

Cash and Carry Democracy: Assessing the Impact of Vote Buying/Selling on Nigeria Political Development

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Abstract

This paper interrogates the political economy of Money politics in Nigeria's Fourth Republic, with particular focus on factors that are responsible for vote buying, how the use of money influence electoral outcome and extent in which vote buying has impacted on the electoral process in Nigeria. The research design adopted was case study research approach to demonstrate that money politics vis-a-vis vote buying has detrimental effects on Nigeria's democracy and unregulated political party finance affects Nigeria electoral process vis-à-vis electoral credibility. It encourages political patronage and clientele networks where political funders control and select politicians, thereby forsaking good governance and growth. Utilising the exchange approach theory as the tool for analysis illustrated relative power of participants in the exchange, conditioned by the principle of mutuality where electoral window in Nigeria political terrain is conceived by the elite as investment venture of which profit is to be maximized by means of exchange of electorates voting power for money, entrenchment of poverty and by extension hold the electoral system to hostage via manipulation, corruption and election irregularities and weak judicial system. The report suggests amongst others, the necessity for public enlightenment on the hazards of votes buying, while organisations responsible for the management of elections must ensure strict compliance with electoral rules.

Keywords: Money Politics, Vote Buying/selling, Electoral Credibility, INEC & Democratic Sustainability

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Background to the Study

Nigeria, a country rich in culture, diversity, and natural resources, finds itself grappling with a myriad of issues, one of which is the tangled web of money politics. The confluence of political aspirations, economic desperation, and societal inequalities has fueled a political landscape defined by corruption and patronage. The form of government known as representative democracy which is practiced in Nigeria is different across the globe because our kind of democracy falls short of all ethos of democratic governance. It is worthy to note that democracy is an imported concept imposed by U.S.A and UN through invisible control mechanism and the most expensive form of governmental administration across the globe, (personal observation, 2024). And as the most expensive form of government, it breed in money politics as the instrument of protecting the interest of the ruling and governing elites in Nigeria through state apparatus such as arms of government (executive, Legislature and Judiciary), in control of rulemaking, adjudication and implementation, institution of governance (police, civil defence, army) which are agents of the state, civil society (trade union, pressure groups), political parties and oppositions and intellectuals through which the world view is diffused, (Obi, 2024).

From the outset, it is essential to understand the nature of money politics in Nigeria. It is not merely about the exchange of physical currency; rather, it encompasses a broader spectrum of financial influence, including bribery, electoral fraud, and the cultivation of patron-client relationships. These practices are so deeply entrenched that they have become an expected part of the political process. As stated by Peters, (2024), a prominent political economy analyst, "Money politics in Nigeria is the lifeblood of our political system, controlling everything from the electoral process to governance itself" (Class lecture, 2024). While the roots of money politics can be traced back to Nigeria's colonial past, it has been exacerbated by the tumultuous political history following independence in 1960. Military coups, civil strife, and a consistent failure to build robust democratic institutions have all contributed to an environment ripe for corruption. According to a report by Transparency International, Nigeria consistently ranks among the most corrupt countries globally (Transparency International, 2020). This systemic corruption can largely be traced back to the political elites' insatiable desire for power, which they seek to secure through financial means.

In Nigeria's political landscape, money plays a pivotal role in elections. During electoral campaigns, candidates often resort to financial inducements to sway voters, thus compromising the electoral integrity. For instance, the 2019 and 2023 general elections were marred by reports of vote-buying, a phenomenon that has regrettably become commonplace. A report by the News Agency of Nigeria detailed instances where politicians distributed cash and gifts to voters, turning the election process into a transactional affair rather than one grounded in ideology or policy (Moghalu, 2019). Such practices undermine the democratic process, prompting citizens to view their votes as commodities to be bought rather than powerful tools of change. Yet, the consequences of money politics extend beyond just electoral processes. The repercussions are felt in the governance structures where public funds are often siphoned off for personal gain. According to the World Bank, Nigeria loses about \$1 billion annually to corruption within its public sector (World Bank, 2022). This scenario

fosters a culture where public officials prioritise their enrichment over societal development, leading to a pervasive neglect of essential services such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure. Hospitals remain underfunded, schools operate without basic resources, and roads become un-motorable all while the political elites indulge in opulence, oblivious to the suffering of the masses.

Election is a fundamental aspect of all democracies. Elections involve the processes of registration, campaigning, and lobbying, all of which necessitate financial resources. Consequently, political parties require funding to fulfill their roles in the political process. However, it is important to acknowledge that the influence of money can pose a significant threat to democracy. This phenomenon is evident on a worldwide scale, as shown in the substantial financial contributions made by large corporations to political campaigns in the United States, as well as the infiltration of drug money into political systems in Latin America. Additionally, corruption scandals have been prevalent in several countries across Asia and Europe (Jones, 2014). In Western developed democracies, the use of money in elections has always been prevalent. This is particularly evident in the United States of America, where successful participation in federal elections necessitates a significant amount of funding. Political parties and politicians heavily rely on affluent donors and organisations. Without sufficient financial resources, candidates may have limited prospects of achieving their objectives (Jones, 2014).

In Nigeria, money has consistently been linked to the electoral process, starting from the colonial era and continuing into the post-colonial era (Adetula, 2008). Money politics has been prevalent in subsequent elections, particularly in the fourth Republic. Since the 1999 elections, there have been complaints about politicians excessively and unrestrainedly using money during elections. Vote buying in Nigerian elections underwent a notable transformation during the 2007 elections. It was characterized as a high-stakes competition, where money was exchanged for voters' cards in certain states (Rauf, Tunde, Aliu, and Mohammed, 2016). Vote buying at this stage became shamelessly bold and daring. Money politics encompasses all financial activities undertaken by candidates or political parties during elections. Vote buying, on the other hand, is a specific form of money politics that has emerged as a tactic in Nigeria to influence voters during elections. Unfortunately, it has surpassed the importance of qualifications and widely accepted methods of political mobilisation. Vote buying has become a prominent issue in Nigeria's fourth Republic, particularly in recent years, with different forms emerging in several elections due to the country's updated policy.

