

Original paper

Vote Buying and Elections: The Case of Ekiti 2022 Gubernatorial Election

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ABSTRACT: Vote buying, a direct market interaction where voters provide their votes for money is one of the reinforcing variables in Nigeria's political corrupt practices, with its negative impact on the country's democratic space. This paper examines the dynamics and operational strategies of voting in the electoral process, using the 2022 Ekiti Governorship Election as area of study. Primary data were generated from self-administered questionnaire to 410 participants cutting across the sixteen local governments. This was supplemented with secondary data that came from election observers and other archival materials. Findings revealed the predominance and prevalence of vote buying cutting across the sixteen local governments involving the three major political parties. The transaction was at two major periods. The pre-election time when candidates and their agents reached out to the electorates at their ward/community level with cash and other consumable items. On Election Day, it was operation see and buy, with voters flagging finished ballot papers as proof of voting and sometimes cash collecting in brown packets, to escape prosecution. The paper recommends strict compliance to electoral regulations by actors in the electoral process, beefing up security architecture to arrest and prosecute violators of electoral offence of vote buying. Voter education by relevant government agencies, mass media and religious organizations.

Keywords: Vote buying, Elections, Electoral rules, Ekiti State

INTRODUCTION

Election is considered by liberal democratic theorists as the most peaceful means of instituting modern democratic government. It is seen as the major mechanism for attaining and translating people consent into governmental authority. (Bratton, 1999; Diamond, 2015). This point to the fact that modern democracies become meaningful through electoral process that guarantees the opportunity to participate in governance either by selecting those that were given the mandate to preside over the affairs of a state for a specified period of time or through decision making in matters of policy and constitution through initiatives of referendum. The reliable, credible periodic election also ensures accountability and stewardship of state officials in governance (Duriyi and Joshua 2014). Globally, the conduct of regular, credible elections has enhanced the institutionalization and consolidation of democratic

system in the western capitalist countries including United States of America, Germany and some European Nations (Diamond, 2015). Election has also served as a major means of installing and changing governments democratically in larger parts of Africa, since the beginning of the third democratic wave (Huntington, 1991; Diamond, 2015). However, in Nigeria, there is the record of dizzying historical profile of electoral processes characterized by violence and disorderliness, as a result of electoral corruption. Vote buying has emerged as one of the reinforcing variables of political corruption that has continued to plague Nigeria's transparent election. While it is undeniable that the incidence had been part of Nigeria's polls profile, its magnitude, influence and prevalence has assumed alarming dimension since the commencement of the Fourth Republic. Jensen and Justesen (2014) note that Nigeria is one of the frontlines

countries in Africa where vote buying is pervasive. Nigeria's electoral umpire, Yakubu (2018) acknowledges the predominance of vote buying in recent elections in Nigeria when he identified politicians as vote buyers through various forms, including inducements of prospective voters with naira notes sandwiched between two slices of bread. In spite of its prohibition and criminalization by Nigerian extant laws (Electoral Act 2010, FGN, 1999), the high incidence of vote buying continues with the dire consequence of frustrating efforts at strengthening democratic governance.

The general objective of the study is to investigate the causes and operational dynamics of vote buying in the conduct Ekiti State, South West, Nigeria, 2022, Gubernatorial Election. The specific objectives are to;

- i. identify the socio-economic factors accounting for vote buying in Ekiti State Gubernatorial election;
- ii. unravel the various strategies and means of mobilizing electoral support through vote buying;
- iii. analyze the implications of vote buying on governance .
- iv. Proffer policy measures capable of taming the menace of vote buying in the political space of the state and Nigeria generally.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study area and population

The scope of this study is Ekiti State. Ekiti State is in south west, Nigeria, declared a state on October 1, 1996 alongside five others by the military under the dictatorship of General Sani Abacha. The state, carved out of the territory of the old Ondo State, covers the former twelve local government areas that made up the Ekiti Zone of the old Ondo State. On creation, it took off with sixteen (16) Local Government Areas (LGAs), having had an additional four carved out of the old ones. Ekiti State is one of the thirty-six states (Federal Capital Territory (Nigeria) that constitutes Nigeria. The sub-national unit of the Nigerian federation is reputed to have produced the highest number of professors in Nigeria. Several pioneer academics are from the state. According to a report by the National Bureau of Statistics, Ekiti has an estimated population of nearly 3.3 million as of 2016. The State government is led by a democratically elected governor who works closely with members of the state's house of assembly. The Capital of the State is Ado-Ekiti. The electoral system for electing a governor is the modified two-round system.

