

# Vote Buying and Democratic Consolidation: A Case Study of 2020 Gubernatorial Election in Ondo State

OYEDEJI, Mary Olufunso<sup>1</sup>; JEGEDE, Oluwafemi Ebenezer<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department Of Political Science, Faculty of Management and Social Sciences, Adeyemi Federal University of Education, Ondo, Ondo State, Nigeria.

<sup>2</sup>Department Of Political Science, Faculty of Management and Social Sciences, Adeyemi Federal University of Education, Ondo, Ondo State, Nigeria.

E- mail: maryoyedeji74@gmail.com, femjeg@gmail.com

**Abstract**—This study examines the impact of vote buying on democratic consolidation in Nigeria, focusing on the 2020 gubernatorial election in Ondo State. Mixed method approached involving qualitative and quantitative were employed for the data analysis, while primary data were gathered through administration of questionnaire and interviews, secondary data were sourced from books, journals newspapers, articles and observer's report of the election. The objective is to explore the prevalence of vote buying, mechanisms through which it operate, and its implications for the democratic process. Purposive Sampling techniques of 100 each qualify electoral candidates that participated in the election from the two selected local governments in Ondo west and Akoko north west areas of Ondo state were selected and tested at the .05 level of significant, Strongly agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) was the available responses. The following three null hypotheses were raised to provide tentative answers, that there is no significant manifestation of vote buying, no significant factors encouraging vote buying and there is no significant impact of vote buying on the 2020 Governorship election in Ondo State. All the three null hypotheses that were employed were all rejected, the study review that there is manifestation of vote buying, there are factors encouraging vote buying and impact of vote buying were significant on the 2020 Governorship election in Ondo State. The findings suggest that vote buying undermines democratic consolidation by eroding public trust, encouraging political corruption and weakening institutional integrity. The study recommended among other things, the grass root poverty alleviation scheme, since it is germane in order to put an end to vote buying, Empowerment of EFCC and ICPC to investigate the source of all party finances, Re orientation on implication of Vote buying, as people should be reoriented on the implications of vote buying on the people and the society at large.

**Keywords**— Vote buying, Gubernatorial election, Liberal democracy, Democracy consolidation, autocracy, Snatching of ballot box and Political ideology.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Liberal Democracy has been deemed the best form of government in the world, and it is also believed that the worst democracy is preferable to the best autocracy, but the menace of vote buying and selling has become a social problem in our electoral process, negatively impacting democratic consolidation. Iloh and Osimen (2022). believed that vote buying was a crucial component of Nigerian money politics. However, recent events demonstrate that vote purchasing occurs throughout the electoral cycle and has been clearly seen during the nomination process, election day, and voter

registration. More on election day, just before or during the election. In the Vote for Cash approach, the interested electoral person has to show evidence that he or she has voted for the party in order to receive payment for the vote. As a market, politicians, political parties and party agents are potential buyers of votes while potential voters are consumers. The thing that is bought is the vote that is given, and the means of exchange can be monetary and non-monetary goods. Market forces determine the value and cost of an election and the extent to which politicians want to win a constituency. Voting is the main form of political participation in democratic societies. A vital component of civic participation is voting. Voter fraud and voting behavior are major phenomena in the Nigerian electoral process, according to several political scientists, who also contend that falling voting rates could be an indicator of a democratic deficit. Consolidating democracy amid vote-buying in Nigeria's electoral process is becoming all but impossible, as the highest bidder is now the criterion for evaluating candidates, rather than their political ideology, ability, competence, popularity, diligence, or character. For this reason, Onwudiwe and Berwind (2010) argued that even as Nigeria, the largest democracy in Africa, gets ready for voting, there are still significant doubts about its ability and political will to hold free, fair, and peaceful elections. Democrats contend that in order for an election to be considered free, all eligible voters must be properly registered and free to select a candidate without being coerced or offered any incentives. Vote-buying has become increasingly common in Nigeria recently, but there were still more instances of ballot box snatching and other violent acts by politicians who were desperate to win. Vote-buying is an international phenomena, it is true, but its growth in Nigeria's political system is concerning. Vote buying and selling have grown commonplace in Nigeria's political system, endangering the country's willingness to adopt democratic values.

