



Higher Education of Social Science
Vol. 18, No. 1, 2020, pp. 73-78
DOI:10.3968/11659

ISSN 1927-0232 [Print]
ISSN 1927-0240 [Online]
www.cscanada.net
www.cscanada.org

Influence of Vote Buying Among Electorates; Its Implications to Nigeria Future Democracy

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Received 21 January 2019; accepted 3 March 2020

Published online 26 March 2020

Abstract

The 2019 general elections in Nigeria witnessed an explosion in the use of the term “vote buying” in academic and media circles. An often-cited definition of vote buying describes it as “the exchange of private material benefits for political support”. Vote buying is seen as a contract, or perhaps an action in which the voter sells his or her vote to the highest bidder. The issue of vote buying has become a problem in the nation polity and the fear is can the university students who serve as adhoc staff of INEC be exonerated from this menace? The researcher adopted a descriptive survey design for this study. Purposive random sampling technique was adopted in the selection of the sample from four Universities in South West. One hundred (100) participants were randomly selected from each universities. The instrument for this study was a self - constructed questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into two sections A and B. Section A sought personal information of the participants. Section B consisted of 15 items. The finding from the work shows that the respondents among others aware of the danger the vote buying could pose to our future democracy. It is therefore recommended that political education be included in all level of education and government should encourage all organizations including religion organization to always enlightening their members the negative effects of vote in buying.

Key words: Vote buying; Democracy; Universities; Undergraduates

Oladapo, S. O., Oyewale, A. O., & Abayomi, H. O. (2020). Influence of Vote Buying Among Electorates; Its Implications to Nigeria Future Democracy. *Higher Education of Social Science*, 18(1), 73-78. Available from: URL: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/hess/article/view/11659>
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/11659>

INTRODUCTION

The 2019 general elections in Nigeria witnessed an explosion in the use of the term “vote buying” in academic and media circles. An often-cited definition of vote buying describes it as “the exchange of private material benefits for political support”. Vote buying is seen as a contract, or perhaps an auction in which the voter sells his or her vote to the highest bidder. Vote buying is defined here as any form of financial, material or promissory inducement or reward by a candidate, political party, agent or supporter to influence a voter to cast his or her vote or even abstain from doing so in order to enhance the chances of a particular contestant to win an election. Thus, any practice of immediate or promised reward to a person for voting or refraining from voting in a particular way can be regarded as vote buying.

In most democracies, vote buying is considered an electoral offence. Vote buying is prohibited in Nigeria. Article 130 of the Electoral Act 2010, as amended, states that: A person who corruptly by himself or by any other person at any time after the date of an election has been announced, directly or indirectly gives or provides or pays money to or for any person for the purpose of corruptly influencing that person or any other person to vote or refrain from voting at such election, or on account of such person or any other person having voted or refrained from voting at such election; or being a voter, corruptly accepts or takes money or any other inducement during any of the period stated in paragraph of this section, commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a fine of N100,000 or 12 months imprisonment or both.

Although vote buying has become ubiquitous in recent elections, its history predates the return to democracy in May 1999. There have been allegations of vote buying in the electoral history of Nigeria. It was rife during the Social Democratic Party presidential primary in Jos in 2018. Indeed, vote buying was part of the reason adduced by Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida for annulling the June

12, 1993 presidential poll which was hailed as the freest and fairest election in Nigeria's history:

Even before the presidential election, and indeed at the party conventions, we had full knowledge of the bad signals pertaining to the enormous breach of the rules and regulations of democratic elections. There were proofs as well as documented evidence of widespread use of money during the party primaries as well as the presidential election. Evidence available to government put the total amount of money spent by the presidential candidates at over two billion, one hundred million naira (N2.1 billion). The use of money was again the major source of undermining the electoral process. Vote buying has been an integral element of money politics in Nigeria. Recent experiences however show that vote buying takes place at multiple stages of the electoral cycle and has been observed eminently during voter registration, the nomination period, campaigning and election day. It is more predominant during election day, shortly before or during vote casting. The phenomenon of vote-selling is currently the most apparent and predominant electoral strategy that political party and their candidates employ to prosecute elections in Nigeria. The vote-selling phenomenon pervades Nigerian elections (Onapajo, Francis, 2015). No single factor determines vote-buying. Researchers have found that it "is a function of a mix of socioeconomic, cultural and institutional factors" (Hicken, 2007).

