

The Effects of Vote Buying on the Electoral Process in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Vote buying is widely perceived as a major obstacle to free, fair and credible elections. This is because it limits the chances of electing good political office holders, and these poses a hindrance to the sustainability of democracy particularly in democratizing states or societies such as Nigeria. This paper argues that the phenomenon of vote buying in Nigerian electoral process from 1999-2011 has been prevalent thus making the outcome of Nigeria's polls not to reflects the wishes of the electorate. this paper argues that the serial incidences of vote buying during elections in Nigeria are an impediment to the country's quest for democratic consolidation.

Keywords: vote buying, democracy, election and Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

In a democracy, an election campaign is supposed to be a peaceful and open discourse of persuasion. Ideally, candidates compete for popular support by presenting reasoned arguments about why they are most qualified for election to occupy an office. They stake out rival positions about programs of public goods, all the while being tugged towards the median voter at the center of the political spectrum [1] voters then choose the contender whose policy positions most closely resembles their own set of preferences [2]. In Africa, however, elections are viewed as struggles over who will have the access to control the resources contracted by that state, which are the biggest prize in society.

Given these high stakes, politicians resort to a variety of means-whether fair or foul to attain public office. To be sure, candidates go through the motions of presenting programmatic promises [3]. The growing sophistication of electoral fraud and manipulation has been matched by improvements in the skills and methods of election observers [4]. African election campaigns are mainly

moments for politicians to engage in mass mobilization and manipulation of electoral rules. All too often, campaign strategies feature material inducement and political intimidation. In extreme forms, unconventional modes of electoral practice are manifest in explicit acts of vote buying. It is tempting to view vote buying as a purely economic exchange. A vote is literally "bought" or "sold" depending on whether one adopts the perspective of the candidate or the voter. The act of vote buying by this is a contract, or perhaps an auction in which the voter sells his or her vote to the highest bidder [5]. Nigerian case to search for credible elections has been dented with terribly festering irregularities. This explains why the conduct of free, fair and credible elections has remained elusive and problematic in the country since her independence in 1960, public polls held in 1959, 1964 - 56, 1979 and 1983 were all fraught with various levels of crass anomalies ranging from bribery, electoral violence, intimidation and harassment of voters, ballot box snatching and ballot stuffing. Under age

voting, vote buying and so on [6]. The snag however is that in Nigeria and several other countries, elections are far from being free and fair. One of the palpable factors is the menace of vote buying. This political malady is indeed pervasive in Nigeria [7]. Broadly speaking, vote trading propositions may target either electoral choices or electoral participation. They may be intended to persuade individuals to vote in certain ways or to vote or to not vote in the first place. The purpose of this paper therefore, is to explore, the nature extent and effectiveness of irregular modes of electioneering such as vote buying which is widely perceived as a major obstacle to free, fair and credible elections. The paper is divided into six major sections, section one is the introduction followed by section two that reviews literature on vote buying. In section three, various incidences of voting during elections in Nigeria are highlighted. This is followed by section four that appraises the effects of voting buying on Nigeria's electoral process. Recommendations are made in section five followed by section six that concludes the paper.

Understanding the Meaning of Vote Buying

According to [8] vote buying is a corrupt act which usually takes the form of "a gift or gratuity bestowed for the purpose of influencing the action or conduct of the receiver, especially money or any valuable consideration given or promised for the betrayal of a trust or the corrupt performance of an allotted duty, as to a fiduciary agent, a judge, legislator or other public officer, a witness, a voter etc." As a corrupt act vote buying can be defined as any form of persuasion in which financial gain is suggested by one person to another with the intension of influencing a person's vote. This includes not only the payment of a simple bribe, but also the payment of excessive travelling expenses and the payments of excessive election workers. Political bribery involves a situation where persuasion income is channeled and also the attitude of the voter to his vote preference is commercial. In this

case, voters are approached in public houses and at home and would be offered financial rewards if they voted for the right candidate [9]. Nevertheless, [10] opined that, more historically textured or ethnographic accounts reveal that what scholars, journalists, reformers and sometimes participants habitually call "vote buying" carries different meaning in different historical and cultural contexts. English voters in the 1830s, for instance, spoke of spelling their votes as a "birth right" [11]. Research on electoral politics in San Isidro, a village in the Bataan province of the Philippines found that:

