



Vote-buying Enterprise and Voting Behaviour among Electorate: Evidence from Southern Nigeria

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

This paper specifically reviews activities of political parties in terms of voters' inducement during elections period in Nigeria. The paper deconstructs voters' inducement as political economy created to attract electorates purposely to swing votes to benefit political party. The paper relied on secondary data retrieved through content analysis. It was evidently established that political parties in Nigeria especially the case in Edo, Ondo and Ekiti State, discretely engaged in voters' inducement which come in the form of financial and material gifts. Financial gift was often distributed during voting period such that eligible voters were whisked and wooed by parties' agents to swing votes. Some willing voters negotiated depending on the highest bidders. Yet some voters grabbed the opportunity to create economy for themselves such that they invested the fund in small scale business and ventures to survive. Besides, mega political parties with robust financial elbow were fingered as major perpetrators of voters' inducement. Some voters apparently were overshadowed by the inducement due to tight economic condition and poverty. This paper recommends voters' education to enlighten electorates and expose the consequence. The role of the media, church, mosque and schools is indispensable in this situation.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The activities of political parties in Nigeria have been saturated with a lot of socio-economic innuendo. Historically, Nigeria witnessed mixture of military and democratic ventures which inextricably represent symbol of the country. Although Nigeria's Military rule is often described as a foray in public governance, democratic experience is not isolated from some notable features [1]. Basically, political parties are the mainstay of democracy, whereas formation, organisation and activities in parties' venture have attracted interest in the academic and among professionals with the aim to construct explanation of party dynamism. The existence of political parties Nigeria dates back to different republics; from first to fourth republican government. Yet comparatively, only the fourth republic has been more sustainable and durable since the post independent period. In the fourth republic, precisely from 1999 till date, political parties have grown in size and number which accommodate people from different ethnic origins, gender, occupation and backgrounds as members of the same party or belonging to different parties [2]. The political parties in Nigeria during this current dispensation have been competitive and dynamic in party activities especially methods used to woo members [3]. It is the central objective of political parties to win elections and return party candidates in elective posts for purpose of governance at every arm and tier of government [4,5]. It is therefore unsurprising to witness political parties adopt different strategies and gimmicks to cumulate votes centrally to assert victory in election.

Critically speaking, it is a thing of pride and expectation that every political party must build its pyramid of members and grow voters' base to stand good chance of competition and winning in an election. Invariably, parties must engage in intensive campaign to bring manifestoes to doorstep of electorate, convince voters and win consent of followers and would be followers for patronage during elections. The dynamics of winning consent of voters is a complex one. This is such that some parties engage in house to house campaign, distribution of flyers, consultation to traditional heads, erection of billboards and megaphones to reach people. Yet some political parties afford to do their jingles on radio, television, news papers and magazines. There are those parties that extend means of

communication to electorates via the new media such as internet service providing Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp and many other modern electronic applications [6,7]. Indeed these dynamic political activities are resonance of survival and recipe for any political party to canvass victory in any election. Advance democracy in countries like Britain, America, France and Germany, are notable for their dynamic political activities during election to swing votes for victory [8]. Moreover, the volume of spending in the aforementioned countries during elections speaks fact of the seriousness political parties put during campaign. Again, campaign spending is a justified legal activity which is nucleus to survival of political parties [9,10].

However, such spending becomes suspicious if the unassuming and latent goal is to induce electorates and canvass for votes. The experience in Nigeria in the recent period demonstrates major concern in the political landscape of the country. Campaign funds and funding elections are criteria that have legal backing in the Nigerian Constitution (Independent National Electoral Commission, [11]. This is so that such funds are available to finance every political party to meet their central obligation to win in elections, whereas the funds also cover for campaigns, advertisement and travel cost (Independent National Electoral Commission [11]. Unfortunately, the intention of funding political parties has been masked for ulterior motives. Evidently, donors of political parties are centrally motivated to swing votes not because such donors wish to direct the humongous funds for grass root campaigns. Rather the paramount value of the fund is largely targeted as inducement for voters or vote buying [12,13]. In some cases, the gigantic fund is reserved to create colony of political enterprise where electorates are empowered and induced to swing votes. In the political enterprise, the funds are largely available to acquire durable materials, properties or asset for distribution. Also, the enterprise provides large network of benefactors in monetary terms, material value and some fancy items to would be voters. This phenomenon has been tagged stomach infrastructure [14], some collectively agreed that it is a form of political economy of electoral voting [15,16]. In this paper, political enterprise is used purposely due to the nature of how such political economy operates, first as economic