The significance of money in Nigerian political campaigns is important to the functioning of society. Unregulated money in politics undermines fairness and reinforces the notion that money can purchase political influence, so jeopardising political equity. Political parties require financial resources to fulfill their legal obligations within their respective jurisdictions. In the absence of financial resources, politicians and political groups may encounter difficulties in effectively communicating and demonstrating their ideas to voters. In order to effectively promote their policies and agendas to the general public, political parties require

financial resources. Nevertheless, the funding of political parties, especially the financing of election campaigns on a global scale, is riddled with corruption. The electoral history of Nigeria is filled with instances of wealthy individuals financing the election campaigns of candidates. Since the reintroduction of the democratic process in Nigeria in 1999, incumbency issues, including vote buying, bribery, and financial inducements by politicians, security agents, electoral staff, and civil society groups, have been widespread in most elections. The prevalence of money politics and vote buying during elections in Nigeria can be attributed to several factors, including the limited access to quality healthcare and education, high rates of unemployment and underemployment, malnutrition, high mortality rates, and frequent national economic crises.

These issues collectively contribute to the persistence of poverty among the majority of the electorate. Money politics and vote buying are not limited to any one political system or geographical location; they transcend race and ethnicity (Ovwasa, 2013). This paper aims to analyse the influence of vote buying an aspect of money politics on political development in Nigeria. The objective is to determine the extent to which money politics inhibits democratic consolidation in relation to the behaviour of Nigerian voters. This paper acknowledges that it does not intend to offer a comprehensive analysis of money politics in Nigeria and electoral conduct among Nigerians. However, it highlights a compelling research field that has been overlooked by scholars.

Statement of Research Problem

The impact of money politics in Nigeria manifests in the erosion of public trust in government institutions. When citizens observe public servants, who engage in corrupt practices without facing consequences, disillusionment sets in, leading to apathy and disengagement. The youth, who represent a significant demographic in Nigeria, grow increasingly cynical about their leaders and the political processes that govern them. This disconnection is poignantly captured by a Nigerian youth activist, who lamented, "Why should we participate in a system that only rewards dishonesty and deprives the honest? Why should we participate in election where the result is already known by the ruling and governing elites? Why spend billions of naira on electoral devices that would not work during election. Voting feels like a waste of our time" (Adeyemi, 2021). This research study seeks to examine money politics and its implication on political development of Nigeria and the extent to which this has affected the political process in Nigeria's Fourth Republic.

Objectives of the Study

Arising from the above, the purpose of this paper is to analyse the influence of vote buying an aspect of money politics and its implication on political development of Nigeria and the extent to which this has affected the political process in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. The paper's specific objectives are to:

- i. Ascertain the factors that are responsible for vote buying/selling during election windows in Nigeria
- ii. Determine how money politics influenced electoral outcomes in Nigeria Election
- iii. Evaluate the extent in which vote buying/selling has impacted on Nigeria political development

Research Questions

This paper is guided by the following research questions;

- i. What are the underlying factors responsible for vote buying/selling during election in Nigeria?
- ii. To what degree has money politics influenced electoral outcome during election windows in Nigeria?
- iii. To what extent has vote buying/selling impacted on Nigeria political development?

This paper is organized into three sections. Section one provides the background and motivation for the work, as well as the research purpose and questions. Section two focuses on reviewing related literature, establishing the theoretical framework, and explaining the research methodology. Section three presents and analyses the data, discusses the findings, and concludes with a summary and recommendations.

Literature Review

Political Development

Political development, as defined in this work, encompasses alterations in the political and/or governmental framework of a nation-state and their influence on its social structure, (Obi, 2014). The effect of this alteration in political structure might be either partial or comprehensive, although it can be assessed statistically in certain cases. In other words, political development can be understood as the process of change initiated by the current government. According to Peter's (2000) analysis, political growth leads to the formation of institutions, attitudes, and values that shape a society's political system. Peter also claims that it improves the state's ability to gather and distribute resources, and to convert policy inputs into actionable outcomes. This facilitates problem-solving and adaptation to environmental changes, as well as the achievement of goals. Several prominent Marxists, including V.I. Lenin, Karl Kautsky, Georgi Plekhanov, Rosa Luxemburg, and Mao Zedong, characterized the political development in advanced industrial societies as the progression of class consciousness and political organisation among the proletariat. They believed that this would eventually result in the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of communism. A more prevalent (although ethnocentric) perspective is the advancement towards liberal democracy, which entails a responsible administration and chances for citizen participation. Some also perceive this as a facet of modernisation rather than growth, achieved through the practice of freedoms of association and expression, (Enojo and Obi, 2016).

The relationship between economic success and political development is a subject of extensive debate. The former has conventionally been regarded as a progenitor or enabler of the latter, by means of intervening factors such as the dissemination of literacy and the emergence of diverse interest groups, as well as the amassing of autonomous financial influence and economic prowess in society. Economic specialisation and differentiation create cross-cutting cleavages that help to regulate societal strife. In recent times, democratisation and good governance have been depicted as essential components of political progress and as prerequisites for long-term economic growth in emerging regions and post-communist states. Included as well are the principles of the rule of law, which encompasses respect for property

rights, and the advancement of civil society. Another essential element is the integration of human rights.

Nevertheless, the persistent challenge faced by certain fragmented nations, such as Nigeria and particularly those in the Third World, is how to effectively merge political stability with political liberalisation and democratisation. Another obstacle is ensuring the protection of democratic transition and consolidation in the face of significant economic transformation that generates widespread dissatisfaction and has the potential to foster political extremism. Therefore, political development encompasses not only the restructuring of institutions, but also the transformation of attitudes and the political culture. That imposes constraints on the extent to which political development can be imported or imposed externally. Political development does not follow a straight line and is not always permanent. Not all countries are going through political development, and some go through phases of decline and deterioration. A few countries even experience complete political breakdown, as seen in the former USSR.

Examining the political structure of Nigeria-State basically helps one to understand how the several groups that comprise the state co-exist peacefully or otherwise (Enajo and Obi, 2016) and how this affects state development. Every group uses whatever tools at its disposal; money, number, violence, religion, ethnicity, and power among others to its advantage, claims Obi, (2014). Development and survival rely on the degree each political unit can pull to benefit itself. This is the background against which state politics is performed. It's a matter of the ethnic group or section of the state one is from. This or that political actor originates from which section of the state or from which ethnic group particular issues benefit. Each of the three main ethnic groups living in the state upholds what their terminology defines as right or interest, which they have committed themselves to preserve and advance. One tries to rule it over the other, and the other object.