Vote-selling is an open form of bribery that substantially corrupts the Nigerian electoral system (Uchenna-Emezue, 2015). In the same vein, corruption impacts the electoral system. Fundamentally, there is a close nexus between political corruption and infrastructure (Effiom, 2014). Unbridled political corruption among Nigerian public office holders leads to inadequate provision of roads, water, healthcare, electricity, and other infrastructure (Ajisebiyawo, 2016).

The phenomenon of money politics and vote-buying only became prominent in post independent Nigeria. Even then, their influence was very minimal in the first republic between the years 1960 to 1966. During the first republic, appeals to ethnic and religious sentiments were the most important weapons the political leaders and tribal heroes deployed to ensure electoral victories. This was possible because the strength and popularity of the major political parties and their allies were essentially enhanced by the primordial ties they had with the people in their regions.

The parliamentary system that was being practiced then, also made it possible for the political parties to exercise considerable control over the candidates to be fielded for elections. As Dudley correctly observed, Candidates in the elections were less important as the parties took the centre stage, appealed to ethnicity played alliance politics and used highly emotive terms which in most cases invited people to violence. Most of the

election expenses were borne by the parties from the funds they were able to raise (Dudley 2002) It should be noted, however, that although politicians were known to distribute T-Shirt, Caps and badges with party emblems, some food stuff and sundry items, to voters at political rallies, there was no huge spending by individual candidates to win elections as obtains currently in the political activities of candidates. Money politics and vote-buying escalated to greater dimensions during the second republic which started in 1979.

It was perhaps, encouraged by some wealthy Nigerians who made their money during the Nigerian civil war between 1967 – 1970, by probably supplying arms and ammunitions to both parties to the war and those who were government contractors, reconstructing projects, after the destructive civil war. And, as soon as the military signalled the commencement of competitive politics, these people ventured into politics or sponsored candidates for elective office. Davies in a recent work summarizes the situation as follows: There was so much display of affluence and use of money by the wealthy contractors and the mercantile class that those who emerged victorious in the conventions and the primaries of some of the political parties, notably the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), the Nigerian People's Party (NPP) and the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) belonged to the business-managerial group (Davies, 2006).

The situation was even worse in 1993 as the act of money politics and vote-buying took very firm roots in the political activities of contestants. This was because the political campaigns for the conduct of the 1993 election demonstrated excessive use of money during the party primaries and the presidential elections, despite the fact that the elections were conducted under the watchful eyes of the military. The rich had actually hijacked the two political parties decreed into existence by the military, namely the National Republican Convention (NRC) and the Social Democratic Party (SDP). At the primaries for example, the use of money to win party nomination was pervasive while complaints of bribery trailed the results. As one of the contestant who lost out claimed. "Money was paid to party functionaries, who were demanding

and negotiating the amount of money to be given to them for payment to win offices and others, and for how votes will be allocated to aspirants (Nwosu, 2005).

Good governance which suffers because of the phenomenon of money politics and vote-buying can be defined as all the governmental and institutional arrangements in a polity which are operated on the basis of strict compliance with the tenets and practices of democracy. All stakeholders must uphold the tenets of access to quality education, economic empowerment, effective health-care delivery system, rule of law and other necessary social amenities. All seem to agree that democracy is the best and the most civilized method of governance known to man. Consequently it has attracted

much attention from both scholars and statesmen. Regrettably however, there is no known definition of the concept that is universally acceptable. This is, perhaps, due to its atavistic nature.

In light of the many irregularities trailing the election even before a single vote is cast, Nigerians and election observers are not convinced the 2019 polls were free and credible. Politicians and their parties are allegedly bribed electoral officials and spending billions of naira on vote buying. According to reports, the main political parties, the APC and the PDP offered sums in the average of 10,000 Naira (\$27) to voters as an inducement in Ekiti state elections. One can imagine how high the bidding will increase at these all-important 2019 polls. We already saw glimpses with the APC's Trader Moni scheme. It is sickening to even multiply these figures by the total number of registered voters 84 million, most of whom are vulnerable students and low income traders. This is high-level impunity and Nigerians must condone it no further. Where will politicians that ordinarily should be earning a decent salary get such an enormous amount of money in a country where fair campaign financing is low? It must be from some unethical means or corruptly embezzled public funds.