empowerment to the beneficiary and second as latent unsuspecting intention to swing votes. This is the main focus of discussion in the paper.

1.1 Objective of the Paper

Centrally, the focus of this paper is to review evidence of financial inducement of Nigerian voters and how this phenomenon is inferred to influence voting behavior among the electorates in the political landscape.

1.2 Scope of the Paper and Conceptual Clarification

This paper specifically reviews evidence of voters' inducement documented in News Papers and Magazines. It is a content analysis method. Conversely, the concept of political enterprise in this paper is used to capture campaign funds and funding of political parties and how such funds are discreetly deployed to induce voters and swing votes.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW: EVIDENCE OF VOTE-BUYING

2.1 E dibo, E Sebe (Financial Inducement of Voters): Evidence of Vote Buying

Evidently, there were incidences of vote buying documented in the works of some authors. Following the outcome of governorship elections in Edo and Ondo States, there are strong indications that many Nigerians and the international community are fast losing faith in the nation's democracy [17]. The Edo State Governorship Election conducted in 2016 provides some facts. The election was held against the background of a postponement that had cited security as a concern. The postponement fuelled perception in the public mind of a likelihood of bias. However, the atmosphere surrounding the election was largely peaceful and devoid of any major acts of violence, which was a concern for several citizens of Edo State and election observers. The Transition Monitoring Group, (TMG) a coalition of human rights, non-governmental and civil society organizations observers and Nigeria's premier citizen observer group, reported complaints about allegations of inducement of voters by political parties on the basis of 'vote for cash/cash for vote' to influence who they voted for. Evidently, TMG [14] averred: This is a sore narrative of 2016 Edo State Election. We

condemn the pathetic, sorrowful and ignoble act as it is our considered view that when people sell their votes, they become slaves to those who bought it, they surrender their power and strength as citizens and they are robbed of the moral right to hold the politicians accountable or question any wrongdoing by the politicians. A Coalition of Civic Groups dedicated to monitoring and improving the electoral process in Nigeria, The Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room [13] reported, voter turnout was generally low across polling units. With the wanton vote buying practice, more voters rushed to the polls. Vote buying fuelled turnout. The Report goes further to state that there is collaboration between INEC personnel, party agents and facilitation by the police to encourage vote buying by setting polling stations in such a manner as to breach secrecy of the polls and encourage inducement.

In Ondo, The CLEEN Foundation [18], a non-governmental organization in its Post-Election Statement on the Ondo Election stated that vote buying by party agents and chieftains who were seen distributing money in order to influence the direction of voting is a major downside of the election of November 26, 2016. Adejumo [19] reported on the Ondo Election:

There is rampant and open buying and selling of votes by agents of the parties, with the main offenders being the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and the All Progressives Congress (APC) the party that is in power at the federal level. Rumour abound that even the winning candidate's party (APC) was spreading so much money around to buy votes, it was mind-boggling, the blatant and open buying of votes. Again, I will not subscribe to the general trance that the election was not flawed. It was the suspicion that money was used to buy votes (allegedly, but we all know this was true) has besmirched the result of the elections in my mind and eyes. I cannot accept that the election was not flawed with vote-buying accusations and rumours flying about.

Similarly, Dada [20] reporting on his coverage of the election averred:

Members of the major political parties in the Ondo State governorship election have accused one another of inducing voters with money. It was observed that members of the All Progressives Congress, the Peoples Democratic Party and the Alliance for

Democracy were giving money to voters at most polling centres visited across the state. Some polling units in Odigbo, Okitipupa and Ilaje local governments areas were given N450,000 while each voter got between N3,000 and N5,000.