Vote-buying is a dishonorable trend in Nigerian politics that has its roots in a number of predisposing conditions. Vote-buying in Nigeria is being aided, according to Davies (2006), by the political parties' and candidates' incapacity to present thorough and understandable manifestos for voters to review. Meaningless slogans and demagogic, rabble-rousing speeches are given in place of precise manifestos that would allow the electorate to make an informed political decision.

Vote-buying by members of the three major political parties—the People’s Democratic Party (PDP), the Zenith Labour Party (ZLP), and the All Progressives Congress (APC)—was extensively publicized during the October 10, 2020, Ondo State governorship election. It was alleged that these parties contributed N3,000 to N10,000 to each of the state's 3,009 polling places. Vote-buying with impunity is becoming the norm in Nigerian elections as political parties compete with one another over the amount of money given to voters. The vote-buying incident in the Ondo election has implications for Nigerian democracy, including the undermining of political legitimacy and the mocking of Nigerian democracy. Voters won't have the moral authority to hold politicians accountable for their actions, which will undermine the legitimacy of the electoral process and lead to a basic issue of irresponsibility and lack of accountability. This research will highlight the alleged effects of vote-buying on the growth of Ondo State as well as the methods used to carry out the act during the election. Additionally, it has been shown that there is a connection between vote-selling and poverty. The article's main focus is on vote-buying, which is defined as paying voters to support a party or candidate. It aims to explain how vote-buying manifests itself in relation to voters' choices in the 2020 Ondo governorship election in Nigeria and the ramifications that result from it.

The primary importance of this research is to contribute to the expanding body of knowledge regarding vote-buying and its effects on democratic governance. As a result, the study is both relevant and important. A thorough examination of this phenomena lessened the lack of information in this field. Furthermore, this study's findings and ideas enhanced Nigeria's democracy. The objective of this study is to investigate the various forms of vote purchasing that occurred during the 2020 Ondo State governorship election, evaluate the effects of vote buying, identify the contributing causes, and devise strategies to reduce vote buying in subsequent elections.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to the 1999 Nigerian Constitution, the electoral body is in charge of planning and carrying out elections for the positions of president and vice president, governor and deputy governor of each state in the Federation of Nigeria, and councilors and area councilors of the Federal Capital Territory. As such, the electoral body's capacity to plan and carry out free and fair elections in Nigeria is called into question by the ongoing proliferation of vote buying throughout the states that comprise the Nigerian federation. Vote purchasing has presented a challenge to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), which has demonstrated blatant inefficiency. The INEC has been paralyzed by heavy pressure from current political and economic realities. Purchasing votes is regarded as an electoral offense. In Nigeria, the provisions of Section 130 of the Electoral Act 2010, as amended, states that:

A person who — (a) corruptly by himself or by any other person at any time after the date an election has been announced, directly or indirectly gives or provides or pays

money to or to any person for improperly influencing that person or any other person to vote or refrain from voting at any such election, or that such person or any other person voted at vote in such an election, or (b ) as a voter, improperly admits or receives money or other fraud during the periods mentioned in clause (a) of this section commits an offense and is liable to a fine of N100,000 or 12 months imprisonment, punished. or both (Valglov, 2010).

Furthermore, anyone found providing money to anyone else for bribery during an election faces a fine of N500,000, up to 12 months in prison, or both upon conviction under Section 124 of the Electoral Act of 2010. Additionally, accepting or giving money or gifts in exchange for voting or choosing not to vote in any election is prohibited by the same clause of the Act, which carries the same penalties as the giver. Politicians seem to have been breaking the Electoral Act with impunity, despite its explicit prohibitions against vote-buying.

