
**ATTITUDE OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS OF UNN
TOWARDS VOTE BUYING DURING ELECTIONS: IMPLICATIONS
FOR A RE-THINK ON PEACE EDUCATION AND NATIONAL
SECURITY IN NIGERIA**

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Abstract

Vote buying is an aspect of electoral malpractice currently gaining notorious image in the electoral system in Nigeria. This study investigates attitude of undergraduate students of University of Nigeia to vote buying and the implication for nation-building and national transformation in Nigeria. The study sample consists of 300 undergraduate students selected through the proportionate stratified random sampling technique across gender from 10 faculties in the main campus of University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The instrument used for data collection was Questionnaire on attitude to vote buying developed by the researchers for the purpose of the study. Five research questions and one hypothesis guided the study. Data collected were analyzed using arithmetic mean and standard deviation, while the hypothesis was tested using the t-test at 0.05 level of significance. The results of the study showed among other things that poverty, ignorance and peer group influence were the major reasons undergraduate students sell their votes to desperate politicians during elections. Moreover, the result indicates that there is no significant difference in the attitude of male and female undergraduate students to vote buying. The result with respect to reasons recommends a re-think on inclusive policy for implementation of peace education at all levels of the Nigerian education system.

Keywords: Votes, Vote-buying, Elections, Undergraduate, Students

Introduction

Vote buying is a new dimension in the electoral malpractices in Nigeria. Vote buying has illegally become a key component of electoral mobilization strategies by desperate politicians in many young democracies especially in Africa (Jensen and Justesen, 2014). Vote buying has often been described as the exchange of private material benefits for political support. It is a form of financial, material or promissory inducement or reward by candidates of a political party, agent or supporter to influence a voter to cast his or her vote or even abstain from voting in order to enhance the chances of a particular contestant to win an election (Amadi, 2012; Jaja & Agumagu, 2019). Vote buying has recently come into playing a dominant role in determining who wins an election in Nigeria. The electorates seemingly look forward to selling their votes as a form of merchandise during elections (Peter & Obi, 2014).

Vote buying seem to be largely associated with developing countries of the world where democratic institutions and practices are still weak (Susan & Nikolay, 2014). Vote buying appear to be dominant in young democracies where money politics is particularly effective in poor or financially vulnerable communities and less educated people (Aytac, 2015). In addition, corruption is a social vice that has eroded the powers of democratic institutions such as the judiciary and the electoral body in many developing countries. Therefore in young democracies who are gradually extricating themselves from military dictatorships, corrupt practices tend to dominate in the public service (The Whistle, 2011). The tendency is the weakening of the security, the police, legislature, judiciary, the electoral body and other de democratic institutions whose officials are often compromised (Peter & Obi, 2014, and Tawakkal, Suhardono, Garner & Seitz, 2017).

In Nigeria, there were many cases of ballot box snatching using political thugs and other forms of violence by politicians while security personnel on duty look the other way during the recently concluded elections. Desperate politicians wanting to win elections by all means have devised a new wave of electoral malpractice known as vote-buying during elections (Onuoha & Ojo, 2017). Vote buying seems more subtle and more effective in swaying voters choices during elections than ballot snatching. This new trend in electoral malpractice is worrisome and therefore calls for the attention of researchers to proffer solutions to the menace.

The justification for vote buying seems to be that of free gift on the basis that no statute binds one who receives the gift on how he/she is supposed to react during or after the said gift has been collected. In the same vein, there is also no legal obligation, binding one from not delivering on the terms, in which such gifts are given (Ovwasa, 2013). This implies that if the receiver of the gift fails to vote for the candidate offering the gift, he cannot be legally sued for not voting. Vote buying is not restricted to Nigeria. In Africa for instance, 16% of voters have reported being offered money or goods in exchange for their votes during elections while nearly 80% of voters from 36 African countries believe voters are bribed – either sometimes, often or always (Shin, 2013). In Nigeria, politicians, political parties, and party agents who are mainly youths are the vote buyers while prospective voters are the sellers (Onuoha & Ojo, 2017). The commodity on sale is the vote to be cast while the medium of exchange could be monetary and non-monetary items. The market force that determines the value or price of a vote is the level of desperation of politicians to win the election in a locality (Ovwasa, 2013).