As Nigeria operates a presidential system of government, each of the States has an executive cabinet led by a governor. These governors are elected through popular votes for a renewable term of four years.

Since the return to democratic rule in Nigeria in 1999, general elections have been holding every four years at both the federal and state levels to elect the president and governors respectively. Participants in the 2022 governorship election in Ekiti State constitute the population of study.

Sources of data

For this study, primary and secondary data that were gathered using both qualitative and quantitative methods. The main technique used to gather the thoughts and opinions of electorates in the state was the use of well-structured questionnaires. However, to support the study's conclusions in the primary data, interviews with electoral stakeholders and observers as well as election observations and reports were analyzed.

Sampling procedure and sample size

The research design used for the study is the survey method, using questionnaire and observation as instruments for data collection. A total of 410 questionnaires were administered to the respondents. However, after data cleaning, 389 respondents were retrieved as the total number of respondents useful for analysis in the study. The population of this study is drawn from electorates in the state. A purposive random sampling selection was adopted to select electoral participants across the 16 LGAs in the state. This was complemented with in-depth interview of some election observers involved during the election.

Procedure for data analysis

Data analysis involves data cleaning, organization, and computing and presentation results. Qualitative as well as quantitative data were gathered using interview guides and questionnaires. Data was processed and results computed using Statistical Product and Service Solutions (IBM SPSS version 23) software. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics namely frequencies, Percentages, means, standard deviation. Qualitative data was presented using textual method. The obtained results were presented in tables and figures. Finally, the results were discussed and interpreted. The study also adopted a Likert rating scale which is normally used to measure opinions, attitudes, or behaviors of respondents.

Conceptual Analysis: Vote buying and Election

Vote buying is seen to be a form of political clientelism which is the direct exchange at individual level, of rewards and material goods by political gladiators in return for electoral support by voters. Vote buying is often defined in literatures as direct market transaction where

voters provide their votes in return for money or gifts (Guardado and Watchekon, 2018). In another definition that attempts to move from cash in exchange for votes, Kramon (2009) defines vote buying as the distribution of particularistic or private material benefits with the expectation of political supports.

In the foregoing definitions, it can simply be said that vote buying is economic exchange. As Fredrick and Adreas (2005) point out, candidates 'buy' and citizens/electorates 'sell' their votes to the highest bidder. Manga (2016) observes that in vote buying transactions in Nigeria, voters are usually offered money or commodities such as food stuff as part of clientelistic patronage. Vote buying taints the credibility of elections and this raises questions about the character of democracy Stokes (2007). Vote buying collides with the standards of democratic fairness because the interest of many voters, especially in the developing democracy like Nigeria are bought by parties before election and therefore may be ignored by political representatives after the election.

Stokes (2007) further explains that the undemocratic nature of vote buying arises because it keeps vote sellers from having their interest articulately interpreted and made known. This tends to weaken or even sever the accountability link between voters and politicians. Community. Indeed, vote buying as a concept in literature represents a force that jeopardizes and violates the tenets of election credibility.

Election is considered the most peaceful means of installing government in modern democracy. Schumpeter (cited in Adesiyan, 2012) envisions modern democracy as a system of government that permits selection of the most powerful collective decision makers through the window of free, fair, honest and periodic elections involving candidates that freely compete for votes of adult population. This process further emphasizes the primacy of elections that by the way he describes a political system as that which supplies regular constitutional opportunities for changing the governing officials and social mechanism which permits the largest possible part of the population to make decisions.

Vote buying and election: The interconnection

There is dyadic relationship between vote buying as a form of political clientelism and election. Vote buying is more visible and more relevant during the electoral process where political entrepreneurs are bidding for the control of state power. Extant literatures have confirmed a link between electoral democracy and vote buying. It is considered to be an integral feature of electoral politics across the globe (Jensen and Justesen, 2014). Indeed, the issue of vote buying and electoral politics is not limited to time and space. What had dominated the early stage of western democracy has now spread to the

developing world where electoral governance is struggling to take its root (Hicken et al., 2018, Bratton, 2008).