Money Politics

Money politics is essentially the funding source for politics. From registration, running campaigns during an election, to how parties support their ideas, how parties finance their operations has been and still is a current question in Nigeria's political system. Regarding pre-party primaries, general elections, and thereafter have drawn attention from all sides, candidates pay campaigns and election expenses according to Jide (2008). Money politics, defined by (Walecki, 2008) is any money used for campaigning or electioneering. He said that candidates for public office as well as their political parties or other supporters could gather and use this money. But Tunde, Lawal, and Muhhamed noted that money politicians were using to run for political office is too ridiculous and points to the poor political culture in the nation. The political disease is so ubiquitous that the concept "share the money" defines all levels of electoral contest (Tunde, Lawal, and Muhammad: 2015).

Unfortunately, money is becoming more and more important in Nigerian politics; it has taken front stage in its political process. It even seems to be so dominant in the electoral process to such an extent that the name "money politics," with negative connotations, has entered the

political vocabulary of the nation. Nowadays, evaluating the degree of political corruption and electoral credibility in the nation depends on a fundamental variable: Money politics affects all aspect of the election process including political party operations' policies and related expenses with regard to electioneering. Money Politics covers political organisation money; pressure and interest group funds; grants to elected officials; political party funds; election campaign funds; litigation funds in politically significant matters; Mass media funds from political parties; Corrupt political finances; unofficial payments to elected politicians; unofficial payments to government personnel; unofficial payments to mass media; Payments meant to streamline the voting process, (Usman, Enojo, Ujah, Kakwagh and Ocholi, 2023).

Looking at the idea of money politics, it is critical to remember that any political process requires finance to function; hence, money is a crucial requirement for the operation of any democratic system. However, the amount of money, its source, and the exact purpose for which it is used in the execution of a campaign or political activity are all crucial matters to investigate. At the onset, it is widely understood that money is required and employed in all electioneering operations worldwide. The difficulty of money politics comes only when politicians and other important actors violate or abuse established limitations, sources, and uses. When defined limitations or sources are ignored, the political space and institutions that oversee election and politicking processes are jeopardised.

The restricted notion of money in politics or political finance typically focusses on campaign and party funding. In fact, numerous non-party players participate in political rivalry with the goal of changing public policy, influencing legislation, or influencing electoral debates and outcomes. According to a typology proposed by Vilfredo Pareto (1935), there are three reasons for contributing political funds: 1) Idealistic or ideological, 2) social, pursuing social honour or access, and 3) financial, seeking material gains. The latter comes as no surprise, but it has significant political implications. The argument about political corruption revolves around money politics and political finance issues. Money politics destroys democratic institutions. Together with other forms of political corruption, it compromises democratic values, increases voter apathy and distrust of authority, and consolidates authoritarian tendencies in the state.

Elections and Electoral Process

According to Eme and Elekwa (2008), elections are a symptom of a competitive politics that tend to bring citizens closer to the political process. Consequently, it is impossible to overstate the significance of elections as formal processes or procedures of voting that enable members of a state or organisation to select candidates they think will best represent their interests or assume positions of authority on their behalf. In this regard, Akindele, Obiyan, and Owoeye (2000), for example, contend that elections have historically been recognized as the origin or progenitor of the representative form of government, which, according to them, refers to the election of individuals, or representatives, by eligible adult voters to public office. They also stress that elections originated in the ancient Greek city-states, from whence they have been eternalized as a symbol of democracy. Therefore, to them, it has preserved that particular emphasis even now, notably on the credentials of candidates for political offices, even if it was

by lot back then and included raising one's hand to indicate support or disagreement on any decision or current problem under debate. As a result, they draw the conclusion that since elections first entered the political sphere, they have undergone numerous reformative Rubicon's and political metamorphoses, ranging from denied, restricted, to unrestricted franchises or rights, some of which persist in various modern polities today (Akindele et al., 2000).

Despite the fact that elections play a crucial part in any democracy, Nigeria's democracy has faced numerous obstacles ever since it resumed its purportedly democratic (or civil) governance. Many African leaders in charge of affairs view elections as merely fronts for achieving political power and relevance, rather than as careful, civilized, and democratically acceptable methods of selecting leaders with the support of the majority of the populace. As a result, a lot of the continent's leaders-including the ones in Nigeria that have held office since 1999-talk about how elections are held in a supposedly democratic environment. Nothing more clearly demonstrates this pretence than the quote attributed to Olusegun Obasanjo, the former president of Nigeria. In 2007, while advocating for the late Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, the PDP's presidential candidate, Obasanjo openly told the shocked populace that the elections would be a "do or die affair" for both the PDP and the then-president (Chief Obasanjo, the sitting president) (Adebayo and Omotola, 2010). This explains why many elections in Africa, including Nigeria, result in unimaginably high levels of violence that cause premature deaths and wanton destruction of citizens' property. It also creates a sense of unease and fear that eventually leads to violent conflicts, as evidenced by the post-election violence in Kenya, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, and other countries.

Tenuche (2011) argues, for example, that political succession in Nigeria and, implicitly, the rest of Africa has been beset by issues primarily because citizens' ability to choose their rulers is restricted even prior to elections, undermining the legitimacy of elections as a vehicle for enacting the will of the people and defending democratic norms and ideals. Sani (2015) provides a cohesive conclusion by observing that elections are democratic if they permit equal voter participation, are conducted using legitimate voter lists and sufficient electoral materials, and are free from fraud, repression, or intimidation in a way that permits all candidates to participate in their campaigns without interference. In other words, they promote competition, let people participate, and are widely seen of as legitimate ways to move up the political ladder. However, our experience demonstrates that not all elections are democratic, even when they are accessible to the public, involve fair and open competition, and are widely regarded as the right path to power.