Vote buying and the vote selling can be understood no longer as an economic transaction between those who sell their freedom and those who buy them in the hope of regaining their investments when they get into power... from the standpoint of ordinary people... elections are the times when equality and justice are temporarily achieved as their patrons fulfill their financial obligations to support them in times of need [12].

Section 24 of the Nigerian Electoral Act 2006 (offences of vote buying and selling of voter's card) defined vote buying as selling or attempting to sell any voter's card whether issued in the name of any voter or not; or buying or offering to buy any voter's card whether on the buyer's behalf or on behalf of any other person. Section 131 of the Electoral Act 2006 (Prohibition of Bribery conspiracy) also outlines the following actions as vote buying;

1. Direct or indirect offering or aiding in offering inducement in any form whatever to a person or a political campaign for the purpose of corruptly influencing that person or any other person to support or refrain from supporting a political party or candidate.
2. Accepting any inducement, money or valuable consideration from

any person, candidate or political party in order to compel that person or any other person to support or refrain from supporting a political party or candidate.

3. Direct or indirect giving or offering to give any money or valuable consideration to any person during a political campaign in order to induce that person or any other person to support or refrain from supporting a political party or candidate [13].

In his perceptive, works, Paul Nugent, noted that in most African countries, the incumbents certainly enjoyed an enormous advantage by virtue of their control of the financial purse strings. This enabled them to offer voters certain material inducements in return for their compliance on polling day. Be that as it may, "vote buying was always a second best strategy. The winning side engaging in straight forward vote buying". The concomitant effect of vote buying in electoral contests in the words of politician is that "elections are not for the poor". It is an extremely expensive enterprise very expensive [14].

In Nigeria, corruption has made election result to have very little or nothing to do with the performance in office of politicians. Precisely because performance is not a critical factor in electoral outcome, the incentive to perform is very weak. And because corruption is effective in achieving electoral victory the incentive to resort to corrupt practices is very high. The main decisive factors in the outcome of elections have been ethnicity, intimidation and massive vote buying and rigging. As far back as the 1950s vote buying and rigging have been identified as major characteristics of elections in Nigeria. The tragic outcome is that political parties in Nigeria today do not articulate any concrete programme during campaigns on how to take the country out of the woods. Political parties have spent billions of naira not merely on campaigns but in outright bribery and buying votes. This has been a source of worry to the National Assembly which has now put

a ceiling on electoral spending to check the problem of monetization of the electoral progress.

One emergent problem in Nigeria is that common among advanced democracies, corporate financing and the fear that corporations are simply buying the votes of elected officials [15].

According to [16]. Investment in electoral politics, for instance, can present a safe heaven for corrupt persons in dire need of protection. Such individuals may invest their spoils in order to make profits of power and of the purse for protection, to dispense influence and to steal more. For example, former or serving members of the armed forces, public servants, government contractors and businessmen and women who possibly are treasury looters; drug barons and fraudsters and are looking for means of laundering their stolen and ill-gotten wealth decide to go into active partisan politics. Ndubisi Obiorah's comment on problem of political corruption in Nigeria and its link with electoral politics is apt he said:

Retiring military officers and their civilian business cronies deployed the massive wealth generated from the proceeds of grand corruption to creating and financing the political networks. That formed the nuclei of several of the political groups that sought and obtained registration as political parties. Deploying their massive financial recourses, they were able to install ex-military officers and their civilian business cronies in control of the two largest political parties and in high federal and state public offices [17].