The editorial board of this day newspaper (2016) also reported the Ondo election:

Two groups of independent observers that monitored the process and conduct of the governorship election in Ondo State said their findings on the field revealed monetary inducement of voters. The groups, Youth Initiative for Advocacy, Growth and Advancement (YIAGA) and *Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room* in their separate reports on their activities during the poll, said the exercise was characterised by many irregularities in some areas. The practice, whereby voters were given money before they voted for candidate, poses threat to the Nigeria's democracy.

Apart from the above reports, the Alliance for Credible Elections, (ACE-Nigeria) which deployed 92 observers and 8 supervisors that carried out the direct observation of the election confirmed in its Vanguard (2016) report that there were incidences of votes buying by agents of politicians in many polling units across the state. The group concluded that from the foregoing we can confidently state that 2016 Ondo State governorship election was peaceful, orderly but not credible. Matenga [15] described the 'strategy' employed for blatant vote buying:

Political 'party agents' are hired and placed at strategic locations very close to the ballot boxes to see which party a voter has voted before payment. The 'agent' will give a signal to another party agent to pay at the back, and if the voter fails to vote for the party, there is also a signal. At the end of the exercise, the highest bidder usually emerges as winner with grave implications for democracy and good governance.

2.2 Ekiti Governorship Election: Evidence of Vote Buying

The governorship election was conducted on the 22nd day of July 2018. Evidence from the election was reported by Newspaper Corresponds, Atoyebi and Ogundele [21]. The excerpt of the report is captured. The Resident Electoral

Commissioner in Ekiti State, Prof Abdulganiy Raji, promised a free and fair election but the outcome of the governorship poll in the state showed clearly that the Independent National Electoral Commissioner has no power over how free and fair an election can be achieved. It undressed the weakness of INEC or the connivance of the body and security forces with buyers of votes and peddlers of the Permanent Voter Card. Except for political parties and candidates who did not have much cash, no major contestant in the race could claim to be innocent of all anti-democratic strategies that were perpetrated before and during the election. And to nail their guilt, post-election responses of the contestants involved in vote buying have been meandering.

Nigerians can celebrate the dying culture of godfatherism in the nation's politics or the gradual disappearance of ballot box snatching and high record of brigandage on election day, but the influence of huge amounts of money in deciding who wins an election is fast replacing the anti-poll styles that once dominated Nigeria's politics. The '*dibo ko sebe*' (vote and cook soup) system in the Ondo governorship election that brought in Governor Rotimi Akeredolu was seen as a one-sided electoral fraud perpetrated by the All Progressives Congress, using the federal might to introduce intrigues into the pre-election activities of its main rival and further cementing its hold on the electoral process with enormous cash.

In the Ekiti election, the political fraud was given the name 'see and buy', with political party agents invading polling units with bags of money. They approached voters who had PVCs and convinced them to vote for their parties. The APC and the PDP were alleged to have taken the lead in this practice. While the APC offered N5,000 for a vote, the state government was alleged to have offered N3,000 per vote 'electronically'. There were evidences of the amount electronically paid to the accounts of civil servants and pensioners in the state for 'logistics'. Logistics here simply translates to inducement. The Peoples Democratic Party was also said to have offered willing voters N4,000 each to vote for the party.

Prior to election, there was open sharing of money as the agents of the two culpable political parties were accused of going from one house to another, using the contact addresses on the voter list as their compass. One of the voters, who was approached with money, Janet

Opeyemi, said she was not given the money because she was not going to vote in Ado-Ekiti, where they met her. This therefore made it difficult for her 'suits' to know if she would vote for them. Opeyemi said, "One of them met me in my grandmother's house in Ado-Ekiti. He appealed to me to vote for the APC and offered N5,000 which I refused. However, when he persisted, I told him I was going to Ikere to vote. He was disappointed because his area of jurisdiction did not cover Ikere. But he made efforts to link me up with another agent of the party in Ikere that would take care of me there and be sure I voted for them. The PDP employed a similar system with N3,000 as its offer.