A joint international observation mission by the International Republican Institute called on the Federal Government to implement the Justice Mohammed Uwais-led commission's report of 2008 and the Ken Nnamani-led electoral reforms committee's report of 2017. This position was made known at a press conference jointly addressed by the Senior Associate and Regional Director (Central and West Africa), NDI, Dr. Christopher Fomunyoh; and the Regional Director (Africa), Mr John Tomaszewski, in Abuja on Monday March 18, 2019. According to them, the discoveries were made during the Presidential and National Assembly membership elections held on February 23 that all parties were guilty of vote buying, noting that it was monitoring the activities of security agencies in Rivers and others states before, during and after the governorship and state House of Assembly membership elections held on Saturday. Listing their findings, NDI/IRI said, "While a marked improvement was seen in the administration of the March 9 state-level elections compared to February 23, and the electoral environment was generally calm in most parts of the country, the elections our delegation observed were marred by irregularities, instances of intimidation, vote-buying and violent acts during the voting, counting, and collation processes in some places.

Meanwhile, the Nigeria Bar Association, through its Election Working Group which monitored on its behalf, the last Saturday's governorship and House of Assembly elections in various parts of the country, has said the exercise was marred by various shortcomings, including violence, vote-buying, intimidation of voters and "noticeable low turnout of voters. The Chairman of

the NBA-EWG, Mr Afam Osigwe, said in the group's preliminary report on the election, that vote-buying was noticed in states such as Kano, Lagos, Bayelsa, Anambra, Imo, Akwa Ibom, Oyo, Kwara and some area in Ondo states as well as the Federal Capital Territory in Abuja in the last presidential election in the state. Osigwe stated, "The political parties had a field day inducing voters with money, food items, soaps and various other items to vote for their parties' candidates.

Urging Nigerians to reject vote buying, the security to be fair and its party agents to protect their votes, the PDP also alleged that security agents have been instructed to provide cover for all APC stalwarts to be assigned with the responsibility of ascertaining voters compliance and making payments to voters who complied. Reacting to PDP's allegations, Akogun said: "Everybody knows Buhari as a man of integrity, by this time four years ago, we were already hearing about raising huge funds for former President Jonathan's campaign, where contractors are raising huge funds, but now you can't hear of any contractors doing that, is this kind of President the one that would waste N112 billion for campaign?".

All elections in Nigeria have historically been characterized by electoral irregularities. It is noteworthy that the 2019 presidential election was full of vote buying in Akoko South West where some political party were given some people money to vote for their candidate, I witness the All Progressive Congress (APC) sharing food and given the sum of two thousand naira each to the people to vote for their candidate. It is evident that candidates and political parties adopt various means or strategies to rig elections in Nigeria (Ajayi, 2016). The incumbent presidency obtain public funds while in power to maximize vote-buying during elections. They illegally convert public funds for personal gain at the expense of the provision of adequate infrastructure (Ajisebiyawo, 2016).

Existing research shows that a mix of poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, old age, early-stage democratization, and a winner-take-all electoral system has contributed to vote-buying (Khemani (2015) found that there is a connection between vote-buying and poor delivery of electorates. Although Nath (2015) concluded that vote buying ordinarily increase voter support, it is noteworthy that existing literature has not examined the connection between electorate and vote selling. Moreover, none of the available research has explored the vote-selling phenomenon from voters' perspectives. Political parties use various illegal means to ensure electoral success in Nigeria.

Vote buying is frowned upon in every democracy. It raises questions about the quality of democracy. Neeman and Orosel (2006) identify three types of arguments that are usually made against the practice. First, they argue that because vote buying gives wealthier individuals an unfair advantage, it violates the principle of equality. Second,

they argue that votes belong to the community as a whole, and should therefore not be alienable by individual voters. Third, there is a concern that votes buying may promote inefficiency. This is because the interests of some voters are bought by parties before the election, and their needs or interests may therefore be ignored by political representatives after the election. Buying of votes is also frowned upon in most economies. This is because once a nation becomes user-friendly to vote buying and vote selling; it ceases to be in the best books of foreign multinational companies seeking to invest in developing countries.

Over the years the country's democracy has been under serious threats due to illegal activities by politicians to buy the votes of electorates. It is widely believed that politicians allocate public resources in ways to maximize political gains. Politicians face intense pressure to provide gifts in exchange for votes. Ghanaian politicians face pressure to allocate private benefits to voters, often at great personal expense.