Vote buying is a form of economic interaction between voters and political entrepreneurs, in which the voter is ready to exchange his vote for materials reward. It is indeed a direct exchange at the individual level of rewards and material goods by political barons in return for electoral support by voters. In this sense, political entrepreneurs consider it expedient to mobilize electoral support from electorates to win election by rewarding individuals with money or other equivalents.

Owen (2013) further opines that vote buying is a process consisting of an offer made to purchase the vote of an individual of voting age who accepts the offer, receives compensation, shows up at the polling station and then votes as paid (Owen 2013:250). It is thus the use of cash as an inducement on behalf of the candidate to persuade voters to vote through the vote buyers. Vote buying in this sense portrays the vote buyers as the mediator of the transaction. However, it is pointed out that the individual seller interest or eagerness to sell its vote is underplayed. Vote buying should therefore be further explained in term of the eagerness of the voters to sell its vote for certain obvious reasons known to him.

From the vote selling position, it is defined as an individual who at least gives impression to buyer or an intermediary of his/her willingness to sell vote (Vincent, 2009). A further explanation of the concept of vote buying is its attributes or features, which isof contingent exchange occurring during election, payment of cash, distribution of goods and services, distribution of food and alcohol and rewards for turnout. Vote buying can be understood and attributed on any of the foregoing attributes.

Theoretical review

Theory provides a framework or basis for explaining, predicting and analyzing a phenomenon. This study is premised on two theories related to electoral behavior. They are Rational Choice theory and Clientelism.

Rational choice theory of election explains voters' behavior and how it influences choice of their candidates. The theory has its root in the economic theory of consumer rationality developed by Dawns in 1957. Economic rationality propounds that consumers being economic and rational beings seek to utilize their money on commodities that give them maximum satisfaction in purchasing them. Just as it happens in the economic realm, Dawns (1957) and Zafirovski (1999) also believe that electorates identify economic indicators such as resource allocation and provision of goods and services as determinants of their political choices of leadership. Voters therefore chose leaders they consider can provide them maximum satisfaction of services and welfare. In society like Nigeria, Ekiti state inclusive, where

electorates lack trust in leadership providing minimum public good, they may have the incentive of selling votes in exchange for money. As Manzetti & Wilson (2007) argue, voters with lower level of trust toward political leadership or Institution are believed to build transactional relations with potential political parties and sell their votes to candidates providing private goods and favours.

In a related manner, Clientelism explains the process of political corruption including vote buying where political office holders seeking for personal enrichment, mobilize support through patron-client relationship. In such a circumstance, the political entrepreneurs engage the service of the patron – who in turn mobilizes voters to sell votes in exchange for money. Clientelism as a theory that emerged in the 1970s and 80s is seen as a political activity and a strategy which involves vote buying and rewarding of voters and political sponsors for undeserved favour which leads to corruption and abuse of political offices (Baidoo *et al.*, 2018).

Empirical review

Empirical studies are available on the issue of vote buying and electoral behavior. Jensen and Justesen (2014) carried out a study on the nexus between poverty and vote buying in Africa. The study relying on data from Afrobarometer study focused on the source of vote buying at individual and country level. Results from the multilevel regression shows that poverty is an important source of vote buying in Africa and has implication on the operation of electoral democracy. Another study carried out by Afro barometer (2016) on Election quality in Africa through opinion survey revealed that almost 7 in 10 Africans (69%) say voters are bribed. According to the report, bribery of vote pervasiveness in Mali is 78%, Gabon 71%, Senegal 68%, Benin 60%, and Nigeria 57%. In another study, Bratton (2008) carried out a study on the influence of political violence and vote buying on Nigerian elections using 2007 general elections. Findings revealed that political violence affected voters' turnout. However, only about one of five was exposed to vote buying, and concentrated on the poor/most vulnerable as a result of limited access to resources and therefore had minimal impact on the outcome of the election. While extant studies exist on the issue of vote buying and elections generally, and in Nigeria, there is still more yet to be explored on the causes, strategies and consequences of vote buying focused on recent elections at sub-national units of Nigerian Federation. This study on the 2022 Ekiti Governorship Election in the South West Nigeria is one of the attempts in filling this gap in knowledge.