Despite becoming commonplace in recent elections, vote buying has a longer history than Nigeria since independence. Even yet, from 1960 to 1966, their impact on the first republic was negligible. In order to secure electoral victory under the First Republic, political leaders and tribal heroes primarily used appeals to ethnic and religious feelings. This was made feasible by the fact that the prehistoric connections that the main political parties and their supporters had with the local populace significantly boosted their stature and popularity. The parliamentary system in place at the time also allowed political parties to have a great deal of influence over the candidates that would run for office. (Dudley, 1982, p. 68) noted that the candidates in the elections were less significant since the parties dominated the scene, made ethnic appeals, engaged in alliance politics, and frequently used highly charged language that incited violence. The parties used the money they were able to generate to cover the majority of the election-related costs. It should be highlighted, though, that while politicians were known to give out T-shirts, caps, and badges featuring party emblems, along with some food and other random items, to supporters at political events, there was no significant election-winning expenditure by individual candidates, unlike what happens today.

Vote-buying and money politics took on new proportions during the 1979–1980 second republic. The wealthy contractors and mercantile class displayed such opulence and profligacy that the business managerial group was represented among the winners of some political party conventions and primaries, including the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), the Nigerian People's Party (NPP), and the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) (Davies, 2006).

The issue worsened during the Third Republic in 1993 as candidates' political activities became deeply ingrained with the practice of money politics and vote-buying. This was due to the fact that, despite the fact that the military was keeping a close eye on the proceedings, the political campaigns for the 1993 election showed an excessive use of money during both the party primary and the presidential contest. The wealthy have taken control of the National Republican Convention (NRC) and the Social Democratic Party (SDP), the two political organizations that the military declared to be founded.

For instance, there were several charges of bribery following the results of the primaries, despite the widespread use of money to seek party nomination. As one of the lost contenders asserted. Money was supplied to party officials, who then demanded and bargained over how much money they would receive in exchange for winning positions and other benefits, as well as how candidates would be chosen for voting (Nwosu, 1996, p.78).

Election candidates and political parties have become irrelevant to the public, and the Fourth Republic is full with instances of flagrant vote-buying. Prominent figure in the Fourth Republic, former President Obasanjo, appeared to have been ironically troubled by the situation. He stated that, given the amount of resources being used to win elective office, it is easy to see how high-level corruption is related to politics. The greatest losers are the ordinary people, those voters whose faith and investment in the system are hijacked and subverted because money, not their will, is made the determining factor in elections. We cannot move from the politics of material wealth to the politics of ideas, questions and development (Obasanjo, 2005).

### III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical underpinning of the paper is prebendalism, as proposed by Richard Joseph in 1991. Joseph introduced the concept of prebendalism to describe the pattern of politics in which everyone seeks state power as a way to further their own material interests. This is the case in an environment where the government has supplanted the economy as the primary producer of wealth, the employer of labor, and the provider of socioeconomic security. The quest and application of state authority in Nigeria have been profoundly impacted by the prebendalism of the country's politics. The main prize in society is access to state-controlled resources, and this is the battle that drives elections. Because of the enormous stakes involved, politicians use a range of tactics, legal or illegal, to win public office. The expediency of power battles during electioneering forces the adoption of unethical incentives in order to assure electoral success and victory. In this sense, in their desperate attempt to secure an electoral advantage, politicians frequently turn to material inducement or intimidation. Vote buying becomes a competitive election strategy tool in this situation. The theory makes the point that Nigeria's "prebendalism political culture" has contributed to the materialization and commercialization of partisan relations and electioneering in the nation. Therefore, one inevitable effect of Nigerian politics' prebendalism is the exchange of votes for cash, as demonstrated by the phenomena of vote buying and selling.

### IV. METHODOLOGY

#### a. Research Design

This study adopted the simple survey research design where the method of data collection involved the qualitative, quantitative, administration of questionnaire and interview.

