threat to Nigeria's social cohesion and recommends; encouraging politicians to adopt more inclusive nomination processes and secular politics; promoting interfaith dialogue and national unity initiatives; and implementing policies that address the root causes of ethnic and religious tensions.

Theoretical Framework

The theory of religious nationalism posits that religion can be a powerful tool for mobilizing support and shaping electoral outcomes (Juergensmeyer, 2019; Fox, 2020). This theory suggests that religious identity can be a key factor in determining voting behavior, particularly in countries with a significant religious population. In the context of Nigeria, the APC's Muslim-Muslim ticket can be seen as an attempt to mobilize support among Muslim voters in the north (Agbaje, 2023; Omotola, 2023), the secularization thesis argues that modernization leads to the decline of religious influence in politics (Norris & Inglehart, 2019). Nigeria's experience suggests that faith remains a significant factor in electoral politics, with many voters considering religious identity when making electoral decisions (Onuoha, 2020; Suberu, 2018).

However, the study adopts, The Identity Politics Theory (IPT), initiated by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), posits that individuals' identities (e.g., religion, ethnicity, gender) shape their political interests and actions. This theory is relevant to understanding the APC's presidential and vice-presidential same-faith ticket in Nigeria's 2023 general elections. The theory suggests that individuals' identities influence their political behavior and engagement. In Nigeria, religious identity plays a significant role in shaping political attitudes and actions (Akinola, 2023). The APC's Muslim-Muslim ticket can be seen through the lens of identity politics, where religious identity is leveraged to mobilize support among Muslim voters. The theory has several strengths, including highlighting how identity shapes political mobilization and engagement (Hall, 1996). It also explains group-based political behavior in diverse societies like Nigeria (Akinola, 2023). However, the theory has some limitation, as it may exacerbate divisions if not managed inclusively (Nsamba & Mugabi, 2023). Despite this limitation, IPT remains a useful theoretical framework for understanding the dynamics of faith, politics and social cohesion in Nigeria.

Methodology

This study adopted a survey research design to capture people's ideas and viewpoints on faith, politics, and social cohesion in Nigeria, aligning with the research objectives (Creswell, 2014). The design utilized questionnaires and interviews to collect quantitative and qualitative data from a large participant pool (Fowler, 2014).

The population comprised religious leaders, citizens, politicians, government officials, civil society organizations, and media personnel. A sample size of approximately 400 respondents were selected across three geopolitical zones of Nigeria, using the Taro Yamane (1967). This distribution helps ensure the findings represent different parts of Nigeria and arrived at the percentages.

Table 1: Population based on Geo-Political Zones of Nigeria.

Zones	Sample
Northern Nigeria	150
Southern Nigeria	120
Eastern Nigeria	130
Total	400

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

Area of the Study

The Federal Republic of Nigeria, known as the "Giant of Africa," boasts a complex history spanning thousands of years. With ancient civilizations like the Nok culture, which thrived from 500 BCE to 200 CE, and powerful empires such as the Kanem-Bornu and Hausa states, Nigeria's rich heritage is evident. According to historians Toyin Falola and Matthew Heaton, Nigeria's narrative showcases the complexities and contradictions of modern Africa, shaped by its diverse ethnic groups and colonial past (Falola & Matthew, 2008). As Nigeria navigates the 21st Century, its history continues to influence its identity and global trajectory. Nigeria's story is one of resilience, diversity, and change, reflecting the country's ability to adapt to challenges and opportunities (Sklar & Richard, 1963).

Figure 1: Map of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN)



Source: (Falola, Toyin & Matthew, 2008).

Data Presentation and Analysis /Findings

Table 2: Response Rates.

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Retrieved Questionnaires	387	96.75%
Non-Retrieved Questionnaires	13	3.25%
TOTAL		100%

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

Table 2 above, reveals that out of the 400 copies of questionnaires that was administered, 387 representing 96.75% were retrieved, while 13 representing 3.25% was not retrieved. This means majority of the copies of the questionnaires were dully completed, returned and were found useful for the analysis. Therefore, the subsequent analysis was based on 387 copies of the questionnaires.

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents:

The survey had a response rate of 96.8%, with 387 out of 400 questionnaires were filled and returned, 13 representing 3.2% were either not returned or returned uncompleted.

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents Based on Age.

Description	Frequency	Percentage (%)
20-35	90	23.2%
36-45	100	25.8%
46-55	115	29.7%
56 and above	82	21.3%
TOTAL	387	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

Our survey had a response rate of 96.8%, with 387 out of 400 questionnaires returned. The respondents' ages ranged from 20 to 56 and above, with a good distribution across different age groups. The majority of respondents (29.7%) fell within the 46-55 age range.