Vote buying and 2022 Ekiti gubernatorial election

Ekiti state is located in the Southwest part of Nigeria. It is regarded as one of the volatile states in terms of

electoral violence as a result of clamor of political parties to capture political power. Since its creation on October 1, 1996, there were three political parties that had always controlled the state power with all the political maneuvering. These are; Alliance for Democracy 1999-2003, PDP 2003-2010, APC 2010-2014, PDP 2014-2018, APC 2018 - 2023. Nigeria electoral umpire. The Independent National Electoral Commission conducted the Governorship Election, on Saturday, 18th June 2022 across the 16 Local governments of the State. Sixteen political parties presented candidates for the election. However, three political parties featured prominently based on electoral performance. These are All Progressive Congress, People Democratic Party and Social Democratic Party. Ekiti State therefore, provides a platform for the dynamics and operation of political strategies in which vote buying is quite prominent. This is more so as the 2022 gubernatorial election provides a sample to which the dynamics, the casual factors and operational dynamics of the transactional strategies can be examined.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic characteristics of the respondents

Distribution of respondents by age

The results in (Table 1) shows the age distribution of voters, young people made up the majority of the voting population in the study area with 45.2% of respondents falling between the ages of 18 and 42. With a percentage of 30.8, those in the 35 to 49 age group came in second. The remaining respondents, who were aged between 50-69 and 70 & above, were 18.0% and 5.9%, respectively.

Table 1. Age distribution of respondents.

Age Distribution	Frequency	Percentage
18-34	176	45.2
35-49	120	30.8
50-69	70	18.0
70 and above	23	5.9
Total	389	100.0

Source: Field Survey, January 2023.

Distribution of respondents by marital status

The distribution of respondents by marital status is shown in (Table 2). It reveals that 44.7% of the respondents were single, closely followed by the married population at a rate of 38.6%.

While the remaining respondents filled out the 'others' section of marital status, 13.1% of other respondents reported being divorced.

Table 2: Marital status of respondents.

Marital status	Frequency	Percent
Married	150	38.6
Single	174	44.7
Divorced	51	13.1
Others	14	3.6
Total	389	100.0

Source: Field Survey, January 2023.

Occupational distribution of respondents

According to (Table 3) results, the majority of respondents (25.7%) are students. Additionally, 21.6% of respondents work in the private sector, 20.1% of respondents are engaged in agriculture, 18.5% of respondents are employed by the government, and 14.1% are engaged in one type of trading or business or another.

Table 3: Occupational distribution of respondents.

Occupational Distribution	Frequency	Percent
Trading & Business	55	14.1
Civil Service	72	18.5
Student	100	25.7
Farming/Agriculture	78	20.1
Private Sector	84	21.6
Total	389	100.0

Source: Field Survey, January 2023.

Distribution of respondents by Education

The educational distribution of the respondents is shown in (Table 4), which reveals that graduates make up 20.1% of the respondents while SSCE holders make up the majority (23.7%). Additionally, 19.8% of the respondents have never attended school. Those with primary education, junior secondary education, and other forms of education made up the remaining respondents (16.5%, 12.9%, and 7.2%, respectively). This implies that most respondents could read and write. Therefore, it makes sense that they could base their decisions on the questionnaires and interviews that were given to them.

Table 4. Education of respondents

Educational Level	Frequency	Percent
No formal education	77	19.8
Primary education	64	16.5
Junior Secondary	50	12.9
Senior Secondary	92	23.7
Tertiary	78	20.1
Others	28	7.2
Total	389	100.0

Source: Field Survey, January 2023.

Distribution of respondents by monthly income

The average monthly income of the respondents is displayed in (Table 5) as shown below. The majority of

respondents (24.2%) make an average salary of between ₦50,000 and ₦100,000. 19.8% of respondents earn less than ₦10,000, which is followed by 19.5% of respondents who earn more than ₦100,000 and only 19.5% of respondents who earn between ₦10,000 and 25,000.