The 'see and buy' syndrome was not the only electoral fraud committed in Ekiti State. INEC and the Federal Government agencies were also indicted of systematic and technical fraud. The Ekiti Resident Electoral Commissioner (REC) said on the eve of the election that 667,270 people had the PVC to vote in the election and that only those who had the PVC would be permitted to stay around the polling units. He also said anyone found working against INEC's directives and guidelines on the election would be dealt with by unarmed security men at the polling units and armed ones who had been stationed at strategic points in the state. On the day of election, vote buyers prowled the streets of Ekiti with no report of any arrest made. At ward 12 in the Igbehin area of Ado-Ekiti, a septuagenarian, who spoke to our correspondent on condition of anonymity, alleged that agents of the APC offered him and others at the polling unit N5,000 to secure their votes. He said the security men at the venue watched helplessly. "I was offered N5,000 to vote for the party but I rejected it. I am a 73-year-old retired teacher. I cannot allow the future of my children to be bought by moneybags. I don't know how we descended to this level where people brazenly offer money to people to secure their votes; it was not like this in the past. Will our votes count with this problem?" he said.

The groups, which included the Centre for Credible Leadership and Citizens Awareness, Nigeria; Justice and Equity Organisation, Nigeria; International Republican Institute, United States of America; and Patriotic Women Foundation, Abuja, said the election fell short of global best practices. Speaking on behalf of the group, Gabriel Nwambu of the Centre for Credible Leadership and Citizens Awareness, Abuja, said the exercise witnessed a high level of

unprecedented electoral-related challenges and that such abuse would remain contentious until justice prevailed especially in the areas of cash inducement and arrests of political stalwarts by security agents. He said, "Party agents had huge cash and were close to voting points. Security agents were indifferent to cash inducement of voters. The whole process falls short of compliance with international best standards."

Reacting to the vote-buying allegation, the state Publicity Secretary of the PDP in Ekiti State, Jackson Adebayo, pointed in Sunday Punch published July 2018, that the party was not involved in the practice during the election. Adebayo stated, "PDP does not buy votes in any election and during the last election in Ekiti, we did not do so. The security forces deployed for the election played the role of security apparatus of the APC. The police provided security for APC agents who moved from polling unit to the other with Ghana-Must-Go full of money. The police even helped in the sharing and they took their own. "Governor Ayo Fayose did not send money to workers and pensioners accounts to influence them. The office of stomach infrastructure had been offering financial assistance to people of the state regularly. It is only a coincidence that the last batch came just before the election. That money was not meant to buy votes.

The Deputy National Publicity Secretary of the Social Democratic Party, Alfa Mohammed, said the APC and the PDP must be held accountable for lavishing public purse on the election. Alfa said, the election was free but not clear, fair or credible. It was free because police did not arrest those who were sharing money to buy votes. Both parties are in government at the state and federal levels; so, they used public money to take part in the practice. We as a party don't have such huge amounts to buy votes. What these parties introduce to our democracy is dangerous. In a situation like this, election can never be free and credible. We have just endangered our democracy but something must be done, otherwise, we are in trouble in 2019.

The Chairman of the APC in the state, Mr. Jide Awe, also denied his party's involvement in the alleged vote-buying saga. He said, we did not share money to anybody. We all know the party that shared money electronically to people's accounts and in cash. Anybody that shared money to people on behalf of the APC is not known to us. Such a person is not our member. The state Police Public Relations Officer, Caleb

Ikechukwu, said he had no information that the police looked away while money exchanged hands during the election. He said, "I do not have such information. If I do, I will let you know our reaction to it. Nigeria Police provided protection for people during the election so that the process would not be truncated. We are not biased.

The state REC, said his men could not have been fingered in the practice because they were busy conducting the election at the polling units. He mentioned what I want people to know is that anyone who is making allegations must come up with enough proof that INEC staffers were involved. We had a job to do on election day and we did our job. I do not agree that it happened at the polling units. The one we knew about, we reported it to the police and arrest was made.