Vote Buying

It has been attempted by various scholars at various stages to describe vote purchasing. This is due to the fact that the concept is different in various regions and is contingent upon the cultural, historical, political, and election models of the respective region (Edegbo and Obi, 2022). Fox defines vote purchasing as the "exchange of political rights for material rights." This definition is predicated on the right of an individual to vote and the fact that voting in an election has evolved into a transaction. Bryan (2005) defines the concept as the utilization of

direct benefits and money to sway electors. Bryan's definition delineates the utilizations of money to influence ballots. In the same vein, vote buying has been defined as a transaction in which candidates distribute private products, such as cash and gifts, in exchange for electoral support or a higher turnout. Food items, the acquisition of voter cards, the targeting of social transfers, and the provision of public services to local communities are all included in the practice of vote purchasing (Schelder, 2002). It serves as evidence that vote buying extends beyond mere financial incentives or palpable material incentives. According to Schelder, the concept of vote buying is broadly analogous to what he refers to as "distributive" strategies of electoral mobilisation. These strategies are distinct from "communicative" strategies, in which parties and their candidates distribute material goods for political mobilisation, while communicative strategies involve the dissemination of symbolic messages, either written or verbal. The concept of distributive strategy is analogous to the conventional notion of clientelism, which is defined as "the exchange of private material benefits for political support" (Etzioni-Halevey, 1998).

In this regard, Charles and Schedler (2005) contend that candidates "purchase" and electorates "sell" the "vote," in the same manner as they purchase and sell fruits, shoes, or television sets. According to this perspective, the act of vote-buying is a contract or, alternatively, an auction in which voters sell their ballots to the highest bidder. By providing electors with particularistic material benefits, political parties and candidates are able to purchase votes. In general, candidates may aspire to acquire political support at the ballot box in accordance with the concept of market exchange. In order to effectively convey the contradictions and repercussions of vote-buying, Ovwasa (2013, p.3) observed the following:

“It is necessary to point out, that the commercial aspirations of vote buyers may run into two barriers, namely; objective and inter-subjective barriers. On the objective side, seller compliance is uncertain, as vote buying is an illicit business and as such does not take place within a “normal” market protected by social and legal norms. On the inter-subjective side, empirical accounts of participants’ perspective revealed that those electoral practices we describe as “Vote-Buying” may carry different meaning in different cultural context”.

This is because, as we have already said, vote-buying is not limited to one system or place. It can happen in any setting and throughout history. Further to this, Ovwasa (2013) said that vote buying happens in all systems, whether they are developed or developing, mediaeval or modern. It also happens in all climates and areas. The only thing that makes it different is that it shows up in different ways and in different amounts in different polities. It is usual for people in Benin, Taiwan, Japan, Northern Portugal, and the slums of Metro Minica to give gifts or do favours for candidates from time to time (Ovwasa, 2013). So, for the purposes of this paper, buying votes is a type of money politics, which is a way for parties or leaders to get people to vote in elections.

Empirical Literatures /Gap in Literatures

Usman, Enojo, Ujah, Kakwagh and Ocholi, (2023), Edegbo and Obi, (2022), Anifowose (1982), Tenuche (2010), Segun and Oni (2010), the OECD Report (2013), Egwemi (2013), Segun (2013), Nnamani (2014), Aondowase (2015), and Ibrahim, Liman, Mato (2015) are just a few of the many studies that have examined the conduct of elections in Nigeria and the voting habits of the general public. However, prior research has mostly failed to take a scientific and comprehensive approach to the selected topic, as this work aims to do. This paper's major claims that money in politics in Nigeria's fourth republic and voter behaviour in the country's elections have thus far not been tested. It is imperative that this enormous gap be filled in Nigeria's political past.

For example, research by Tenuche (2010), Segun and Oni (2010), and Segun (2013) has shown that in the area of Ebiraland in North-central Nigeria, where this paper is focused, the capacity of political candidates to mobilise and appeal to the religious, ethnic, and sub-ethnic identities of the people in order to gain political office is the primary factor determining voter behaviour. Specifically, as pointed out by Tenuche (2009), the addition of a new dimension to party politics in Ebiraland during the Second Republic was the greater political mobilisation of sub-ethnic identities. This was most clearly shown in the 1977 fierce contest for power between Obatemi Usman and Adamu Attah, who was the son of Ibrahim Atta. In an effort to rally support from his Oziogu clan, Adamu Atta's defeated opponent Obatemi Usman accused Attah's Aniku sub-clan of Adavi of monopolizing Ebiraland's public office positions.

In their own study, Adamu, Ocheni, and Ibrahim (2016) examined the influence of money on Nigerian politics and voting behaviour. They found that politicians often resort to vote-buying as a tactic to hide the fact that their platform fails to adequately convey their values, goals, and, most importantly, the benefits that the electorate would receive if they were elected. Their study takes a more holistic view, discussing Nigerians as a whole rather than zeroing in on any one demographic. A big issue has arisen here. Similarly, Adetula (2015) acknowledged that money, godfathers, and election violence were the main factors influencing voters' behaviour and involvement in the 2015 and 2019 general elections in Nigeria, whereas Obi et al. (2019) found that ethno-regional sentiments were the most influential in determining voting behaviour and political participation nationwide.

Thus, none of these studies despite the deluge of them have been able to sufficiently and substantially record the issue selected for this research. Consequently, the report pointed out number of issues. First, research on voting behaviour and the political economics of money in Nigeria's fourth republic seems to be lacking. In addition, prior studies have focused on religion, ethnicism, godfatherism, and electoral violence; nonetheless, it is thought that these elements alone do not fully account for what influences Nigerians' voting behaviour.

Third, the effectiveness of the Independent National Electoral Commission's (INEC) leadership in controlling party funding is called into doubt. The Independent National Commission (INEC) is responsible for keeping tabs on these funds, but seven consecutive elections in Nigeria have exposed the INEC's ineffective leadership. Corruption in the

leadership structure is further exposed by INEC's failure to regulate. According to Onoriode and Samuel (2023), the success of the INEC in providing its services depends on the full cooperation of everyone involved, from the chairman of the INEC to the Adhoc workers. The electoral umpire's inadequate personnel resource is another factor contributing to INEC's lack of regulation. Reason being, if HRM, which handles internal operations and policy maintenance, is faulty, the entire system will also be flawed. In light of this, Goswami, Hamida, Murthy, Gopal, and Kumar (2023) contended that efficient HRM may affect the execution of organizational policy, which in turn aids in materializing strategies for accomplishing set goals.