I begin this paper by looking at the meaning of vote buying that is material offer from the perspective of candidate and their agents. What, specifically, are the different strategies by which givers hope to influence the electoral behaviour of recipients? (By recipient, I mean someone who receives an offer. I will now turn to the historical background of

voting buying during elections in Nigeria which will answer the question asked above.

Historical Background of Vote-Buying in Nigeria's Election

Vote buying has been reported in all the elections held in Nigeria since 1999. A report of a national representative survey conducted in the country during the last quarter of 2005 shows that as many as 28 percent of voters were offered gifts during the 2003 campaign [18]. In Nigeria today "money politics", "vote buying", and "godfatherism" are used regularly to describe the fraudulent electoral behaviour of politicians, political parties and voters. Such include the practice of accepting bribes from patrons and distributing money to buy vote.

No doubt that vote buying has contributed significantly to the lack of confidence among Nigerians in the electoral system. This in turn has disposed some people toward violence as a means of seeking redress which brings out the link between the abuse of money in politics, electoral fraud and violence. There are no available records on the exact amount of money spent by candidates and political parties during the elections so far held. [19]. [6] noted that the birth of fourth republic saw the formation of People Democratic Party (PDP), Alliance for Democracy (AD) and All People Party (APP) (now All Nigerian People Party ANPP). All the three registered political party's contested the 1998/99 elections. The money bag's, who played prominent role during the infamous Abacha regime, joined the founders of the parties. They not only made their money available to the parties, they also contested and won elections using their financial muscles. The principle of party supremacy soon lost its meaning as campaign organizations took over from party secretariat.

Chief Olusegun Obasanjo emerged as the PDP presidential flag bearer in the 1999 elections. It was reported that several individuals and corporate bodies supported his campaign networks directly without reference to the

party and that his campaign organized fund raising activities without rendering account to the party or the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). The same trend was observed at the state level where the gubernatorial candidates organized and ran parallel organizations with their parties. Similarly, some candidates for the federal and state legislative assemblies raised funds for their campaign independent of their political parties. Several millions of naira was raised but no records were kept or even made available as no regulatory body is put in place to check the parties and the candidates [14].

The 2003 elections further consolidated the trend discussed above. The PDP reportedly directed all her governors to pay in hundreds of millions naira to the party's coffer as a way of supporting the party. Not too long ago, the Plateau State Governor, Chief Joshua Dariya, confessed that we donated substantial parts of the funds meant for ecological development of the state to PDP, the campaign organization of president Obasanjo and for other illegal and corrupt uses. Also, there are allegations of corporate organizations donation towards president Obasanjo's re-election campaign [10]. But the serious misconduct observed in Nigeria's previous 1999 and 2003 polls cast doubt on whether Nigeria would easily attain a free and fair elections.

In the event, Nigeria's 2007 elections were deeply flawed (Human Rights Watch, 2007). Before the campaign even began, seasoned observers correctly predicted that as "various powerful figures calculate their best interests and shift their factional alignments... tremendous amounts of largesse will change hands and some of the players will likely resort to force". [8] [9]. A bitter feud between outgoing President Obasanjo and Vice President Atiku Abubakar, an aspirant successor, dominated the election season. Dueling Lawsuits, Boycott threats and shifting alliances between opportunistic political parties and factions created a chaotic atmosphere of uncertainty. Election preparations-such as delayed voter

registration exercise were woefully inadequate and questions soon arose about the impartiality and competence of the Independent National Election Commission (INEC) (Transition Monitoring Group, 2007). Given that for three consecutive times in 1999, 2003 and 2007 since the current fourth republic began, Nigeria has not been able to conduct credible elections [3]. The April 2011 elections were heralded

as among the fairest in Nigeria's history, but there also was a report of fraud such as vote buying under aged voting etc. The increase influence of godfathers in Nigerian politics can be linked to the influence of money in electoral politics through uncontrolled party financing.