2.3 Osun Gubernatorial Election Scenario: Evidence of Votes Buying

The report of Osun election was compiled by Atoyebi, Makinde, Nwogu and Alagbe, et al. [22]. The election was conducted in September 2018. First hand information of the governorship election was documented as contained in Newspaper reporting. The excerpt of the reportage is described. Forty-eight governorship candidates from 48 political parties jostled for 1,246,915 votes in the Osun State governorship election which held on Saturday. Some of the contestants and their political associates devised new means and tactics to induce voters ahead of the poll. The report revealed that the representatives of at least one of the contestants were using the WhatsApp social media platform to woo Permanent Voter Card holders, who are residents of Osun State, to sell their votes. This was despite attempts by the Independent National Electoral Commission to curb vote-buying and selling especially in the Osun election.

Checks by correspondents showed that the associates of the contestants cleverly hid their identities. To track the identities of the buyers and the politicians they were working for, one of the correspondents connected to an online link that in turn linked him with a WhatsApp number 08120569530, where he was asked a series of questions to ascertain if he actually had a permanent voter card and if he was an Osun State indigene. The administrator later promised that N10,000 would be deposited into our correspondent's account number at 6am on Election Day. The correspondent was asked to

send his account detail, age, town, ward and unit to claim the amount. The administrator said, "You'll receive bank alert 6am on the Election Day. Don't forget to pass this good news to all your friends and family. Make sure you add us to your phone book and don't forget to send this to all your friends and family living in around Osun State. Expect our call anytime from now."

It was difficult to ascertain the party or governorship candidate that initiated the payment process. When our correspondent tried to call the number, using Truecaller, a mobile app that finds contact details globally, to trace the owner, it did not respond. Almost immediately, the administrator sent a message that our correspondent would be stopped from enjoying the N10,000 vote-buying price. "Please, no WhatsApp call and if you keep calling, we'll block you," the administrator wrote. Meanwhile, one of the contestants was said to have started distributing money to the ward leaders who would identify names of their party members on the voter registers and pay them ahead of the poll. A source close to one of the politicians told one of our correspondents on Friday that money had been moved to where the distribution would be done in order to pay for the votes. He said there is nothing they can do to stop vote-buying especially in this election, because politicians are desperate to outdo one another in their bid to buy votes. They have started bringing money out but this time round, because of the noise over it, they will be more discreet in sharing the money. Money has been given to the leader of the party in our area but they are yet to tell us how much.

Evidence gathered that the sponsor of a particular candidate compelled some party leaders to swear an oath that they would spend the money he wanted to give them to induce voters and not pocket them. Some of the leaders were said to have agreed while a few of them were said to have rejected the money because they could not swear this oath of allegiance. The same candidate was said to have distributed forms to prospective voters, asking them to fill in their accounts details to enable them to be credited with the sum of N10,000. The amount is said to be meant for any voter with Permanent Voters Card (PVC).

But the APC and the PDP trade blames over allegations of vote-buying, accusing each other of trying to sway voters by offering electorate money for their votes. The PDP accused the ruling party of planning to buy votes with billions

of naira in order to manipulate the people to vote for the ruling party's candidate, Gboyega Oyetola. The opposition party denied that its candidate in the election, Ademola Adeleke, was collecting bank details of the electorate through a WhatsApp number in order to buy their votes. He said the allegation was a rumour and that Adeleke would play by the rules of the election. The PDP Chairman in Osun State, Mr. Soji Adagunodo, who said this at a press conference at the party secretariat, noted that the party had detected several means through which the APC wanted to rig the election. Adagunodo said we wish to alert the general public to the planned monetisation of the Osun State governorship election, especially the voting process, by the APC. Towards this ignoble end, several helicopters loaded with cash were flown into the Government House between the hours of 4pm and 8pm on Thursday.