Theoretical Approach

Lycian Pye Theory is a pioneering analysis of political development, focusing on the importance of social, economic, administrative, political, and cultural variables in shaping it. Pye traces political development at three levels: population, government, and policy organization. Population involvement leads to greater sensitivity to equality and universalistic law. Government capacity develops with political development, allowing for better management of public affairs and controlling controversy. A developing political system implies greater structure differentiation, functional specificity, and integration of participating institutions. Pye criticizes the view that political development should be a result of economic development, as it does not consider the specific economic problems of each country. Instead, he proposes three characteristics of political development: equality, capacity, and differentiation. Equality involves mass participation and popular involvement in political activities, requiring active citizenship and the application of laws. Capacity is closely associated with governmental performance and the conditions that affect it, focusing on efficiency and effectiveness in modernizing and executing public policy. Differentiation and specialization are central themes in political development, focusing on the ultimate sense of integration rather than fragmentation and isolation of different parts of the political system. This approach emphasizes the importance of addressing the specific economic problems of each country and focusing on the development of a country's political system.

Almond and Coleman's structural functional analysis focuses on the comparative study of political systems at different levels of development and the rapid growth of these systems. They identified five properties of the political system: universality of political structure, universality of political functions, multifunctionality of political structure, and culturally mixed character. Apter's theory of modernization suggests that traditional societies have no different development sequence depending on their type of government and value system. He proposes secular libertarian models approaching democracy through reconciliation systems and sacred collectivity models approaching totalitarianism through modernization systems. Apter also suggests the possibility of developing societies setting up modernizing autocracies, military oligarchies, or other complex patterns of political modernization.

The Theory of Modernization emphasizes the importance of technology, industrialization, urbanization, and wear literacy in achieving rural-urban industrialization. The Theory of Rural Development emphasizes the importance of rural change and development to control

the pace of rural-urban migration mobility, which has its own consequences. The Lucian Pye theory emphasizes the importance of the capacity of government to meet the demands of its people through effective and efficient execution of policies. The Almond and Coleman theory contributes to their study by emphasizing the universality of political functions and the need for wise and optimal use of state government power for the people's benefit. Lastly, David Apter's theory stresses the possibility of developing societies setting up modernized governments.

However, the social exchange theory was adopted for understanding the correlation between money political on political development vis-à-vis electoral credibility. Social exchange theory holds that a trade process generates social behaviour. This trade aims to minimize costs and maximize advantages. George Homans, a significant proponent of social exchange, claims that people consider the possible advantages and drawbacks of social contacts; so, when the risk exceeds the benefits, people will either terminate or abandon that relationship (Cherry, 2018). Social exchange theory as a whole address's social transformations as a process of dynamic interactions among many people. Social exchange theory sees human interactions and exchanges as a kind of results-driven social behaviour, whereby cost and reward is the fundamentals of this theory, that is cost and rewards evaluation drive human decisions and behaviour, where costs are the negative consequences of a decision, such as money, time and energy, rewards are the positive results of social interactions. Consequently, the basic theory is that individuals will deduct the expenses from the benefits to determine the value. According to the idea, people will make decisions depending on particular outcomes; they will expect the most profit, rewards, and long-term benefits; they will also favour social exchange that produces the most security and eventually independence.

According to the social exchange theorist, people are reasonable in thinking, avoid penalties, and usually pursue rewards. According to the theory, each party has assets or commodities the other party or parties' value, which results in economic interactions among them. Social exchange theory thus sees trade as a social activity with possible social as well as economic results (Jay, Michael and Roberts, 2001). Fundamental to social exchange theory is that human activity is basically an exchange, especially of rewards (Homans, 1961) or resources of essentially material type (wealth), and secondarily of symbolic qualities. Understood as sets or combined results of voluntary individual activities motivated by rewards, such exchange transactions permeate all social events (Coleman, 1990), including group processes and intergroup relations. Exchange transactions, then, become the basis and open secret of social existence, of group ties and processes especially. Exchange theorists have thus developed and compiled the argument above as follows. Arguably, social action is an exchange of (tangible or intangible) activities and rewards/costs effect amongst people on the grounds that people have always explained their actions, behaviours and conducts by means of their advantages and costs or potential benefit(s). Exchange is fundamental for human conduct (Homans, 1961) and is all around social life (Coleman, 1990). Social exchange theory holds that social life is composed of interactions among social actors' individuals or collectives—of a variety of valuable resources, including material products, financial resources, and intangible social goods, (humour, respect, information) (Dowd, 1975). Social exchange can take many different

forms; people might trade with governments with one another (such as foreign aid exchanges for loyalty) and with businesses (such as job effort for a pay cheque).

In application of exchange theory to money politics and vote buying in Nigeria and their implication on credible elections, it could be examined in viewing the relative power of participants in the exchange which could be conditioned by economic status, or other social factors as well as the various types of exchanges that are ongoing between the electorate and politicians seeking public offices and those undertaken under special conditions such as during campaigns or election seasons. Usually exchanging their only and most valuable asset their votes for physical cash or other material inducements like food, clothing, and even job employment, the electorates due their social status that is blatantly marked by poverty, hunger, and low economic power. Based on the mutuality, give and take concept, which takes place during the election period and results in financial and material incentives provided to voters, this interaction is structured.

Voting for a specific party or leader is also considered to be a trade, which is in actual fact delayed reciprocity that is, repayment on a due debt for gifts that is, "give and take" occurrence received usually during campaigns and occasionally during elections. Usually futuristic in nature, the exchange is between someone without job or community in great need of some basic amenities like borehole or streetlights; for instance, the electorate in anticipation will vote any candidate or politician who promised to provide him or her with a job and the community these amenities when elected, so producing a delayed reciprocity. Ironically, most people do not usually consider their choices before selling. This actually goes against the social exchange theory put forward by Cherry, 2018, which holds that before signing a contract, participants in exchanges should consider the possible advantages and cost ramifications. This study is therefore of great relevance since most Nigerian people are not aware of the terrible consequences or ramifications of vote buying and money politics before consenting to sell their votes for peanuts.