The Phenomenon of Vote Buying in Nigeria's Democracy 1999-2011

In this section, an attempt to discuss the relevance of civil society groups and other international observers in Nigeria's electoral process will be made in order to show how the citizens of Nigeria especially women and youths should be educated on how their voting behaviour is supposed to be. Also in this section various incidences of voting during elections in Nigeria are examine and analyse to appraises the effects of vote buying on the electoral process in Nigeria.

In societies undergoing transitions to democracy, nurturing a democratic political culture is an essential requirement for bringing about consolidation and sustainability of democracy. Similarly, understanding how adolescents and youth perceived democracy is an important step towards knowing what measures need to be taken in order to nurture a democratic political culture and mindset amongst them, especially in Nigeria which experienced military rule over a long period and which is now striving for democratic sustainability and consolidation. This long experience with militarism has implanted in her youth and students anti-social behaviours and undemocratic dispositions within the society which convert them into perpetrators of armed

bandity, criminality, anarchism and unprovoked violence [15]. All the anti-social behaviours mentioned above is what is shaping their attitude during any elections in this country. Among the categories involved mostly in vote buying or rather accepting offers made by politicians to buy their votes are the vulnerable groups of the society known as women and youths, I mentioned women because they actively support the politicians who buy votes from them, why women in Nigeria do accepts this offers is their level of poverty and illiteracy, also the youth accept this offers because of the rate of unemployment facing this country, most of them graduated from the university but there is no work for them and they remained unemployed. Since the return to electoral politics in 1999 after three decades of military rule, interrupted only by the 1979-83 second Republic, and most especially after the 2003 general elections,

Nigeria's political parties have been severally criticized for unbridled use of money in politics. The anti-corruption initiatives of the administration of President Olusegun Obasanjo (1999 - 2007) provided a suitable environment for some civil society groups to engage the government and other stakeholders in the electoral process. In a nation-wide survey on the perceptions of Nigerian's on corruption and governance conducted in 2001, over 80 percent of the sampled population regarded corruption as "serious". [12].

Also, the respondents ranked political parties among the most corrupt institutions in the country [3]. Again, another report of surveys conducted by the international foundation for electoral system (IFES) in 2007 shows the public perceptions on "corruption in the realm of politics" in Nigeria. The report reveals that majority of Nigerians "think it is wrong for an ordinary person to sell a vote in return for goods or money". However, more than a third of the sampled population for the surveys "think it is understandable to do so".

Money has in fact, been made to become the mother's milk of politics; which the

political gladiators must drink to remain in business. In a chat with International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) official, Craig Donsanto, he identified three conditions that make the environment conducive for vote buying.

These are:

1. Close competition between political factions within the jurisdiction for an important office:
2. Poverty: Rich people, the privileged among us, do not sell their votes.
3. Apathy that is lack of interest to the elections he concludes that when all these three conditions works together, it is the grandest fertilizer for the vote buying to happen [1].

It was widely reported in the media that members of the National Assembly, the state governors and the members of the State House of Assembly were given various sums of money to support tenure elongation and also help influence the opinions of their constituencies. It was believed that the pro-tenure elongation parliamentarians were to enjoy the sum of N40million each while parliamentarians at the state levels and other pro-tenure elongation politicians collected the N10million. Vote buying occurs within the political party during national elections. It was that in the 1999 elections instance of bribery took place [15].

Elections Observers Reports States:

Bribery allegations were equally widespread, but TMG monitors also made actual reports of bribery. In Oshimili North LGA in Delta State, a party gave out money that facilitated that sharing of the ballot papers among the three parties, and as a result, that party had 75% to thumb-print, while the other two parties shared the remaining ballot papers. In Ekiti State, the wife of one of the party's gubernatorial candidates was

arrested with a large sum of money and indeed, a pot of charms. It was alleged that she had been using money to bribe voters [18].

The report of the Transition Monitoring Group on the Presidential elections held on Saturday, 27th February 1999 states that:

In Kano Malpractices were on all sides. While in Gaya LGA some voters were offering their votes for sale for as little as N10.00, in other areas, such as Madobi, INEC officials and party agents connived in bribery and rigging. The fallout of bribery at Sabon Gari ward, Magami polling station in Zamfara state has already been noted above. Attempts at underaged voting were also a feature in this state, for example at Danbawa 5B polling stations in Tsafe ward, ten underaged boys were brought for voting, but were detected. [18].