The money, run into billions of naira, was contributed by state governors elected on the platform of the APC to enable the party to induce voters at various polling units. In addition, each of the 67 local government council development areas in Osun State was made to cough up N12.5m for the same purpose. The plan of the APC, as gathered from very credible sources, was to buy votes with a sum ranging from N5,000 to N10,000 each at the polling units. It is quite unfortunate that a government which did not find it compelling to pay salaries and allowances of its workforce for 34 months could resort to attempting to buy the conscience of voters in this election. But, when contacted, a chieftain of the APC in Osun State, Mr. Sola Fasure, who is also the media aide to Governor Rauf Aregbesola, asked the PDP to provide evidence of its allegations.

In defense of the ruling party, Fasure said the opposition party had started inducing voters ahead of the election, adding that the PDP raised the allegation as a smokescreen to divert attention from the alleged electoral fraud the party had perfected. He said the PDP and its candidate have been sending messages out to obtain account numbers of the people whose vote they want to buy. They are using this allegation to cover their own heinous and sinister practice of trying to induce voters. They are making allegations without evidence but we have evidence of them trying to induce voters. They are the ones actually sending messages and trying to induce these voters with cash. They have been obtaining bank accounts and it is all

over the state. Everybody knows but they are using the press conference as a means to divert attention from them so that they can perpetrate that criminal activity of subverting the election and inducing voters. We are not giving out money to anybody; anyone who claims to have collected money from us should come out to the public and say it. We have the strategy of winning elections by going out to canvass for votes and they have the strategy of taking shortcut by paying to induce voters and to circumvent the electoral process. They have started inducing voters already but they will fail woefully.

The INEC Chairman, Prof. Mahmood Yakubu, said the commission had recently observed increasing voters' inducement through electronic transfers to influence their choice of voters on the day of the election. According to a release by INEC, Yakubu led a team of national commissioners to the EFCC on Thursday to look at further steps that could be taken to address the vote-buying and selling menace. Yakubu said of immediate concern is the election we are holding in Osun State and it is going to be the last major election before the 2019 general elections. We have taken steps as a commission, but we need the support of the EFCC in this respect. Vote-buying and selling is giving our democracy and elections a bad reputation. Also, institutions like the EFCC having the powers to arrest, investigate and prosecute can help to stem this ugly tide. We have also recently observed increasing inducement through electronic transfers, whereby money is transferred into the accounts of some voters in order to influence their decisions on Election Day. We believe that you have both the law and the capacity on your side to help us in this respect. We implore the EFCC to also monitor campaign finances of political parties and their candidates. We don't want the moneybags to determine our democracy. We want the votes of the people to determine who wins in our elections.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

It is pertinent to put in perspective the ideological motivation that thrive the emergence of political enterprise which present itself as campaign funds and translated into voters inducement or otherwise votes buying. Evidence from the literature abundantly revealed the pattern of voters' inducement and channel through which the fund is transmitted to electorates to swing

votes. For the purpose of this discussion, Turner's [23] Social Exchange Theory is used. The theory of social exchange is germane to explain social change and stability as a process of negotiated exchange between parties. This paradigm has its fundamental premises that all social life is treated as an exchange of rewards or resources between actors. The exchange paradigms entertained high aspirations in sociology explanation because of its fundamental premise that all life can be treated as an exchange of rewards or resources between actors. The interactions that exist between human beings are established on the norm of reciprocity whether positive or negative [23]. Social exchange theory posits that all human relationships are formed by the use of a subjective cost-benefit analysis and the comparison of alternatives and sterility as a process of negotiated exchange between parties. The voters received money and other gifts from the politicians or political gladiators in exchange for their votes during the election periods.

In furtherance of this theory, the politicians elected by voters into office easily forget about the promise they made during the campaign and plight of the voters. Though, a person may continue to be in a good relationship without adequate satisfaction when there is no set of alternative relationship available. In a situation when there are many alternatives available to an individual, such a person is less dependent on such a relationship and vice versa. Exchange transactions are reciprocal, if reciprocity relationship and mutual concern is not observed such transactions may tend to eventually discontinue. The task of social exchange theory is then to investigate the reciprocal (mainly materials) advantages the individuals draw from their exchange transaction on singular premise that they engaged in. The exchange theory provides a clear conception of the material and resources basis of social action as Cook [24] put it, since the poverty level of voters is high, the first priority is to solve their immediate needs.