Methodology

As a theoretical paper, it utilized the case study research method to gather data and analyse the political economics of money politics. It aimed to understand how the monetization of the election process contributes to political underdevelopment. The decision to employ documentary analysis was appropriate as the main focus of the work was to discover and choose important material, as well as assess evidence in academic research. Avidime and Obi, (2020) asserted that the documentary analysis method is inherently dynamic, as it can serve as the primary or sole research method. According to Johnson (1984), document analysis is valuable for research that centres on organisational policy or the assessment of government reports. Hakim (2000) and Elton (2002) defined document analysis as the study of information that was created within a specific timeframe on paper. This paper was conducted with the purpose of critically examining the role of money politics in Nigeria's political landscape during the fourth republic.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Brief Overview of Manifestation of Money Politics in Nigeria

Vote-buying and money politics have been prevalent in Nigerian politics since the pre-colonial era, with politicians and political parties exploiting their wealth to gain votes. In the First Republic of Nigeria, politicians and political parties were able to participate in illicit party funding and corruption without strong laws controlling party finance. This continued into the second republic, with politicians using their wealth to hijack the parties of their choice. In 1993, the situation was even more dire, with candidates' political activities reflected the practice of money politics and vote-buying. Complaints abound in the 1999 elections, with prominent politicians donating enormous sums of money. In 2003, vote-buying and money politics consolidated, with the National Assembly becoming a house of trade. In 2007, vote-buying and money politics peaked, with money being paid in return for voters' cards in voting stations across the nation. Vote buying activities were characterized as offering money, goods, or jobs to voters. The median price of a vote payment changed between 2003 and 2007, mostly due to the change in the proportion of big payments (10,000 naira or more per vote) over time.

The 2011 general elections in Nigeria were costly, with over a thousand groups assisting the government and billions distributed for campaign plans. Candidates used vast sums of money to outdo each other, including illegal expenses such as bribery of election officials and hiring political thugs to manipulate election figures. In 2015, money became increasingly important during Nigeria's national elections, with claims of shady practices and political cabals. Reports of vote buying during the 2018 gubernatorial elections in Ekiti and Osun states have been abounded, with politicians purchasing voter votes for an average of 5,000 depending on the location. The occurrence of money politics in the 2019-2023 gubernatorial and presidential elections has exposed some politicians who have taken vote buying to a higher dimension with reckless abandonment. The Trader Moni plan by Buhari's government has been identified as a kind of vote-buying instrument by transparency international. The former Senate President's allegation and position on the use of Trader Moni as a vote-buying instrument have been affirmed by INEC. During the 2019 presidential primary of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), presidential candidates Alhaji Atiku Abubakar and Nyesom Wike allegedly gave bribes to each delegate in thousands of American dollars, with Abubakar winning the ticket for the 2023 presidential ticket, (Personal Observation, 2023 Primary Election).

The impact of financial influence on the credibility of elections in Nigeria's Fourth Republic

Money politics and vote buying in Nigeria hinder the country's democracy, obstructing free, fair elections and quality representation. The British government, in their evaluation of the Ekiti gubernatorial elections, deemed vote buying as equally detrimental as rigging. British High Commissioner to Nigeria, Paul Arkwright, compared vote buying to manipulation and ballot stuffing. He made the statement while addressing newsmen in Abuja after a meeting with the Independent National Electoral Commission's chairman, Prof. Mahmood Yakubu on 20th July 2018. Arkwright thus affirmed:

"I was there in Ekiti to monitor elections and I heard a lot of reports of vote buying and we are convinced that some vote buying went on. I condemn it. Vote buying is illegal, it is against the law, it is just as vote rigging, it is just as ballot stuffing" (Punch, July 25 2018).

Understanding vote buying and election monetizing in Nigeria is significant as it validates concerns about the legitimacy of candidates running for public office and highlights the risk connected to vote manipulation. Credible elections cannot exist in a highly monetized economy. In recent times, vote buying and indiscriminate use of money in politics has become prominent feature in Nigeria's political processes, with over 8,000 delegates participating in the APC 2015–2023 presidential primary election. Vote buying has evolved into a bold endeavor recently, with politicians buying votes in secret or using cash to influence voters. The Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room reported that vote buying occurred during the Edo governorship election, where party agents monitored ballot casts to ensure voter compliance with party policy. In Ondo, "dibo ko sebe" (vote and prepare soup) was widespread, with politicians buying voter votes for an average of N5,000, 1000 and 20000 depending on location. Electoral malpractices, INEC rigging of election via calling of results not in tandem with results uploaded to IREV, and judicial rascality/corruption allegedly determined the 2019 and 2023 general elections, with vote buying and electoral violence being some of the shortcomings in the exercise. Election observers noted vote buying in various parts of Nigeria, including Kano, Abuja FCT, Lagos, Bayelsa, Anambra, Imo, Akwa Ibom, Oyo, and Kwara states. The connection between money politics, vote buying, and election legitimacy is more like one in which the latter is sacrificed for the former than a symbiotic kind. Vote buying compromises the integrity of elections in Nigeria, as described by former Finance Minister Prof. Oby Ezekwesili as "cash and carry democracy." This poses a grave threat to Nigeria's democracy, as credible elections cannot exist in a highly monetised economy.

Discussion of Findings

The use of money in Nigerian politics is influenced by a variety of factors, which contribute to its pervasiveness in the political landscape. Here are some key factors and consequences

Poverty and Economic Inequality

Major reasons why money politics and vote buying always trend during elections in Nigeria as seen in 2019-2023 general election are the inability of most electorate in Nigeria to access quality health and education, unemployment, underemployment, malnutrition, high death rate, constant national economic crisis resulting from poor policy planning void of environmental determinism, long and short-term impact on the Nigeria populace, which finally translate to poverty. Money politics and vote buying cut across race and ethnicity as a phenomenon; they are neither system specific nor space bond. According to Nigeria Bureau of Statistics, (2023), inflation rate was 22.79% in June, as at June, 2024 during the writing of this paper, inflation rate increased to 34.19%, as at June, 2024. NBS further posit that 40.1% are poor according to 2018/2019 national monetary poverty line, 63% representing 133 million people are multidimensionally poor with National MPI of 0.257 showing that over one quarter of poor people experience all form of possible deprivation. 65% of the poor (86

million) live in northern Nigeria, 35% (47 million) reside in the southern part of the country from 27% in Ondo state to 91% in Sokoto. In rural areas, the poverty level is put at 72%, and urban area is put at 42%, multidimensional child poverty in Nigeria is put at 67.5% of two thirds of children from 0-17 of which 51% are children. Child poverty in rural setting is put at 90% across the six geopolitical zones. Many of the Nigerian people live in poverty; hence they are open to money incentives during elections. As the only means of receiving from the ruling and governing elites in Nigeria frequently take advantage of this by promising votes in exchange for money, presents, or other rewards.