Vote buying takes place during registration of voters. In the past registration exercise, registration officers sold empty or completed voters cards to politicians of opposing camps (this results in accusations of insufficient registration materials). The Transition Monitoring Group (TMG) reported numerous cases of vote buying nation wide during the 2002 voter registration exercise. The observers in Kwara State, Ilorin East Local Government Area reported that some powerful politicians bought votes and voters sold their votes.

TMG wrote:

One Alhaja Fumilayo Olokoba (Leader of the Women's Wing of the ANPP) mobilized registrants to one of the units and gave them N200 each in exchange for their cards. Similarly, one Mrs. Mayaki Balogun Sani, a seamstress, was alleged to have taken

all her apprentices for registration after which she collected their registration cards from them. In [16] in Balogun-Fulani 3 ward in Ilorin South Local Government Area on the 23rd September, 2002. Party agents approached registered voters as they left the centre and sought to buy their cards. Those who obliged them were paid sums ranging from N100.00 N250.00 per card. [11].

TMG reported similar selling and buying of voters cards during the registration exercise nation-wide. One classic case of vote selling and buying took place in Rivers State and TMG report thus:

In River State, hoarding and selling of voters cards was rampant... in Khalga Local Government Area, Supervisors hoarded materials for PDP agents; on the 21st day of September 2002 in ward 10 Ikwere Local Government Area, INEC officials hoarded registration materials and were later sold to top politicians. In Khalga Local Government Area, a registration officer carried out registration in his house at night to those willing to pay. In obia/Akpor, there were cases of buying and selling of registration materials and the registration of people in absentia. In Onelga Local Government Area. INEC supervisory/registration officers hoarded registration materials for PDP top officials... [17].

A reporter of "Diary" newspaper of (30th April, 2007) reported his experience of the incidences of vote

buying in elections not only in Nigeria he said:

I have reported on a lot of elections in my time, all the way from Iran to Zimbabwe, but I have never before interviewed a self-confessed vote-buyer. The young man I met in the sprawling, dusty, decaying city of Kano, in the far north, was willing to talk to me because he'd been victim of another deal that went sour, (The Diary 30th April, 2007).

The man further stated that President Obasanjo's ruling People Democratic Party (PDP) had, he said, "hired him to bribe voters to support their man". The going rate apparently, was 20p per vote; he'd been promised £10 dollars for a day's bribing. He showed me most convincingly how you bid the voter good morning, take his hand in yours as you chatter a way about how important it is that your chap should win, and, as you are ambling along, a crumpled banknote is some how transferred. Trouble was, said the disgruntled vote-buyer, "the PDP man don't win - so the party didn't pay up politics or "politricks", as Nigerians call it really is a dirty game" (The Diary 30th April, 2007). [12] noted that the conduct of the 2007 General Elections in Nigeria which scholars and analysts are unanimous in its assessment as the worst in the country's electoral history [14]. There were actual vote buying recorded in the 2007 elections in Nigeria by Afrobarometer source.

In total the Afrobarometer recorded 485 cases of vote buying as experienced by 96 respondents out of a random sample of 2410 Nigerians [15]. According to the civil society election situation room, the 2011 elections represents significant improvement over previous exercise since the beginning of the fourth Republic in 1999. They pointed a number of irregularities which occurred and need

to be addressed in order to improve the quality of elections in Nigeria. The areas that need immediate attention include the cases of vote buying, under aged voting and late arrival of INEC staff and security officials. The civil society election situation room closely followed all the three elections held between 9th and 29th April 2011 (and ongoing in the case of Imo state), their overall conclusion was that the elections were generally free, fair and credible elections. But as they rightly pointed out the problem of buying vote still pose a threat to the credibility of the elections held April, 2011. According to the civil society election situation room obvious cases of vote buying which was observed during the 2011 general elections were also another anomaly which was not properly addressed by the election authorities (Civil society election situation room, 2011).