#### b. Research hypotheses

1. H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant manifestation of vote buying in 2020 Governorship election in Ondo state
2. H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant factors encouraging vote buying in 2020 Governorship election in Ondo State.
3. H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant impact of vote buying on the 2020 Governorship election in Ondo State.

c. *Study Population.* The population of this study are the individual that are eligible to vote across the two Local Government; Ondo West and Akoko North East local government, the choice of this two local government was burnt out of the fact that election malpractices was at its pick in the two local government respectively.

d. *Sampling Techniques and sample size.* Sampling method was used to get 100 samples from two states (Ondo West and Akoko North East). The samples of this study consists of major participants and registered voters across the two (2) selected local governments in Ondo state during the 2020 governorship election. Therefore, the respondents are Voters, Journalists, Election Observers and Candidates in the election, with total population of 200.

e. *Method of Data Collection and Data Analysis.* Three null hypotheses were developed to guide the investigation in order to accomplish the study goal. It was decided to use a descriptive survey study approach to gather information in order to correctly and impartially illuminate the study. At the 05 level of significant, all research hypotheses were analyzed. Strongly agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) was the available responses.

#### Data Presentations and Analyses

##### Testing of Hypothesis One

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant manifestation of vote buying in 2020 Governorship election in Ondo state

Regression Summary						
Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	Decision
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
<b>Significant manifestation of Vote Buying</b>	10.830	1.187		9.127	.012	Reject null hypothesis
<b>2020 Governorship Election</b>	2.668	.349	1.002	7.648	.017	
P>0.05						

The calculated t-value for the relationship between 2020 Governorship Election and if there Significant manifestation of Vote Buying is as 7.648 with an associated p-value of 0.017 since the p-value is less than 0.05 at 5% level of significant, it was concluded that there is significant manifestation of vote buying in 2020 Governorship election in Ondo state. However, since the p-value from both independent variables is less than 0.05 at the 5% level of significance, the null hypothesis is therefore rejected.

##### Testing of Hypothesis Two

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant factors encouraging vote buying in 2020 Governorship election in Ondo State.

Regression Summary						
Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	Decision
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
Significant factors encouraging Vote Buying	10.830	1.187		9.127	.012	Reject null hypothesis
2020 Governorship Election	1.183	.255	.094	.715	.002	
P>0.05						

The calculated t-value for the relationship between 2020 Ondo State Governorship Election and if there is significant impact on vote buying was found to be 0.715, with an associated p-value of 0.02 Since the p-value is less than 0.05 at the 5% level of significance, it was concluded that the 2020 Governorship Election has a significant factors encouraging vote buying. However, since the p-value from both independent variables is less than 0.05 at the 5% level of significance, the null hypothesis is therefore rejected and conclusion was made that there is significant factors encouraging vote buying in 2020 Governorship election in Ondo State.

*Testing of Hypothesis Three*

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant impact of vote buying on the 2020 Governorship election in Ondo State.

Regression Summary						
Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Decision
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
Significant impact of Vote Buying	10.830	1.187		9.127	.012	Reject null hypothesis
2020 Governorship Election	.456	2.130	1.067	1.512	.001	
P>0.05						

The calculated t-value for the relationship between Significant impact of Vote Buying and 2020 Governorship Election was found to be 1.067, with an associated p-value of 0.01 since the p-value is less than 0.05 at the 5% level of significance, it was concluded that there is Significant impact of Vote Buying on the 2020 Governorship Election in Ondo State. However, since the p-value from both independent variables is less than 0.05 at the 5% level of significance, the null hypothesis is therefore rejected.

V. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

*The discussion of findings of this study was done hypothesis-by-hypothesis*

*There is significant manifestation of vote buying in 2020 Governorship election in Ondo state.*

The result of the first hypothesis revealed that there is significant manifestation of vote buying in 2020 Governorship election in Ondo state. Vote-buying and selling in Nigeria have reached unprecedented levels, and they have remained unabated due to the failure of appropriate government institutions and stakeholders to impose penalties for electoral offenses. The resulting results undermine the credibility of the

election, diminish representative democracy, and, to a significant part, make a mockery of Nigeria's democratic process. Furthermore, the practice of vote-buying in Nigerian politics is not only illegal, but it also violates the people's constitutional right to choose their leaders in a free, fair, and credible manner. Lipset & Lenz 2000:112-4 Said Corruption has broadly been defined as a perversion or a change from good to bad. Corrupt behaviour involves the violation of established rules for personal gain and profit, Corruption is efforts to secure wealth or power through illegal means or private gain at public expense or a misuse of public power for private benefit. Dyke 2005 also argues that there are three main ways of classifying corruption: political corruption, known as grand corruption, bureaucratic or petty corruption, and electoral corruption. Most importantly, corruption, whatever its form, distorts the will of the people and reinforces the lawlessness, which has seriously threatened the hope of democracy in Nigeria.