Given the widespread poverty in Nigeria, citizens are more prone to vote buying since instant money gain seems more real than the long-term advantages of effective government. More importantly, Nigeria suffers significant economic effects from the predominance of money politics. Given the volatility and uncertainty it generates in the political terrain, it skews economic policy and discourages foreign investment (Onuoha, 2019). The preferential distribution of resources to political cronies' stunts innovation and competition, hence fostering inefficiencies and hence underperformance of the Nigerian economy. Stiffer electoral rules, voter education initiatives, and the use of technology to track elections have been part of efforts against vote buying in Nigeria. Still, the practice presents a major obstacle entrenched in the political culture and socioeconomic situation of the nation.

INEC, Judiciary and Corruption

Winning election in Nigeria involves four very simple strategies such as; (i) weaponize poverty and buy votes during election, (ii) bribe INEC (iii) bribe judiciary, and (iv) bribe the security architecture. For example the rules of engagement for 2023 election stipulated in the electoral act was crystal clear and loud enough for the blind to see and deaf to hear, because using the lens of administrative law, the judges argued that an internal regulation built on a law an act, a regulation directing that you will do X you can choose to do Y when there is legitimate expectation and detrimental reliance shows that INEC was totally wrong and Supreme court as well got it wrong totally because INEC is an agency created under the law and the constitutions recognized such agency and when it makes rules, those rules are laws, they can only nullify such rules via rule making process, if they do not they are bound by such rule. Result should have been transmitted electronically. It is embarrassing and a democratic reversal for us to witness the apex court affirming that INEC can walk away from abusing the rule of law and entrenching irregularities in our electoral system which undermines the people's right to elect their leaders.

If election were conducted aside the rules of engagement, that is enough to nullify an election, there is no need of proving beyond reasonable doubt that a candidate won an election or there is over voting in one state or the other if there are conducted aside the rule. Every process in an election is administrative procedure that requires due process which INEC must obey, but INEC did not but rather go ahead to announce results in the face of irregularities and asked contestants to go to Court.

A big part of the problem is corruption, since many politicians support their campaigns with their own money or with stolen public monies. People spend money on politics because they think they can get their money back once they're in power by using governmental resources. It is not uncommon for regulatory agencies like the EFCC and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to be underfunded and politically weak when it comes to enforcing rules against electoral fraud. Because of this, it's easy to influence elections with financial backing and face few consequences.

Cultural Norms and Patronage/ Lack of Political Awareness

Deeply ingrained in Nigeria, where political success is often linked to one's capacity to share riches and favouritism, is the culture of "money politics". This system keeps politicians in a cycle whereby they feel driven to spend money to gain votes and allegiance. Nigeria's political system's winner-take-all character promotes high-stakes rivalry in which politicians commit substantially in campaigns to guarantee success. This frequently results in the use of money to sway voters, party members, even election officials. Many voters could be more prone to financial incentives as they lack sufficient political knowledge or education. Politicians exploit this by promising quick, concrete gains instead of emphasizing long-term development projects or policy concerns.

Influence of Political Godfathers

Deeply ingrained in Nigeria, where political success is often linked to one's capacity to share riches and favouritism, is the culture of "money politics". This system keeps politicians in a cycle whereby they feel driven to spend money to gain votes and allegiance. Nigeria's political system's winner-take-all character promotes high-stakes rivalry in which politicians commit substantially in campaigns to guarantee success. This frequently results in the use of money to sway voters, party members, even election officials. Many voters could be more prone to financial incentives as they lack sufficient political knowledge or education. Politicians exploit this by promising quick, concrete gains instead of emphasizing long-term development projects or policy concerns.

Consequences Monetized Electoral System

Vote buying is among the most direct consequences. To thank voters for their support, candidates and political parties sometimes provide presents or cash. This tactic compromises the democratic process and frequently produces candidates chosen who might not really speak for the people's best interests. Rich politicians or those supported by strong sponsors can support more comprehensive and public campaigns. Funding for rallies, commercials, and social media efforts is part of this also. Reaching more voters and controlling the story will help those with greater means tilt the odds in their favour. Sometimes security guards or election officials are bought off with money in order to rig election outcomes. This can entail changing vote totals, postponing the distribution of election supplies in opposition strongholds, or enabling electoral violence. To pay for their re-election campaigns, incumbent politicians might make use of state resources basically public monies. This offers them an unfair benefit over their rival, therefore influencing the result of the election. Rich politicians could potentially use money to affect the court system. This can entail launching legal

challenges to postpone or reverse negative election results or suing to disqualify opponents. Media coverage can be under influence or control via financial power, guaranteeing favourable news by suppressing bad articles. This can affect public opinion and guide voter action. These behaviours undermine public confidence in the democratic process and endanger election fairness. Consequently, the outcome is usually the selection of candidates more answerable to their backers than to the voters.

Impacted on the Electoral Process in Nigeria's Fourth Republic

Investigating the degree to which money politics affected the Nigerian election process reveals that the use of money in vote buying has greatly changed the electoral process in Nigeria, therefore compromising the integrity and legitimacy of elections. Often referred to as "vote trading," this custom entails presenting voter's gifts or cash in return for their support. It has various important effects:

Erosion of Democratic Values and Cost of Governance: Vote buying disrupts the democratic process, in which free and fair competition of ideas and policies should guide elections. It therefore turns the emphasis from the candidates' policies and merits to financial incentives. With public office seen as a profitable path for wealth building, Nigerian governance has shockingly financial consequences. Grand corruption, overblowing of the public pay bill, and public cash being syphoned into private vaults follow from this. Transparency International Nigeria's 2023 research shows how political office holders in Nigeria use their positions for personal profit, therefore sustaining the cycle of money politics at the expense of public welfare.