As part of the efforts to reduce irregularity during elections Prof. Atairu Jega led administration introduced the use of Coppers as adhoc staff during elections since 2015. The aim is to reduce inducement of electoral personnel as fresh graduate should be seen as those who have not mix with corrupt society. This study is therefore, aim at investigating the influence inducement in cash and kind can have on undergraduates students who will be responsible for the conduct of future elections when participating in youth service.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine the implication of the menace of vote buying among undergraduate in Nigeria University.

- i. To find out the implication of vote buying in Nigeria electoral system among university students
- ii. To examine the Conditions Politicians Attach to Vote Buying Incentives in Nigeria Electorate system
- iii. To study the level of vote selling in Nigeria Electorate System

Research Questions

- i. What is the influence of vote buying among undergraduate students in Nigeria electoral system?
- ii. What are the conditions politicians attach to vote buying in Nigeria electoral process?
- iii. Does vote buying cause violence in Nigeria electorate system?

Significance of the Study

This study accesses the implication of the menace of vote buying among electorate in Nigeria electoral system. In order to assess their work objectively, Vote buying does not just occur; sometimes electorates demand for the incentives from politicians and sometimes politicians also give to the electorates from their own will. The findings will help policy makers and the Independent National

Electoral Commission to provide appropriate means of stopping vote buying among the electorates system in Nigeria.

Scope of the Study

The study area covers Undergraduate Students of Nigerian universities.

METHOD

The researcher adopted a descriptive survey design for this study. The justification for adopting survey research is that it enhances easy means of obtaining useful information from a representative sample of target population.

The population of the study consists of undergraduate students in south west states, Nigeria.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

Purposive random sampling technique was adopted in the selection of the sample from for Universities in South West. One hundred (100) participants were randomly selected from each of the four universities to make a total of Four hundred (400)

Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument for this study was a self - constructed questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into two sections A and B. Section A sought personal information of the participants. Section B consisted of 15 items to which the participants were to indicate the degree of agreement or rejection. The adoption of Likert scale, with each of the items formulated by ticking Strongly- Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly-Disagree in relation to the research questions.

Reliability of the Instrument

The instrument was subjected to reliability estimates to affirm the consistency of the test results. The split-half method was adopted, using Pearson product Moment Correlation method for analysis.

Method of Data Analysis

The data collected from the field were analyzed using frequency count, chart for the bio - data. The research questions were answered using simple percentage, mean and standard deviation and Chi-square. Decisions for the research questions were based on the grand mean of 2.5, that is, questions and items with mean 2.5 and above were regarded positive while those below 2.5 were regarded as negative.

RESULTS AND AISCUSSION

Introduction

Research Question 1: What are the influence of vote buying among undergraduate students in Nigeria electoral system?

Table 1
A frequency table showing the implication of vote buying in Nigeria electoral system

S/N	Influence of vote buying in Nigeria electoral system	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	S.D
1	I can't vote for money	260	100	12	20	3.52	.79
2	It is an insult to offer me money to vote for a candidate	136	180	48	36	3.04	.91
3	Accepting cash or kind in order to vote for a candidate will make my university education meaningless	168	156	20	52	3.10	1.00
4	Vote buying result in poor infrastructure in the society	160	164	36	40	3.11	.94
5	I may not participate in a compromised election	236	124	20	20	3.44	.81

Weighted mean score= 3.24

The result in table one revealed a weighted mean score of 3.24 which is higher than the average mean score of 2.5 which indicates that vote buying brings about bad political leader as the richest party gets the highest vote. A major implication of vote buying is lack of trust and political apathy with the highest mean score of 3.44. Also the result indicated that vote buying often results in poor infrastructure in the society ($\bar{x} = 3.11$) and there are always high rate of poverty and illiteracy in the society (\bar{x}

$\bar{x} = 3.10$). The result in table revealed mean scores higher than 2.50, for all of the items.

Research Question 2: What are the conditions politicians attach to vote buying in Nigeria electoral process?