The issue of selling votes to the highest bidder aptly is a questionable practice that has permeated Nigeria's electoral process as demonstrated in the recent off-season elections in Ekiti, Anambra, Osun and just concluded national and state assembly elections. However, many researchers in the area of vote buying appear not to have paid much attention to the key stakeholders, undergraduates who constitute a significant part of youths in Nigeria. This study investigated undergraduate students attitude to vote buying in Nigerian politics using University of Nigeria Nsukka as a case study. The undergraduates are the leaders of tomorrow, who also have been playing active role in several elections in Nigeria either as political thugs, party agents, electoral ad-hoc staff, vote canvassers or voters. An undergraduate student is primarily a youth and a person enrolled in a university or tertiary institution and pursuing a degree or a diploma programme. The students are very vulnerable to vote buying in view of the rising level of poverty, unemployment and inadequate social welfare scheme, bursary, scholarship and general educational funding for youths.

Researchers such as Amadi (2012), Jensen Justesen (2014) Onye and Obizue (2017) are of the view that the socioeconomic status of parents especially of these undergraduate students from low-income homes are likely to influence their attitude towards vote buying. This position or assertion is predicated on the prevailing economic reality in Nigeria today which affects low income families. Thus, students from low-income families may have strong preference for particularized immediate benefits while students from wealthier homes may prefer more programmatic benefits that could take longer time to be delivered (Shin, 2013). What is important however is that the undergraduates are of voting age and may have enough political awareness to accept or reject vote buying.

Similarly, gender as a factor could play a significant role in the way individuals especially undergraduates perceive vote buying and other issues of serious concern in the society. Gender is a sociocultural concept that illustrates masculinity or femininity. It is the social role played by men and women (Amanyic, Bariledum & Lucky, 2015). Researchers in education and the social sciences have identified the influence of gender on attitude, interest and achievement (Onye & Obizue, 2017). Males appear more assertive, dominant and independent while females are more receptive, submissive and dependent (Anyanwu, Nwakanma & Idimogu, 2017). It therefore more likely for the males to resist the temptation of vote selling than their females counterparts. Thus, this study investigated undergraduates' students' attitude to vote buying, and extent their gender influenced such attitude.

Statement of the Problem

In Nigeria, vote buying has been identified as a trending electoral malpractice adopted by desperate politicians to take advantage of their opponents during elections. of the. Politicians resort to wooing voters with money, foodstuffs, clothes and other souvenirs in exchange for their votes. Considering the economic situation in Nigeria today, the youths especially the undergraduates appear to be the primary target as ballot box snatching is fast becoming unfashionable, The undergraduates could become easy prey to vote buying and selling due to the absence of social welfare scheme for their education, lack of bursary and near absence financial support from government. Many of the students come from low-income homes and could be easily lured into immediate beneficial offers

from politicians during elections except for those from wealthier families. Thus, the researchers investigated the attitude of undergraduates towards vote buying. This study also considered the influence of gender on the students attitude to vote buying since research evidence indicates that males are more assertive, independent aggressive than the females. It is possible that these attributes of males and females could account for the attitude of undergraduates to vote buying. Hence, this study investigated undergraduate students attitude to vote buying using the University of Nigeria, Nsukka as a case study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate student's attitude to vote buying in University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu State. Specifically, the study;

- a. assessed undergraduate students' perception on the extent of vote buying during elections.
- b. ascertained undergraduate students' attitude to vote buying during elections.
- c. ascertained the extent parents' level of income influences undergraduate students' attitude to vote buying.
- d. determined the extent gender of undergraduate students' influenced their attitude to vote buying.

Research Questions

The research questions formulated to guide the study are as follows:

1. To what extent does vote buying occur during elections in Nigeria?
2. What is the undergraduate students attitude to vote buying?
3. To what extent does income level of parents' influence undergraduates students' attitude to vote buying?
4. To what extent do male and female undergraduate students differ in their attitude to vote buying during elections in Nigeria?