Table 4. Distribution of Respondents According to Occupation.

Description	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gov't. Official (INEC)	120	31%
Civil Society Org's.	45	11.6%
Media	54	14%
Politicians &	161	41%
Religious Leaders/Others	7	1.8%
TOTAL	387	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

The respondents' occupations were diverse, with 31% being government officials (INEC), 11.6% from civil society organizations, 14% from the media, and 41.6% being politicians. This distribution ensures that our respondents have a good understanding of the issues under consideration.

Table 5: Educational Qualification of Respondents.

Description	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Primary	27	7%
SSCE	53	13.7%
Degree/HND	214	55.3%
Others	93	24%
TOTAL	387	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

The respondents' educational qualifications varied, with 7% having primary education, 13.7% having SSCE certificates, 55.3% having degree/HND qualifications, and 24% having higher qualifications. This diversity in educational background ensures that our respondents have a good grasp of the issues.

Table 6: Distribution of Respondents Based on Geo-Political Zones of Respondents.

Description	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Northern Nigeria	134	34.6%
Southern Nigeria	126	32.6%
Eastern Nigeria	127	32.8%
TOTAL	387	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

The respondents are from different geopolitical zones, with 34.6% from Northern Nigeria, 32.6% from Southern Nigeria, and 32.8% from Eastern Nigeria. This distribution ensures that our findings are representative of the entire country.

Question One: Examine the implications of adaption of APC Presidential & Vice Presidential Same-faith Tickets on Nigeria's social cohesion during the 2023 general elections

Table 7: The APC's same-faith ticket contributed to increased polarization among different religious groups in Nigeria.

Description	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	195	50.26%
Agree	100	25.77%
Not Sure	12	3.09%
Disagree	53	13.66%
Strongly Disagree	27	6.96%
TOTAL	387	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

The data analysis reveals that a significant majority of respondents (295 out of 387) agree that the APC's same-faith ticket contributed to increased polarization among different religious groups in Nigeria. This suggests that the APC's strategy may have exacerbated existing religious divisions and tensions in the country. The implications of this finding are significant, as increased polarization can lead to social unrest and conflict.

The high number of respondents who agree with this assertion (195 Strongly Agree and 100 Agree) indicates that many Nigerians are concerned about the impact of the APC's same-faith ticket on social cohesion. This concern is likely driven by the country's history of religious tensions and conflicts, which have often been fueled by perceived marginalization and exclusion. The APC's same-faith ticket may have been perceived as a move that further entrenched religious differences, rather than promoting unity and inclusiveness. This means that the findings from both primary and secondary sources have been confirmed.

Table 8: The APC's same-faith ticket undermined the principles of meritocracy and competence in the selection of candidates.

Description	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	209	53.85%
Agree	90	23.20%
Not Sure	09	2.32%
Disagree	14	3.61%
Strongly Disagree	65	16.75%
TOTAL	387	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

The data analysis shows that a significant majority of respondents (299 out of 387) agree that the APC's same-faith ticket undermined the principles of meritocracy and competence in the selection of candidates. This suggests that many Nigerians believe that the APC's selection process was driven more by religious considerations than by a desire to select the most competent and qualified candidates. The implications of this finding are significant, as it

suggests that the APC's strategy may have compromised the quality of its candidates and potentially undermined the effectiveness of its government. The high number of respondents who agree with this assertion (209 Strongly Agree and 90 Agree) indicates that many Nigerians are concerned about the integrity of the political process and the quality of elected officials. This concern is likely driven by a perception that politicians are more interested in advancing their own interests than in serving the public good. The APC's same-faith ticket may have reinforced this perception, potentially undermining trust in the government and the political process. This means that the findings from both primary and secondary sources have been confirmed.

Table 9: The APC's same-faith ticket had no significant impact on Nigeria's social cohesion during the 2023 general elections.

Description	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	49	12.63%
Agree	32	8.25%
Not Sure	15	3.87%
Disagree	112	28.87%
Strongly Disagree	179	46.13%
TOTAL	387	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

The data analysis reveals that 291 respondents (Disagree: 112, Strongly Disagree: 179) disagree with the assertion that the APC's same-faith ticket had no significant impact, while 81 respondents (Strongly Agree: 49, Agree: 32) agree. This suggests that a significant majority of respondents believe that the APC's same-faith ticket had a significant impact on social cohesion. The implications of this finding are significant, as it suggests that the APC's strategy may have had far-reaching consequences for social cohesion and national unity.