The INEC chairman in an interview with Weekly Trust of May 7th 2011 admitted that the 2011 elections has “substantial remarkable improvement over the previous elections in Nigeria and that all observers both domestic and international have acknowledge that the elections of 2011 was fair even though it requires substantive additional improvement. And in my own thinking the areas which needs additional improvements is the issue of vote buying, because it is one of the major obstacle or problem bedeviling elections in the country’s journey towards democracy.

The Effects of Vote Buying on Nigeria’s Electoral Process

The role of money in politics especially for those seeking political office has become the norm. perhaps, the Nigerians electorate has become apathetic that whether run by the military or civilians, they have little hope for enjoying the dividends of the national cake. While not much could be done when the military class is power flagrantly siphoned wealth (though their coup speeches had expressed the desire to turn around the downward trend of the nation’s economy), some electorate

expect or demand for compensations in cash kind as the only opportunity to nibble at the crumbs from what is left of the national cake’. A female senatorial aspirant under the PDP in Lagos during 2003 elections lamented thus “women accept rice, gari and other foodstuff from people who now use them to impose candidates on us [15]”. The common saying that “he who pays the piper dictates the tune” is applicable to the Nigerian electoral experience [17]. In a perceptive work, A.E. Davies indentifies seven predisposing factors responsible for vote buying in Nigeria it is these factors that our subsequent discussions in this segments resolves around.

One is that:

1. The inability of the political parties and the contestants to put in place comprehensive and comprehensible manifestoes for scrutiny by the voters is aiding vote buying
2. In Nigeria, candidates, ignorance of their own party programmes (when there are any) is embarrassing. Candidates spin the issues they think can attract votes, which may sometimes negate positions. The picture painted above produces representative but not participatory democracy which consequently encourages vote buying.
3. Also, the political cynicism on the part of the voters who believe that political office holders are incurably corrupt, self-seeking and incompetent that politics is a dirty and dishonorable enterprise, that the whole political process is a fraud, and a betrayal of the public trust. This cynical view of politics is further accentuated by unfulfilled promises made by winners of past elections. Thus demanding for money from the candidates canvassing for votes is equivalent to asking for pay-off, another way by which the people receive their own share of the national cake. On the

other hand, candidates giving money to secure votes probably believe that they are investing against electoral failure.

4. One other factor is focusing on personalities rather than on issues. By the mode of their campaign, most candidates draw the attention of the electorate away from the political parties to the themselves. The consequences of this is that the political parties and their message become less important to the electorate [6].
5. Nevertheless, perhaps the strongest predisposition factor for vote buying in Nigeria is excruciating poverty among the masses of the people [3].

Based on this last factor that contribute to vote buying among Nigerians I draw some lessons from the previous elections in Nigeria. Vote buying as noted earlier is largely illegal, criminal and therefore unconstitutional. It has tremendous impact on the process of transition to democracy in a number of ways: first; vote buying promotes the primacy of money in politics to the detriment of merit, ideology and free, and fair competitive political competition. The character and quality of persons seeking mandates are not questioned and worrying too, this does not feature in national discourse. In addition, there has been a disappearance from political praxis, debates on ideas and issues affecting the populace. Old and unproductive politicians are re-cycled into the political process, with obvious implications that such individuals are only concern with personal projects and primitive accumulation of wealth. In this case the work towards the development of democracy is not given attention. Vote buying therefore, obstructs the consolidation of democracy in Nigeria, because of the ultra-privatization of transition project by money bags political instability due to recurring electoral and political violence amongst political groups. This instability weakens the national economy.