Research Hypothesis

The following hypotheses formulated for the study were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference in the mean (x) rating scores of undergraduate students from parents of high and low-income levels on their attitude to vote buying.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean (x) rating scores of male and female undergraduates on their attitude to vote buying.

Methodology

The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. Nworgu (2015) stated that in survey studies collect data through questionnaire, observation or interview which are analyzed and used for answering research questions. The author further opined that when a study centers on individual opinion or group of opinions that the best design to adopt is survey method. This study investigated the opinion of groups of undergraduate students on their attitude to vote buying during elections in Nigeria. Hence the survey research design was considered appropriate for this study.

The area of the study is University of Nigeria, Nsukka in Nsukka local government area, Enugu state. The University of Nigeria Nsukka is a Federal University popularly known as UNN, it was founded by the Rt. Hon. Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe in October, 1960. It has three campuses namely. Nsukka, Enugu and Ituku- Ozalla. All the campuses are located in Enugu state which is the capital of former Eastern region and hot-bed of politics east of the Niger. The population of undergraduate students in UNN was 35,630 in 2019/2020 academic session (Department of Students Affairs UNN: Population Statistics, 2021). This large population of students is enough to generate a large sample for the study. The choice of UNN as the area of this is also based on the fact that it is a federal university with a wide catchment area and boasts of students population from across Nigeria.

The sample for the study consisted 300 undergraduates selected from the 35630 undergraduates in UNN. The sample was selected through the disproportionate sampling technique from the ten faculties in the Nsukka campus of the University. The 300 respondents were made up of 125 and 175 undergraduates students from parents of high and low income levels; and 150 male and 150 female undergraduates students respectively.

The researchers developed the instrument titled "Undergraduate Students' Attitude to Vote Buying Questionnaire (USAVBQ). The instrument has two sections, namely; section A and section B. Section A was on demographic information of the respondents and it elicited information on personal data of the respondents (faculty and gender). Section B consists of items that dealt on attitude

to vote buying. Section 'B' is arranged in clusters. Cluster 'A' dealt on extent of vote buying while cluster 'B' dealt on attitude to vote buying while Cluster 'C' was on influence of parents level of income on vote buying. The clusters have 9, 7 and 7 items respectively.

The researchers subjected the questionnaire to face validity test by three experts in Faculty of Education. Two lecturers in the Department of Social Science Education and one from Measurement and Evaluation unit of Science Education, all in faculty of Education, UNN. These experts looked at the content of the questionnaire, whether it is in line with research questions and statements of problems. These experts also looked at the format of the questionnaire, the appropriateness of the questionnaire title and the clarity of items it contained. The instrument was further subjected to construct validity using the factor analysis. This was done because attitude is psychological construct whose instrument requires construct validation. Items that met the requirements in factor loading were included in the final version of the instrument.

The reliability of the instrument was determined using the Cronbach Alpha method. This is because the items deal on psychological construct (attitude) and were also scored polychotomously, hence the use of cronbach alpha reliability method. To determine this, the instrument was administered to 35 respondents in Enugu state university of Science and Technology (ESUTH) which is outside the area of study. The reliability index of the USAVBQ was thus calculated using the SPSS version 20 at 0.81. This was considered high and thus appropriate for the study.

During data collection, the researchers visited the undergraduate students in their faculties and departments and administered the questionnaires directly to the respondents. The researchers collected the questionnaires back on the spot to ensure 100 percent return. The information obtained from the questionnaire were analyzed using the arithmetic mean (\bar{X}) and standard deviation. The t- test was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

The data generated for the study were analyzed and presented according to the research questions as follows;

Research Question 1: What is the extent vote buying occur during elections Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean (\bar{x}) ratings of undergraduate students on extent of vote buying during elections in Nigeria