Table 2
A frequency table showing the conditions politicians attaches to vote buying in Nigeria electoral process

S/N	The conditions politicians attach to vote buying in Nigeria electoral process	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	S.D
1	I was told to snap a picture of the ballot	148	164	36	52	3.02	.99
2	I was given an incentive and made to swear to go by the contract	148	140	44	68	2.92	1.01
3	I was given a ballot already thumb printed to use	132	132	48	88	2.77	1.14
4	The condition was to spoil my ballot	132	104	92	72	2.74	1.11
5	I was told that if I collect the incentive and do not do per the contract I will die	108	112	76	104	2.56	1.15

The conditions politicians attaches to vote buying in Nigeria electoral process as revealed in table 2 are request for screenshots of ballots ($\bar{x} = 3.02$), engagement in contract ($\bar{x} = 2.92$), Falsified ballot papers ($\bar{x} = 2.77$

and 2.74), and Death penalty ($\bar{x} = 2.56$). The result in

table two revealed mean scores higher than 2.50, for all of the items. This therefore means that the identified conditions are attached to vote buying by politicians.

Research Question 3: Does vote buying cause violence in Nigeria electorate system?

Table 3
A frequency table showing the influence of vote buying in Nigeria electorate system

S/N	Does vote buying cause violence in Nigeria electorate system	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	S.D
1	Vote buying cause civic war among electorate	228	108	20	44	3.30	.99
2	It deprive the franchise of a citizen from electing the right candidate	160	196	12	32	3.21	.84
3	It gives room for ethnic diversity	128	136	32	104	2.72	1.17
4	It makes some party malfunction whenever they won an election	164	164	28	44	3.12	.96
5	It encourage embezzlement of funds when politicians get to power	204	124	28	44	3.22	.99

Weighted mean score= 3.11

The result in table three revealed a weighted mean score of 3.11 which is higher than the average mean score of 2.5 which indicates that vote buying causes violent in Nigeria electorate system. Emergence of civic war among electorate ($\bar{x} = 3.30$), encouragement of embezzlement

of funds ($\bar{x} = 3.22$), ethnic diversity ($\bar{x} = 2.72$), and deprivation ($\bar{x} = 3.21$) emerges from vote buying. The

result in table three revealed mean scores higher than 2.50, for all of the items. Research Question 4: What is students' attitude towards vote buying?

Table 4
A frequency table showing students' attitude towards vote buying

S/N	Students' attitude towards vote buying	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	S.D
1	Collecting money does not mean anything to me	180	92	52	76	2.06	1.16
2	I can vote for anyone if I am promising a position	80	52	192	76	2.34	1.07
3	I can vote to appease a friend	76	68	124	132	2.22	1.11
4	I can't vote for another candidate that does not belong to my party	152	120	48	80	2.14	1.14
5	There is no problem in voting for member of my family	152	124	56	68	2.10	1.10

Weighted mean score= 2.17

The result in table 4 show that students' attitude towards vote buying is negative with a weighted mean score of 2.17 which is lower than the standard mean

score of 2.50 out of 4.00. All of the items depict lower means scores (2.06, 2.34, 2.22, 2.14 and 2.10) than 2.50 indicating that students display a negative attitude towards vote buying as they may collect money or vote for anyone based on position or connection.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Finding research on research question one which read attitude of university students towards vote buying is negative. The responses of the sampled students show their negative attitude towards vote buying in Nigeria electoral process. This attitude supported the reason why corps members were been used for elections in Nigeria. Their attitude is in line with the findings of Wright: (2018), which states in his findings that majority of graduate students became corrupted after their interaction with corrupt environment after they have graduated.

Table three which is the analysis of the responses of the participants to the research question two which look at conditions politicians attaches to vote buying in Nigeria electoral process shows that politician attached to vote buying does not give room for sanctity of ballot papers as they demand for screen short of ballot papers and stuffing of ballot boxes. This act is not good for future electoral process. This is in line with the finding of Desposato (2007) which states in his finding that politicians are more interested in their gain rather than sanctity of ballots.

Table four revealed the responses of the participants to research question three which investigates knowledge of the what would be the implication of vote buying on the future of the country revealed that participants are of the opinion that vote buying can cause violence in future as other parties without financial strength can result into violence as well as disruptions of the process in many ways. This in line with the finding of Owen, (2013)

CONCLUSION

From the findings it could be concluded that if our universities could continue with the teaching of societal value, such as integrity and loyalty to the nation, products of the universities will continue to be protecting the sanctity of the electoral process and if the teaching continues after graduation and service, the lost value can be regained.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is therefore, recommended that curriculum planners should include in all the level of education the teaching of value. Also there should be room for continue learning for young graduate in order not to get them polluted in the society, this could be through religion leaders and community leaders. Government should implement the sanction accompany vote buying to always serve as deterrent for vote buyers.

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