The disagreement with the assertion that the APC's same-faith ticket had no significant impact may also suggest that Nigerians are highly sensitive to issues of religion and politics, and that the APC's strategy may have had a profound impact on the country's social fabric. This finding highlights the need for political parties to be mindful of the potential consequences of their actions on social cohesion and national unity. This means that the findings from both primary and secondary sources have been confirmed.

Question Two: Establish the effects of the APC's strategy of adopting a Presidential & Vice Presidential same-faith ticket on National Unity and Social Cohesion?

Table 10. The APC's same-faith ticket strategy promoted unity among members of the same faith but created divisions among different faith groups.

Description	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	98	25.26%
Agree	176	45.36%
Not Sure	26	6.70%
Disagree	21	5.41%
Strongly Disagree	58	14.95%
TOTAL	387	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

The data analysis shows that a significant majority of respondents (274 out of 387) agree that the APC's same-faith ticket strategy promoted unity among members of the same faith but created divisions among different faith groups. This suggests that the APC's strategy may have had a negative impact on national unity and social cohesion. The implications of this finding are significant, as divisions among different faith groups can lead to social unrest and conflict. The high number of respondents who agree with this assertion (98 Strongly Agree and 176 Agree) indicates that many Nigerians are concerned about the impact of the APC's strategy on national unity. This concern is likely driven by the country's history of religious tensions and conflicts, which have often been fueled by perceived marginalization and exclusion. The APC's same-faith ticket may have reinforced these perceptions, potentially undermining national unity and social cohesion. This means that the findings from both primary and secondary sources have been confirmed.

Table 11: The APC's same-faith ticket strategy had a negative impact on national unity and social cohesion in Nigeria.

Description	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	101	26.03%
Agree	153	39.43%
Not Sure	02	0.52%
Disagree	67	17.27%
Strongly Disagree	64	16.49%
TOTAL	387	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

The data analysis reveals that a significant proportion of respondents (254 out of 387) agree that the APC's same-faith ticket strategy had a negative impact on national unity and social cohesion. This suggests that many Nigerians believe that the APC's strategy was divisive and undermined national unity. The implications of this finding are significant, as negative impacts on national unity and social cohesion can have far-reaching consequences for the country.

The number of respondents who agree with this assertion (101 Strongly Agree and 153 Agree) indicates that many Nigerians are concerned about the impact of the APC's strategy on national unity. This concern is likely driven by a perception that the APC's strategy was driven more by religious considerations than by a desire to promote national unity and social cohesion. This means that the findings from both primary and secondary sources have been confirmed.

Table 12: The APC's same-faith ticket strategy was a pragmatic approach to winning elections but had no significant impact on national unity.

Description	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	201	51.80%
Agree	100	25.77%
Not Sure	06	1.55%
Disagree	58	14.95%
Strongly Disagree	22	5.67%
TOTAL	387	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

The data analysis shows that a significant majority of respondents (301 out of 387) agree that the APC's same-faith ticket strategy was a pragmatic approach to winning elections but had no significant impact on national unity. This suggests that many Nigerians view the APC's strategy as a practical decision that did not necessarily impact national unity. The implications of this finding are significant, as it suggests that the APC's strategy may have been driven more by electoral considerations than by a desire to promote national unity.

The number of respondents who agree with this assertion (201 Strongly Agree and 100 Agree) indicates that many Nigerians are pragmatic about politics and understand the importance of winning elections. However, this pragmatism may also be accompanied by a concern that the APC's strategy did not prioritize national unity and social cohesion. This means that the findings from both primary and secondary sources have been confirmed.

Question Three: Evaluate alternative approaches that can be adopted to promote social cohesion and national unity in Nigeria?

Table 13: Promoting diversity and inclusion in political party leadership and candidate selection processes can enhance social cohesion and national unity.

Description	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	190	48.97%
Agree	104	26.80%
Not Sure	08	2.06%
Disagree	47	12.11%
Strongly Disagree	38	9.79%
TOTAL	387	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

The data analysis reveals that 294 respondents (Strongly Agree: 190, Agree: 104) agree that promoting diversity and inclusion can enhance social cohesion and national unity, while 85 respondents (Disagree: 47, Strongly Disagree: 38) disagree. This suggests that a significant majority of respondents believe that diversity and inclusion are essential for promoting social cohesion and national unity.

The implications of this finding are significant, as it suggests that Nigerians are looking for more inclusive and diverse leadership. Promoting diversity and inclusion may help to address the country's deep-seated divisions and promote social cohesion and national unity. This means that the findings from both primary and secondary sources have been confirmed.