S/N	Extent of the Vote Buying in Nigeria	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{x}	Decision
1.	Vote buying is becoming an acceptable practice during elections.	72=288	68=204	167=334	23=23	$\frac{849}{300}=2.83$	A
2.	Some voters refuse to accept gifts of money, salt and clothes during elections.	54=216	52=156	118=236	76=76	$\frac{684}{300}=2.28$	D
3.	Females are more susceptible to vote buying than males during elections.	41=164	69=207	82=164	108=108	$\frac{643}{300}=2.14$	D
4.	Many undergraduates refuse to sell their votes during elections.	37=148	93=279	66=132	104=104	$\frac{663}{300}=2.21$	D
5.	Poverty is the main reason for people selling their votes during elections.	92=368	91=273	83=166	34=34	$\frac{841}{300}=2.80$	A
6.	Vote selling and buying are common in rural than urban areas during elections.	83=328	76=228	107=214	34=34	$\frac{804}{300}=2.68$	A
7.	Politicians and their agents visit houses with salt, money, etc. to buy votes during elections.	33=132	109=327	31=62	127=127	$\frac{648}{300}=2.16$	D
8.	It is difficult to win elections these days without buying peoples votes.	121=484	89=267	76=152	14=14	$\frac{917}{300}=3.05$	A
9.	Both young and old voters look forward to selling their votes during elections.	127=508	73=219	88=176	21=211	$\frac{924}{300}=3.08$	A

Table 1 shows that, the undergraduate students agreed that vote buying during elections is very pervasive to a high extent. They seem to agree that vote buying is generally accepted as a normal practice in politics in Nigeria, that poverty is the main reason people sell their votes. They also affirm that vote buying and selling is common in the rural than urban areas, that it is difficult to win elections in Nigeria without vote buying and that both old and young voters look forward to selling their votes during elections.

On the other hand the undergraduates students disagreed on the following issues as regards to vote buying as presented in items, 2, 3, 4 and 7. The undergraduate students disagreed on the following issues: that, many refuse to accept gifts of money, cloths and salt; females are more susceptible to vote buying than males; some voters refuse to sell their votes; and that politicians and their agents visit the houses to buy votes with salt, money and cloth. Disagreeing on these items suggest that vote buying is prevalent and trending in Nigeria.

Research Question 2: What is the undergraduate student’s attitude to vote buying?

Table 3: Mean (X) rating on Undergraduates Students Attitude to Vote Buying

S/N	Attitude to vote buying	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{X}	Decision
1.	I believe in vote buying.	5=20	9=27	110=220	125=125	$\frac{392}{300} = 1.30$	SD
2.	Vote buying do not help to choose good leaders.	125=500	117=351	31=62	20=20	$\frac{933}{300} = 3.11$	A
3.	Vote buying has come to stay.	30=120	25=75	115=230	125=125	$\frac{550}{300} = 1.83$	D
4.	Vote buying is anti-democratic.	120=480	110=330	50=100	28=28	$\frac{938}{300} = 3.13$	A
5.	Vote buying is corruption	112=448	145=435	43=86	0=0	$\frac{969}{300} = 3.23$	A
6.	Vote buying should be accepted.	25=100	11=33	149=298	115=115	$\frac{546}{300} = 1.82$	D
7.	Vote buying should be punished legally.	125=500	116=330	41=110	18=40	$\frac{980}{300} = 3.27$	A

Table 2 above shows that undergraduates students attitude towards vote buying in Nigeria is negative. They believe that though it has come to stay vote buying doesn’t help voters to choose the best candidates during elections. The attitude of the students towards vote buying suggest that it is anti-democratic, and an act of corruption that should be punishable legally.

Research Question 3: To what extent does income level of parents influence undergraduate students attitude to vote buying in Nigeria?

To answer this research question, a hypothesis was formulated as follows:

H01: There is no significant difference in the mean (x) attitude rating scores of undergraduate students from high income parents and low income parents.

Table 3: Result of t-test analysis on mean (x) rating scores of undergraduates students from high income parents (HIP) and low income parents (LIP) parents on their attitude to vote buying.