Undermines Credibility of Elections: Vote buying calls into doubt the validity of elected leaders. This weakens public confidence in democratic institutions and the voting process. Based on ideas and values, democracy lives on justice, representation, and competitiveness. But the spread of money politics inside Nigeria's Fourth Republic clouds the integrity of these democratic values. Money's influence in politics distorts election competition and reduces political pluralism; hence building obstacles to entrance that deter qualified candidates from taking part because of financial restraints (Kura, 2007). The effect is a compromised electorate whose choices are swayed by instantaneous financial incentives, therefore impeding the growth of a politically informed and involved populace. Moreover, the prevalence of money politics can result in political unrest as political players turn to the accumulating and use of riches as a means of power retention or conquest, hence triggering often violent post-election conflicts and disagreements (Kew and Lewis, 2007).

Marginalization of Popular Candidates and Propaganda of Corruption: Genuine public service candidates who lack the means to participate in vote buying are sometimes excluded, therefore limiting the pool of qualified leaders. Spending large sums of money on vote buying, candidates sometimes view it as an investment, hoping to recover their expenses by means of unethical behaviour while in government. This helps to keep a cycle of bad government and corruption alive. The fight for political control turns into a high-stakes game in which money counts as well as votes (Kalu, 2005). The implication is that political power will become inexorably tied with economic might, hence guiding policy decisions and resource allocation.

Many times, in Nigeria, political capital is expressed in monetary terms. Rich people sponsoring politicians begetting loyalty and then influencing important political decisions is a phenomenon known as "godfatherism" (Adeoye, 2018). Elections are costly; candidates must have significant financial means to launch respectable campaigns. Money thus becomes a portal to political involvement, which calls for a critical analysis of how this compromises representative democracy and supports inequality.

Summary

Consolidation of every democracy depends on the way elections are run and handled. Actually, elections are a basic aspect of democracy since they allow voters to exercise their franchise. Therefore, it is crucial that they be trustworthy and free. In a situation whereby, all qualified voters are free in totality to make their decisions concerning candidates and or parties without inducement of any kind and the indiscriminate use of money in the general political process, one cannot underline the importance of money in politics anywhere else. But the complete monetisation of the electoral process from the party primaries down to vote buying and selling at the polls under little or no control from acknowledged institutions has not only compromised the outcome of the process but also jeopardises the very survival of democracy as a whole. Agreeing to this harsh reality shown by this study, Usman, Enojo, Ujah, Oholi, Kakwagh and Obi, (2023) argues that money politics and vote buying/selling distorts the playing field by giving some more than others and limits competition, therefore affecting some over others. Some parts of a population without means are deprived of running for office or meaningful representation, therefore resulting in uneven access to offices, those that provide money will be in charge of the politicians they support; they are like co-opted politicians, or godfathers. Through corrupted politics, dirty or illegal money runs the danger of corrupting the system and erasing the rule of law and democratic institutions. Since it has firmly seized the polity over the years, money politics and vote buying are progressively erasing our democracy and decent government we so want. Thanks to their "fat pursues," the study finds that Money Politics and Vote Buying in Nigeria's political system has made it possible for the political middle class to dominate and occupy important appointive and elective positions, so enabling control of the state, decisions and allocation of state resources at their disposal. Consequently, it is quite necessary to address this by reversing the tendency.

Conclusion

The paper highlights the impact of commercialization on Nigeria's Fourth Republic, highlighting the prioritization of high bidders over merit and prioritizing immediate necessities over long-term infrastructure. This approach worsens people's issues and poverty, and presents a threat to democracy's existence. The military's ability to seize power is also a concern. The political economy of money politics in Nigeria's Fourth Republic erodes society's sociopolitical framework, makes administration less effective, and promotes inequities. To address this issue, reforms to the law, public awareness campaigns, economic empowerment of individuals and communities, and a shift in political methodology are essential. To achieve a more just, democratic, and prosperous society, Nigeria must investigate the origins, processes, and results of money politics. A thorough economic and political reorganization is necessary, with new policies and a shift in the political culture. The Fourth

Republic presents an opportunity to reevaluate Nigeria's democratic trajectory, shifting focus from wealthy interests to a more equitable and inclusive government.

Recommendations

Sensitization of the People: As previously said, money politics and vote buying have become the focal points of Nigeria's polity. This development is despicable and has the potential to impede the country's progress and development. If we want sustainable development and a strong democracy, we must stop these threats. At this juncture, the most pressing issue is to raise awareness among voters about the perilous prevalence of illegal activities like vote buying and money politics.

Banning of Vote buying/selling and any form of Inducement: It is depressing that the integrity of candidates, their manifestos, and those of the parties are no longer persuasive enough to ensure their success in elections. To guarantee success, they so turned to vote buying using money and other resources. The fact that the voters are ready to sell their votes to the candidate with the fattest purse makes things even worse. Therefore, voters should be sensitive against this tendency; civil society, the media, and traditional institutions should cooperate with one another to enlighten voters and the public at against the negative consequences and implication of money politics. Selling our votes to the highest bidder during elections will simply help to undermine our fledgling democracy. More importantly, voters should know about the current legislation prohibiting vote buying and associated penalties. Those who donate money to be voted into public posts are fraudsters who would keep defrauding the national purse once elected into office in order to recover their spent money. To reach a really developed and solidified democracy, relevant stakeholders should as a matter of urgency sensitise and inform members of the public the costs consequences of these developments.

Independent National Electoral Commission: In order to maintain credibility and transparency, electoral act must be amended and state clearly that only transmitted results showing un-altered results must be used for declaring winner and the judiciary should review their position on substantive justice, jurisprudence and administrative law, only election that follows the rule of engagement should stand while those that do not should be nullified there is no need of coming to prove beyond reasonable doubt that a candidate won an election. There is also need for constitutional review to incorporate sanctions on INEC as a body for abusing its own rule. It is imperative for INEC to consistently demonstrate impartiality and transparency. The primary objective is to guarantee rigorous adherence to election legislation and ensure that those who violate these rules face appropriate sanctions. Security agencies such as the police, civil defence corps, and the military should avoid showing bias and strive to fulfill their responsibilities impartially, regardless of the status of the individuals involved.

Resurrecting Spirit of Patriotism through good leadership: At last, the thorough articulation of the national interest of the nation is desperately needed and ought to be revered by every member of the nation. The long-term consequences of this are the inculcation of patriotism in all and sundry that will guarantee the culture of owning up and responsibility concerning problems affecting election infractions. Therefore, Nigeria and its interest have to

be above and ahead of personal interests, which has heretofore robbed the country the required push needed to turn it from a nation of possibilities into a really great one.

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