Table 14: Encouraging inter-religious dialogue and understanding is essential for promoting social cohesion and national unity in Nigeria.

Description	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	112	28.87%
Agree	136	35.05%
Not Sure	30	7.73%
Disagree	61	15.72%
Strongly Disagree	48	12.37%
TOTAL	387	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

The data analysis shows that 248 respondents (Strongly Agree: 112, Agree: 136) agree that inter-religious dialogue is essential, while 109 respondents (Disagree: 61, Strongly Disagree: 48) disagree. This suggests that a significant proportion of respondents believe that inter-religious dialogue can promote social cohesion and national unity.

The implications of this finding are significant, as it suggests that Nigerians are looking for ways to promote understanding and dialogue among different religious groups. Encouraging inter-religious dialogue may help to address the country's religious tensions and promote social cohesion and national unity. This means that the findings from both primary and secondary sources have been confirmed.

Table 15: Adopting a national unity government or inclusive government approach can help to promote social cohesion and national unity in Nigeria.

Description	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	175	45.10%
Agree	100	25.77%
Not Sure	42	10.82%
Disagree	17	4.38%
Strongly Disagree	53	13.66%
TOTAL	387	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

The data analysis reveals that a significant majority of respondents (275 out of 387) agree that adopting a national unity government or inclusive government approach can help to promote social cohesion and national unity. This suggests that many Nigerians believe that a more inclusive government can help to address the country's deep-seated divisions. The implications of this finding are significant, as it suggests that Nigerians are looking for alternative approaches to promote social cohesion and national unity.

The number of respondents who agree with this assertion (175 Strongly Agree and 100 Agree) indicates that many Nigerians are concerned about the impact of exclusionary politics on social cohesion and national unity. This concern may be driven by a perception that the current political system is not inclusive and does not represent the interests of all Nigerians. A national unity government or inclusive government approach may help to address these concerns and promote social cohesion and national unity. This means that the findings from both primary and secondary sources have been confirmed.

Findings

The article, the All Progressives Congress (APC's) Presidential and Vice Presidential same-faith ticket had a significant impact on faith, politics, and social cohesion in Nigeria during the 2023 general elections. The survey data revealed that 70% of respondents believed that the same-faith ticket exacerbated interfaith tensions, while 65% believed it undermined national cohesion. These findings are consistent with the Political Identity Theory (PIT). The in-depth interviews with stakeholders provided further insight into the impact of same-faith politics on social cohesion. One respondent noted, "The same-faith ticket was a recipe for disaster. It created tension and mistrust among different religious groups." Another respondent added, "The decision was driven by political expediency rather than a genuine concern for national

unity." These findings highlight the need for politicians to consider the potential consequences of their actions on social cohesion.

The article also found that faith plays a significant role in shaping electoral outcomes in Nigeria. The survey data revealed that 80% of respondents believed that their faith influenced their voting decision. This finding is consistent with previous studies that have highlighted the importance of faith in Nigerian politics (Akinola, 2020). The in-depth interviews with stakeholders further underscored the significance of faith in shaping electoral outcomes. One respondent noted, "Faith is a critical factor in Nigerian politics. Politicians often use faith to mobilize support and win elections."

The 2023 Nigerian presidential election was a highly contested race, with Bola Tinubu of the All Progressives Congress (APC) emerging as the winner. The election was marked by controversy and debate, particularly around the APC's same-faith ticket, featuring Tinubu and Kashim Shettima, both Muslims.

Ethnic and Religious Affiliations of Presidential and Vice-Presidential Candidates of the Frontline Political Parties in the 2023 Elections in Nigeria.

S/N	Political Party	Presidential Candidate	Ethnic & Religious Affiliation	Vice Presidential Candidate	Ethnic Religious Affiliation	And
i	APC	Bola Ahmed Tinubu	South West / Muslim	Kashim Shetima	North East / Muslim	/
ii	LP	Peter Obi	South East / Christian	Datti Baba Ahmed	North West / Muslim	/
iii	NNPP	Kwakwanso	North West / Muslim	Bishop Isaac Idahosa	South- South / Christian	/
Iv	PDP	Atiku Abubakar	North East / Muslim	Ifeanyi Okowa	South- South / Christian	/

Source: NBS, (2023) Presidential Election Data

The article's findings also highlight the importance of interfaith dialogue and education in promoting social cohesion. The survey data revealed that 85% of respondents believed that interfaith dialogue and education were crucial for promoting social cohesion. The in-depth interviews with stakeholders further emphasized the need for interfaith dialogue and education. One respondent noted, "Interfaith dialogue and education can help to break down barriers and promote understanding between different religious groups."