Second, vote buying promotes elitist politics and weakens popular participation. Only persons with resources get access to political offices in Nigeria. Communities with grassroots solidarities hardly have access to political power because of their inability to participate actively in the monetized political system. Third, the political parties that bought votes monopolized power to the exclusion of financially weak parties. They become new sets of autocrats in the political process. Fourth, political institutions (parliaments and government houses in Nigeria for instance) are currently inhabited by some politicians with stolen mandates via vote buying. This has affected the image and respects for such national institutions which are suppose to direct the course of democracy [6].

Another strategy to generate instrumental compliance is to pay voters to abstain from voting altogether thereby preventing them from casting ballots for one's opponent, a strategy often called "negative vote buying" [10]. Most Nigerians also condemn efforts by politicians to purchase support at the polls. Almost six in ten (58percent) say that is "wrong and punishable" for a candidate or party official to offer money in return for a vote. An additional 30percent consider vote buying "wrong but understandable", adding the qualifying phrase perhaps because they think that political patrons are obliged to steer kickbacks their clients. In Nigeria voters take vote buying offers as signals of a patron's wealth and capability of winning elections, features of a leader with which they wish to be associated [8]. This seems reasonable to assume that in seeking to control voter behaviour, politicians would focus their efforts on the most vulnerable elements in society. One would therefore expect a disproportionate concentration of bribery and violence on poor and uneducated people. The poor are likely to be victimized by vote buying because their limited means makes them susceptible to material inducements, including offers of basic

commodities or modest amounts of money. Also people with limited education may be unaware of individual political rights and therefore possess weak defenses against intimidation. In the only observable statistical effect, education performed as expected; it tended to inoculate Nigeria against explicit threats of “negative consequences” for the making of the “wrong” vote choice. Whereas five percent of people with no formal schooling experienced such threats, just 2 percents of those with post-secondary education did so. So people who are ill equipped to defend their rights are prone to be victimized, even by their own political patrons. By contrasts, there were clear demographic correlates of vote buying.

In both 2003 and 2007, poor Nigerians were mostly likely to report an encounter with politicians (or a politician’s agent) who offered to buy their vote. In 2007, educated Nigerians were less likely to report that any one had approached them with a vote buying offer. But, even if poor Nigerians were more frequently exposed to materials inducements they still drove a hard bargain [2]. In 2011 elections youth, women and rural people were mostly confronted with such an offer to buy their vote. I recalled the polling unit I casted my vote, I saw many of them women in particular asking for “Tsari or tsari akwai” from the party agents “Kayan aiki” means money or any item given by any party to buy vote.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Election officials, legislators and civil society activities in a number of countries should try as they have been trying to curtail or eliminate the practice of vote-buying. The electoral law has very specific penalties for vote buying and selling and they range from disqualification of the violators as voters, or disqualification of violators who are in position of authority from retaining such office, to fines and imprisonment. The lawmakers and election officials should try to reform the behaviour of givers. Among the most common are:

introduction of a party list system to encourage voters to choose their members of parliament based on party plat forms rather than personalistic ties, barring constituency members of parliament from becoming ministers (thus denying them access to ministerial funds). And also educating the whole society on how all these elections are suppose to be because most of them accepting offers of vote buying are ignorant of how they should exercised their own right in choosing best leaders for themselves and the country as a whole. There is need for INEC to establish written law against vote buying in simpler language and made accessible to the electorates.

1. Strengthening of vote secrecy
2. Centralized vote counting
3. Tightened campaign finance rules
4. Reducing the number of allowed campaign workers
5. The law makers and election officials should try and have control on campaign finances and

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we have seen in this paper how vote buying has continued to be a threat to the growth and development of democracy. Political scientists often treat vote buying as a single type of political behaviour. But there are, as we have seen, a variety of ways in which particularistic material often designed to influence vote choices are made, received and responded to. If all I suggested in the

recommendations are to be implemented by the INEC and election law makers the phenomenon of vote buying in Nigeria would have become a history of the past. Lastly as stated by Adetula Nigerians are not satisfied with the performance of the electoral system in providing for free, choices and fair selection of leaders.

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