S/N	Statements	HIP N1	LIP N2	X1	X2	S.D1	SD2	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
1.	I believe in vote buying.	125	175	2.38	2.68	1.34	2.21	2.15	1.96	Reject
2.	Vote buying do not help to choose good leaders.	125	175	2.15	2.63	1.25	1.67	1.72	1.96	Do not reject
3.	Vote buying has come to stay.	125	175	2.62	3.16	1.27	2.42	1.62	1.96	Do not reject
4.	Vote buying is anti-democratic.	125	175	2.74	2.69	1.23	1.58	2.52	1.96	Reject
5.	Vote buying is corruption.	125	175	3.16	2.37	1.03	1.73	2.1	1.96	Reject
6.	Vote buying should be accepted.	125	175	2.14	2.52	0.94	1.64	1.15	1.96	Do not reject
7.	Vote buying should be punished legally.	125	175	3.25	3.10	1.56	1.72	1.63	1.96	Do not reject

Table 3 above shows that the hypothesis was rejected for items 1, 4 and 5. Hence, there is a significant difference in the attitude of the undergraduate students from high income parents (HIP)

and those from low income parents (LIP) with regards to their believe in vote buying, anti-democratic and corrupt practice. However, they do not differ on the issue of vote buying not helping electorates to choose good leaders; that vote buying has come to stay, vote buying should be accepted, and vote buying should be punished legally.

Research Question 4: What is the difference in male and female students' attitude to vote buying? In answer to the research question, a hypothesis is formulated as follows:

Hypothesis Testing Ho2: There is no significant difference in the mean (\bar{x}) rating scores on attitude of male and female undergraduates to vote buying at 0.05 level of significance

Table 4: Result of t- test analysis of mean (\bar{x}) attitude ratings of male and female undergraduate students on vote buying.

S/N	Statements	Male N1	Female N2	X1	X2	SD1	SD2	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
1.	I believe in vote buying	150	150	2.5	3.5	1.34	2.32	2.15	1.96	Reject
2.	Vote buying do not help us to choose good leaders.	150	150	2.9	2.4	1.25	1.35	1.72	1.96	Do not reject
3.	Vote buying has come to stay.	150	150	3.1	3.1	1.27	1.14	1.62	1.96	Do not reject
4.	Vote buying is anti-democratic.	150	150	3.1	3.1	1.03	1.73	2.14	1.96	Reject
5.	Vote buying is corruption.	150	150	2.7	2.4	0.94	2.16	1.15	1.96	Do not reject
6.	Vote buying should be accepted.	150	150	2.8	3.3	2.31	2.53	1.73	1.96	Do not reject
7.	Vote buying should be punished legally	150	150	3.5	2.9	2.71	2.42	1.59	1.96	Do not reject

Table 4 above shows that the hypothesis was rejected for items 1, and 4. This means that there is a significant difference in the mean (\bar{x}) rating of male and female undergraduates students on their attitude to vote buying on the two items. Hence, the male and female undergraduate students differ in their believe in vote buying and in their regard of vote buying as anti-democratic. However, there is no significant difference in their mean (\bar{X}) rating on the other five issues. These include; vote buying do not help to choose good leaders, vote buying has come to stay, vote buying is corruption, vote buying should be accepted; and vote buying should be punished legally.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The findings of this study suggest that vote buying has come to stay as a veritable tool for willing elections in Nigeria as both the young, male and female, rich and the poor look forward to politicians for material and cash gifts before casting their votes during elections. There is also a strong link between poverty and attitude to vote buying. The Undergraduate students from high income parents do not believe in vote buying as the students from low income parents. Despite differences in gender and economic background, the undergraduate students generally regard vote buying as a socio-political malaise that is undemocratic, and that should not be accepted but punished legally. The implication is that since poverty makes vote buying a more attractive, there should be a re-thinking on entrepreneurship education for the economic empowerment of the population. Education for life support skills and employment may significantly reduce the tendency for vote selling and buying in Nigeria. This study therefore recommends a re-thing on relevant existing policies on entrepreneurship education for the survival of the youth.

In addition, there is need for a value re-orientation through education in the nation. A new policy direction on value education should be considered and encouraged as panacea for correcting the social ills of vote buying and selling to ensure national transformation. The National Orientation Agency and public education department of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) have greater roles to play in this regard.

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