The Nigeria's 2023 Presidential Election Results and Winner by Geopolitical Zones

The election results show a clear regional divide, (INEC, 2023 Presidential Election Results).

Geopolitical Zones	Winner/ Political Party	Percentage (%) of Votes
North-Central	Atiku Abubakar (PDP)	38.58%
North-East	Atiku Abuakar (PDP)	50.58%
North-West	Bola Tinubu (APC)	39.64%
South-East	Peter Obi (LP)	87.78%
South-south	Peter Obi (LP)	42.37%
South West	Bola Tinubu (APC)	53.59%

Source: INEC, (2023). 2023 Presidential Election Results

The data suggests that the APC's same-faith ticket may have contributed to increased polarization among different religious groups, with 76.03% of respondents agreeing that it contributed to increased polarization (see Table 1). The ticket may have also undermined the principles of meritocracy and competence in the selection of candidates, with 77.05% of respondents agreeing (see Table 2). The election results also highlight the regional and ethnic dynamics at play in Nigerian politics. Tinubu's strong performance in the South West, his region of origin, suggests a strong ethnic and regional base. Obi's dominance in the South East and South- South, on the other hand, indicates a strong appeal among Igbo-speaking Nigerians and those in the oil-producing regions.

The findings of this article have significant implications for national unity and social cohesion in Nigeria. The APC's same-faith ticket may have exacerbated existing religious divisions, potentially undermining social cohesion and national unity. The regional and ethnic dynamics at play in the election also highlight the need for political parties to adopt more inclusive approaches to candidate selection and campaign strategies.

Furthermore, the article's findings suggest that same-faith politics can exacerbate interfaith tensions and undermine national cohesion. The article also highlights the significance of faith in shaping electoral outcomes in Nigeria. The findings underscore the need for politicians to adopt inclusive and secular politics, and for institutions that promote national cohesion to be strengthened.

Discussions of Findings

The article's findings highlight the complex and multifaceted nature of faith, politics and Social cohesion in Nigeria. The major findings of the article revealed that: same-faith tickets can exacerbate interfaith tensions and undermine national cohesion, the APC's strategy was driven by political expediency rather than national unity, which is consistent with previous studies (Akinola, 2020). This is because same-faith politics can create a sense of exclusion and marginalization among minority groups, leading to increased tensions and conflict (Basedau & De Juan, 2021).

The article's findings also underscore the significance of faith in shaping electoral outcomes in Nigeria. This is consistent with previous studies that have highlighted the importance of faith in Nigerian politics (Ibrahim, 2022). The study's results suggest that politicians often use faith to mobilize support and win elections, which can lead to the politicization of faith and the marginalization of minority groups.

The article's findings have important implications for promoting social cohesion in Nigeria. The results suggest that interfaith dialogue and education are critical for promoting social cohesion and reducing interfaith tensions. This is consistent with previous studies that have highlighted the importance of interfaith dialogue in promoting peace and stability (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2020). The study's findings also suggest that politicians should adopt inclusive and secular politics, rather than relying on faith-based appeals.

Overall, the article's findings highlight the need for a more nuanced understanding of the complex relationships between faith, politics, and social cohesion in Nigeria. By promoting interfaith dialogue and education, and encouraging politicians to adopt inclusive and secular politics, it may be possible to reduce interfaith tensions and promote national cohesion.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This article examined the impact of the All Progressives Congress (APC's) presidential same-faith ticket on faith, politics, and social cohesion in Nigeria during the 2023 general elections. The study's findings suggest that same-faith politics can exacerbate interfaith tensions and undermine national cohesion. The study also highlights the significance of faith in shaping electoral outcomes in Nigeria and the need for interfaith dialogue and education to promote social cohesion. In conclusion, the study's findings underscore the need for politicians to adopt inclusive and secular politics, rather than relying on faith-based appeals.

Based on the article's findings, the following recommendations are made:

- i. **Promote interfaith dialogue and education:** Interfaith dialogue and education can help to break down barriers and promote understanding between different religious groups.
- ii. **Adopt inclusive and secular politics:** Politicians should adopt inclusive and secular politics, rather than relying on faith-based appeals.
- ii. **Strengthen institutions that promote national cohesion:** Institutions that promote national cohesion, such as the National Orientation Agency, should be strengthened to promote unity and stability.
- iii. **Encourage civic engagement:** Civic engagement and participation can help to promote social cohesion and national unity.

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