*There is significant factors encouraging vote buying in 2020 Governorship election in Ondo State.*

The result of the second hypothesis revealed that there is significant factors encouraging vote buying in 2020 Governorship election in Ondo State. This shows that there is a large concentration of respondent acknowledging the fact that poverty and security agents turning a blind eye to vote buying and the lack of trust in the promises of candidates are factors encouraging vote buying while a wider range believed it is lack of voters education. Among the notable things found in this study, we can mention the high level of poverty among the voters and the low level of education of the voters. The above result is supported with (Abba & Babalola, 2017; Onapajo & Babalola (2020). The poor are vulnerable segment of voters easily predisposed to be victimized, intimidated, and manipulated by vote buying because their limited means make them susceptible to material inducements, including offers of basic commodities or modest amounts of money or job procurements (Abba & Babalola, 2017; Onapajo & Babalola (2020).

*There is significant impact of vote buying on the 2020 Governorship election in Ondo State.*

The result of the third hypothesis revealed that there is significant impact of vote buying on the 2020 Governorship election in Ondo State. It ascertain the impact of vote buying on the 2020 gubernatorial election by analyzed using the one sample T test. Shows that there is a large concentration of respondent acknowledging the fact that vote buying had impact on the 2020 Governorship election in Ondo state. It also aids to identify the pronounced impact of vote buying which includes corruption and lack of trust in the government, the structure and the electoral institution. This is in agreement with Nurdin, (2014) This large turnout of voters for incentives has a significant effect on voting behaviour not necessarily to vote but to collect the benefits and may abscond voting. Money is a dominant determinant factor in our society's politics.

VI. CONCLUSION

Vote buying as a transactional process in which vote is selling to the highest bidder has marred 2020 governorship election in Ondo State. This menace was at the pick that people and the newspapers commented on it. Because there were significant factors contributing to vote buying in Nigeria. Interestingly the study reveals that vote buying has escalated to an unprecedented degrees and continues because relevant government agencies and interested parties have not enforced consequences for election offenses. It also helps to highlight the negative effects of vote buying, such as corruption and a decline in confidence in the political system, the government, and electoral institutions. The research suggested a grassroots program to reduce poverty, strengthening the EFCC and ICPC, reorienting people towards the implications of vote buying, monitoring CCTV cameras, and enact laws that would facilitate these efforts.

Recommendations

1. *Grass root poverty alleviation scheme*: poverty alleviation from grass root level is germane in order to put an end to vote buying, since it was discovered that the poor are vulnerable to vote selling. Reduction in level of poverty may also result to reduction in vote selling.
2. *Empowering Anti-Corruption Commission like Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) and Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission (ICPC)*: these two should be empowered to investigate the source of all party finances, in other to curb vote buying. Possibly who and who will finance a political party must be stated in the constitution, and illegal source of finance should be avoided.
3. *Re-orientation on implication of vote buying*: People should be re-orientated on the implications of vote buying on the people and the society at large. Knowing fully the havoc of vote buying on the government, political party, candidates and community may serve as deterrent to vote buying and selling in the subsequent elections.
4. *Mounting of CCTV Camera*: Mounting of closed-circuit television, as a TV in which signals are not publicly distributed but are monitored primarily for surveillance and security purposes will curb party agents and candidates that do manipulate electorates. Therefore sharing of money during the elections will reduce to a minimum level.
5. *Enabling law*: The government must put in place enabling law which will guard against the act of vote buying and selling in the society at large. And the culprits of vote buying must be severely dealt with.

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