Social action is an exchange of (tangible or intangible) activities and reward or cost between individual on the ground that people have always explained their conduct by means of its benefits and costs to them [25]. The relevance of this theory lies solely on the fact that voters or citizens embarked on voting exercises on the premises that they voted for their

representatives. Not everybody will be in public offices to determine or take decision that affects all but citizens have to delegate their responsibilities to the elected candidates to hold the power for them. This theory, therefore, rests on the norms of reciprocity where one individual obliges another. In the social exchange process, a return is expected though not by bargaining but left to the discretion of the one who makes it. On one side, the voters may decide to vote because of the material reward from the political leaders or with great expectation to improve the condition of their living standard or other demands from the government in term of policies and so on. On the other side, the voting behaviour of the masses may emanate as a result of exchange of materials by politicians [26].

In the first place, candidates provided voters with material inducements to increase their chances of winning an election, especially when there is competition or between political parties or political actors. Voters on their part may agree to sell their votes and support for a particular candidate because they value their immediate needs and gains, more than they value their preferred political contender. This belief perhaps strengthens the intention of voters to be willing and on the alert to readily collect material gifts in monetary and non monetary aspects to add value to their lives. Evidence from above literature put it that some voters have confidently invested the money they received in exchange for votes to establish small scale enterprise and they could proudly boast of gains which accrue from their action.

Although social exchange theory proposes that social behaviour is the result of an exchange process, the purpose of this exchange is to maximize benefits and minimize costs. Therefore, people weigh the potential benefits and risks of social relationships. In this situation when the risks outweigh the rewards, people will terminate or abandon that relationship. Voters who are overwhelmed with poverty do participate in elections due to incentives and material gains from the politicians and may not enjoy the future benefits. Although, scholar such as Blaydes [27] argued that people with low incomes are more likely to be targeted for patronage because their 'votes are more easily bought and their reliance on state patronage is higher. Chibber [28] argued that voters turn out to vote because it is their rights to fulfill their civil responsibility and apathy recorded during an election as a result of poor electoral process.

Nevertheless, political enterprise continues to flourish because voters who are induced strongly believe that the immediate benefits can largely serve to compensate their poor economic condition and reciprocate their voting behavior to givers of the inducement. There are now electorates who identify small scale ventures as proceeds of their political escapes, *e dibo esebe*.

3. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The phenomenon of voters' inducement is a reality in the political landscape of Nigeria. Apparently, all political parties which have the financial capacity are guilty of this strange practice. Some political parties are large in size and also have mega funds to run party activities during elections. Some parties which are in government strive to retain power by all means, while others which have numerical strength of members and fund compete shoulder to shoulder to wrestle political power. The desperation of mega parties to retain power or wrestle power proliferate the unsparing action to vote buying. At the same time, the desperation of some voters to gain immediate material benefits serves as motivation to willingly exchange their votes for money. However unethical the practice is presented to the conscience of votes' sellers, economic survival to grow business venture blindfolds their ethical thought. This is rather unusual practice in democratic ethos. This paper submits that some recommendations can be followed to stem the rising tide.

- i. Voters' inducement flourished among poor electorates who are always ready and willing to compensate for their economic lacks or needs. Against this backdrop, there is need for clarity of party manifestoes and political will to implement items contained in the blueprint. This will build electorate's confidence in the political landscape and help to redirect unethical voters to believe in the sanctity of electoral process. Also, voter's education must now be considered imperative especially where this is inculcated in school curriculum, religious organization and charity groups.
- ii. Security apparatuses and electoral umpire have been serially accused of compromising electoral value and process. This paper recommends that there should be synergy among government agencies designated to handle electoral process. The collaboration should be continuum to

achieve seamless interrelationship in the management of electoral activities.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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