Table 5. Monthly Income of respondents

Amount (₦)	Frequency	Percent
<10,000	77	19.8
10,000-25,000	75	19.3
25,000-50,000	64	16.5
50,000-100,000	94	24.2
>100,000	76	19.5

Respondents’ perception of vote buying and its implication

Did you vote in the last Ekiti State election?

The number of respondents who voted in the most recent elections in Ekiti State is shown in (Table 6). And it shows that the majority (54.5%) of respondents said they voted in the 2022 Ekiti gubernatorial election, while the remaining 45.5% said they did not.

Table 6. Responses to “Did you vote in the last Ekiti/Osun State election?”

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Yes	212	54.5
No	177	45.5
Total	389	100.0

Source: Field Survey, January 2023.

Have you heard about vote buying before?

Table 7 reveals that the vast majority of respondents (79.9%) have heard of vote buying before, with only 20.1% reporting not having. The outcome demonstrates the respondents' level of familiarity with the idea of vote buying. This is in consonance with studies by Jensen and Justesen (2014), which have confirmed a link between electoral democracy and vote buying. Vote buying is considered to be an integral feature of electoral politics across the globe, especially given the result in the table above which showed that a good number of the respondents are aware of the concept of vote buying.

Table 7: Responses to “Have you heard about vote buying before?”

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Yes	311	79.9
No	78	20.1
Total	389	100.0

Source: Field Survey, January 2023.

At what point did vote buying become more prominent in your area?

According to the results from the (Table 8), 51.7% of votes were bought during elections, followed by 37.5% of

Table 8: Responses to “At what point was vote buying more prominent in your area?”

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Pre-election	146	37.5
During election	201	51.7
Post-election	42	10.8
Total	389	100.0

Source: Field Survey, January 2023.

respondents who said it usually happens before elections, and the remaining (10.8%) respondents who said it usually happens after elections. This agrees with Yiaga Africa’s observation that there was rampant vote buying inducement. It observed open use of money by politicians and their agents to buy votes. Frontline political parties engaged in vote buying – APC, PDP and SDP were doling out cash ranging from N5000 to N10,000 in exchange of votes for the eagerly waiting vote sellers (Yiaga Africa, 2023).

Voters’ willingness to vote for money

Table 9 shows the respondent’s response to if they will be willing to vote in exchange for money. The result reveals that majority (41.6%) disagreed to their willingness to vote for money while 19.8% strongly disagreed to it. It further shows that 26.5% of the respondents however agreed to willingly vote for money while 12.1% of the respondents strongly agree to willing to vote for money. This result aligns with Owen (2013) who portrays the vote buyers as the mediator of the transaction. He pointed out that the individual seller interest or eagerness to sell its vote is underplayed. Vote buying should therefore be further explained in term of the eagerness of the voters to sell its vote for certain obvious reasons known to him.

Table 9: Responses to “Will you be willing to vote in exchange for money?”

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	47	12.1
Agree	103	26.5
Disagree	162	41.6
Strongly Disagree	77	19.8
Total	389	100.0

Source: Field Survey, January 2023.

Voters’ willingness to accept food items instead of cash

The results in (Table 10) shows that 39.3% of the respondents disagree willing to accept food items

In place of cash while 11.3 strongly disagree to it. 32.1% of the respondents agreed that they are willing to accept food items in place of cash gift from electoral candidates during election, while only 17.2% strongly agreed to it.

Table 10: Responses to “I’m willing to accept food items in place of cash from electoral candidates.”

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	67	17.2
Agree	125	32.1
Disagree	153	39.3
Strongly Disagree	44	11.3
Total	389	100.0

Source: Field Survey, January 2023.

Voters’ perception on collecting money during elections

The majority of respondents are shown in (Table 11) to strongly agree (at 32.1%) and agree (at 36.5%) to the statement that collecting money during an election means absolutely nothing. At 24.7% and 6.7%, respectively, the minority were found to have strongly disagreed and agreed that collecting money during elections meant absolutely nothing. This agrees with the rational choice theory which posits that individuals make decisions by weighing the costs and benefits of different options and choosing the one that maximizes their self-interest. In the context of electoral behavior, this theory suggests that voters are rational actors who make choices based on their perceived self-interests (Baidoo *et al.*, (2018).

Table 11: Responses to “Collecting money during elections means nothing whatsoever.”

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	125	32.1
Agree	142	36.5
Disagree	96	24.7
Strongly Disagree	26	6.7
Total	389	100.0

Source: Field Survey, January 2023.

Vote buying is common only among those who are not well educated

According to the results in (Table 12), the majorities of respondents (70.1%) strongly agree or agree with the statement that vote buying only occurs among less educated people, while the remaining respondents (29.9%) either strongly disagree or disagree with the statement.

Table 12. Responses to “Vote buying is common only among those who are not well educated.”

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	104	26.7
Agree	169	43.4
Disagree	106	27.2
Strongly Disagree	10	2.6
Total	389	100.0

Source: Field Survey, January 2023.

Studies by Baidoo *et al.*, (2018) have suggested that educational qualifications are often associated with increased political participation and engagement. As individuals gain higher levels of education, they may become more interested and involved in the political process. This heightened political participation can potentially decrease the susceptibility to vote buying, as educated individuals may be more inclined to vote based on their ideological alignment, policy preferences, or evaluation of candidates' qualifications and performance, rather than material inducements.

Voters' awareness of the negative effect of vote buying in their ward

The findings in (Table 13) indicates that a smaller proportion of respondents (31.9%) quite agree with the opinion that there is sufficient awareness of the negative effects of vote buying in their ward, as they either agree or strongly agree with the statement. Although people have demonstrated awareness of the concept of vote buying, a higher percentage of respondents disagree with this assertion, further demonstrating that there is less awareness of the detrimental effects of vote buying.

Table 13: Responses to "There's adequate awareness on the side effect on vote buying in my ward."

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	27	6.9
Agree	97	24.9
Disagree	178	45.8
Strongly Disagree	87	22.4
Total	389	100.0

Source: Field Survey, January 2023.

From the (Table 14) presented below, the use of money (cash), gifts, and food items occurred quite frequently and was very prevalent, according to the results, majority of respondents agreed that these methods of vote buying were either high or very high. A total of 297 of the 389 people who responded agreed that gifts could also be used to buy votes, while 275 of the 389 people who responded said that using money (cash) was much more frequent in their ward during election. In a similar vein, 283 respondents agreed that using food packaging was also a part of buying votes in their ward. In the study area, other vote-buying strategies like money (transfer) and word-of-mouth (promise) were less prevalent. This result agrees with Owen (2013) who in his study describes vote buying as the use of cash as an inducement on behalf of the candidate to persuade voters to vote through the vote buyers. Furthermore, based on the in-depth interview and information collected from secondary sources. There is a general consensus among

the respondents that in the Ekiti election, cases of voters' inducement in form of vote buying were prevalent in all the 16 local government areas of the state where elections took place. Indeed, the electorate voluntarily and willingly placed monetary values on their votes. One of the election observers during the conduct of the governorship election stated that voters and buyers were conducting the transaction in the open without disturbance (Aiyede, 2022).

Jinadu, a professor of political science and Chairman of Centre for Democracy and Development who was on the field at the day of election throws light on the dynamics and pattern of vote buying. According to him, "Vote buying took the pattern of cash collection in brown envelopes to disguise the content to avoid arrest". He further noted that in some cases, young voters openly displayed the money for the votes they are willing to auction, which he attributed to the ongoing strike by Academic Staff Union of Universities in the country during the conduct of election (www.thisday.com.cdn.amproject.org). The period of the election thus offered opportunity for some categories of the electorates to solve their economic challenges. The industrial strike grounded campus economic activities where some of these young folks earn their daily living, apart from the lecturers and other staff on monthly salary. Indeed, Ekiti governorship election demonstrated that voters auctioned their votes to the highest bidder, a form of corrupt electoral behaviour that is fast replacing ballot snatching in Nigeria's electoral process.

The influence of vote buying on the electoral system and democratic governance

Vote buying deprives us from having the right candidate to rule and govern us in my state

The result from (Table 15) shows that the majority of respondents (44.5%) agree with the statement that vote buying deprives us from having the right candidate to rule and govern us in my State. while (29.3%) of the respondents strongly disagree with the statement, (17.5%) of the respondents disagree with the statement while (8.7%) strongly disagree with the statement.

Vote buying usually causes ethnic unrest and bigotry amongst the voting populace

The result from (Table 16) shows that the majority of respondents (47.3%) disagree with the statement that vote buying usually causes ethnic unrest and bigotry amongst the voting populace. while (24.7%) of the respondents agree with the statement, (20.6%) of the respondents strongly disagree with the statement while (7.5%) strongly agree with the statement.

Table 14. Methods of voting.

	Money (Cash)		Money (Transfer)		Gift Items		Words of Mouth (Promise)		Food Packaging	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Very High	100	25.7	11	2.8	118	30.3	59	15.2	140	36.0
High	175	45.0	94	24.2	179	46.0	103	26.5	143	36.8
Moderate	66	17.0	157	40.4	58	14.9	111	28.5	72	18.5
Low	36	9.3	103	26.5	27	6.9	99	25.4	28	7.2
Very Low	12	3.1	24	6.2	7	1.8	17	4.4	6	1.5
Total	389	100.0	389	100.0	389	100.0	389	100.0	389	100.0

Table 15: Responses to “Vote buying deprives us from having the right candidate to rule and govern us in my state”

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	114	29.3
Agree	173	44.5
Disagree	68	17.5
Strongly Disagree	34	8.7
Total	389	100.0

Source: Field Survey, January 2023.

Table 16: Responses to “Vote buying usually causes ethnic unrest and bigotry amongst the voting populace”

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	29	7.5
Agree	96	24.7
Disagree	184	47.3
Strongly Disagree	80	20.6
Total	389	100.0

Source: Field Survey, January 2023.

Table 17. Responses to “Vote buying is what leads to under-performance of Public office holders after they win the election”

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	133	34.2
Agree	145	37.3
Disagree	84	21.6
Strongly Disagree	27	6.9
Total	389	100.0

Source: Field Survey, January 2023.

Table 18. Responses to “Vote buying has limited the infrastructural development of my state and region.”

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	143	36.8
Agree	136	35.0
Disagree	71	18.3
Strongly Disagree	39	10.0
Total	389	100.0

Source: Field Survey, January 2023.

Vote buying leads to under-performance of public office holders after they win the election

According to (Table 17) the result shows that the majority of respondents (37.3%) agree with the statement that vote buying is what leads to under-performance of public office holders after they won the election. (34.2%) of the respondents strongly agree with the statement, (21.6%) of the respondents disagree with the statement while (6.9 %) strongly disagree with the statement. This confirms the observation of Hicken et al. (2018) that inefficiencies in public sector is associated with vote buying. Vote buying as an electoral strategy leads to governmental and economic inefficiencies.

Vote buying has limited the infrastructural development of my state

According to (Table 18), majority 36.8% of respondents strongly agreed that vote buying has limited the infrastructural development of the state, while 35% of the respondents agreed that lack of infrastructural development is one of the effects of vote buying in Ekiti state.

This shows that majority of the respondents are aware that vote buying has the potential to limit the infrastructural development of the state. The view aligns with the findings of Adojutelegan (2018) on the effect of vote selling on infrastructure and public service delivery in Akoko North Local Government, Ondo state.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study set out to investigate the dynamics and operational strategies of vote buying that has emerged as one of the reinforcing variables of political corruption in the electoral process.

The focal point was the 2022 Ekiti Governorship Election in the South West, Nigeria. This became apparent given its volatility when it comes to manipulation of electoral process by political entrepreneurs in order to capture state power. The result of the study from both primary and secondary data generated, revealed the predominance and prevalence of vote-buying.

It showed the eagerness of the politicians to buy vote given the high premium placed on winning the election while there was the willingness on the part of certain voting population to sell their votes as a result of their socio-economic conditions and educational background. In an important sense, vote buying predominated the 2022 Ekiti Gubernatorial Election as a result of loss of confidence of the voters in the political class for failure to fulfil their promises resulting in poor service delivery. In an attempt to curb vote buying and its consequences on election integrity, the study recommends as follows;

- i) Sincere and committed implementation of country's new electoral act on the use of Biometric Voters accreditation and electronic transmission of results.
- ii) Ensuring violators of electoral offences are brought to book to serve as deterrent to others
- iii) Security architecture to be beefed up especially during the period of election.
- iv) Voter education on the part of government, mass media and religious organizations.

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