

The Effect of Currency Redesign on Vote Buying in Yewa South Local Government of Ogun State

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Abstract

Elections in Nigeria, a democratic country, are seen as contests for control over the state's resources, which are considered the most valuable assets in any society. Given the significant consequences, politicians will employ any means, whether legitimate or immoral, to secure public offices. The descriptive survey research design was employed in this study. The population of the study consists of eligible voters who have completed the necessary registration process with the Yewa South Local Government. The research population was used to obtain a sample of 389 respondents using the Taro Yamane formula. The findings suggest that the new currency design in Yewa South Local Government has an impact on the act of buying votes. The study findings indicate that the act of vote buying remains a substantial threat to the integrity and trustworthiness of Nigeria's democratic system. Despite the government's attempts to mitigate the act by implementing new electoral forms in the weeks leading up to elections, occurrences of voter manipulation and vote buying persisted, prompting politicians to seek alternate tactics in order to ensure electoral success. The study proposed several recommendations, including enhancing voter education, improving electoral institutions to combat vote buying, and intensifying election security operations to catch and report vote sellers and buyers to the appropriate authorities for legal proceedings.

Key words: Currency; Currency redesign; Vote buying; Election

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INTRODUCTION

Within the framework of a democratic society, an election campaign is designed to facilitate a transparent and unrestricted interchange of ideas. Political candidates would strive to gain public support by making compelling arguments about their extraordinary qualities to hold public office. Vote purchasing occurs when a voter sells their vote to the highest bidder through a contractual agreement or, in certain instances, an auction. Essentially, votes are acquired or traded based on the candidate's or voter's stance. Subsequently, the candidate is chosen by the electorate based on the extent to which their policy positions align with their individual preferences (Hadizah, 2020). The process of currency redesign contributes to the enhancement of security by assisting governments in the prevention of counterfeiting and implementing proactive steps to mitigate potential dangers. The primary aim of currency redesign is to achieve specific goals, including bolstering the security of banknotes, combating and protecting the nation's collective properties, controlling the circulation of money, and minimizing the total costs associated with currency administration (Pillah, 2023).

Another main aim of the currency redesign is to eliminate the substantial quantity of cash, now estimated at 2.73 trillion, which accounts for approximately 85 percent of the total cash supply in circulation, from the banking system. Redesigning the Naira is to mitigate insecurity, augment the money supply, deter counterfeiting, and curtail inflation. According to Pillah

(2023), around 85 percent of the nation's cash is held in individual households, which are not linked to the formal banking system.

The naira note underwent a redesign in response to pressing concerns such as illegal hoarding banknotes, a shortage of appropriate banknotes in circulation, a rise in counterfeiting of banknotes, inflation, interest rates, and money market exploitations and laundering. This research aims to assess the effects of the currency redesign on vote buying in the Yewa South Local Government.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The persistency of vote-buying and financial influence in contemporary Nigerian politics has resulted in an excessive concentration of power within these entities throughout electoral processes for those occupying positions of authority. Consequently, they possess the capacity to exert control over the allocation of resources, timing, and manner of distribution. The prominence of money in politics has garnered considerable attention in the majority of countries today. Regrettably, there has been a notable escalation in this inclination, resulting in the inclusion of the disparaging phrase "money politics" inside the realm of Nigerian politics (Ovwasa, 2013).

The matter at hand is to the recurrent compromise in the democratic process, which undermines the fundamental principles of elections that are both free and fair. It is crucial to emphasise that there is no evidence suggesting that the utilisation of money resources in politics by individuals, political parties, or other institutions automatically carries a corrupting weight. The report endeavours to categorise the issue into three distinct groups: the key factors contributing to vote buying, the adverse effects of currency reform on vote buying, and the techniques employed to mitigate or avoid such practices.

Money is essential for various service- and logistical activities, including the coordination of political events and campaigns, the production of manifestos and posters, the design of party insignia and other symbolic representations, and other related duties. The sole concern, meanwhile, pertains to the evident corruption and adverse consequences associated with altering the monetary landscape and engaging in vote-buying. This research therefore examines the several contributing factors and outcomes associated with currency redesign in association with vote buying in the Yewa South Local Government, Ogun State, Nigeria.

CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

The Concept of Currency re-design

Currency redesign refers to the modification of a country's currency's characteristics and visual attractiveness (Ezeonwuka, Nwankwo, & Nwosu, 2020). The main

objectives are to prevent counterfeiting, enhance security measures, and update the design to integrate emerging technologies. The process of currency redesigning often involves input from various stakeholders, including central bank, government and the populace at large. Countries exhibit distinct challenges and objectives for redesign as a result of varying demands, cultural norms, and technical improvements (Olugbenga, 2016).

Concept of Vote Buying

Vote buying refers to the act of bestowing a gift with the intention of influencing the action of the recipient. It includes the provision of money, in exchange for corrupt practices of a designated duty. Examples of such recipients include judges, fiduciary agents, witnesses, legislators, voters, and others. Vote purchasing is an unethical act that involves using any means of influence to manipulate someone's vote with financial advantages (Hadiza, 2020).

Vote buying involves the financial burden associated with travel expenses and the unequal remuneration received by election staff, in addition to the provision of a mere bribe. Political extortion refers to instances in which the preferences of voters are commercially exploited, and financial resources are allocated towards the purpose of persuasion. The process of soliciting voters occurs in both indoor and outdoor settings, wherein individuals are provided with financial incentives in return for their endorsement of the suitable candidate (Civil Society Election Situation, 2012).

In contrast, ethnographic nuanced assessments reveal that the term "vote buying," frequently used interchangeably by scholars, journalists, advocates, and sometimes individuals involved, carries different meanings in different cultural and historical contexts (Human Rights Watch, 2007; Hadiza, 2020). During the 1830s, English electors considered the capacity to vote by spelling to be an inherent entitlement.

Vote Buying in Nigeria

Voter purchasing, exemplifying clientelism, has long been a prevalent issue in various underdeveloped nations, Nigeria included. In Brusco (2010) analysis of reciprocity and vote buying, the author contends that candidates employ vote buying as a transactional strategy by providing financial incentives to voters in return for their support. According to the findings, voters are more inclined to sell out their votes when they perceive politicians as not representing them or when they are facing financial danger, which means an indication that a significant proportion of Nigerian voters are currently facing financial difficulties as a result of the widespread poverty and distress prevalent in the nation.

As a political problem, vote buying is more dominant in developing countries as a result of the plagues of political corruption, favouritism, nepotism, poverty and power drunk syndrome attributes of political leaders,

Omotola (2020) considered the act of exchanging franchise for economic gain as a significant threat to quality of the democratic procedure in Nigeria. Riccucci and Grimmelikhuijsen (2016) and Kikute and Chikulo (2020), equally subscribe to the fact that vote buying constitute a significant influence on election results and erodes the validity of the democratic system in any polity.

Moreover, the act of buying votes usually weaken the ability of authorized officials to accurately represent the desires of the public, as well as undermine the efficiency of government by creating an environment of political favouritism and nepotism (Matsubayashi & Ueda, 2019). Consequently, the political class in Nigeria has developed a kind of culture characterized by dereliction, when elected officials exhibit a contempt for their constituents subsequent to achieving victory. Instead, they choose to revisit their constituency during the election period, as a result of their confident to secure victory through bribery.

Civil society organisations (CSOs) as well as International organisations have strongly discouraged vote buying as a significant risk to the integrity of the democratic activity (UNDP, 2012). To mitigate this behaviour, various technical interventions have been employed, such as the incorporation of security staff at voting stations and the utilisation of biometric voter registration systems (Olaniyi & Olaniyi, 2018). The critical appraisal of the 2022 governorship election done by Situation Room included a comprehensive compilation of grievances pertaining to vote buying agents of political party in all Local Government Areas of Ogun State. The investigation recorded occurrences of “See and Buy,” in 2022 wherein individuals were compensated ranging from N4, 500 to N10, 000 for the purpose of annotating completed ballot papers as evidence of a particular voting trend. Evidently, this behavior contravenes the electoral legislation in Nigeria, which explicitly forbids voters from engaging in the sale of their ballot papers or taking any form of incentive.

Factors Responsible for Vote Buying In Nigeria

The study conducted by Davies (2006) provides a comprehensive analysis of five predisposing characteristics that are associated with vote buying in Nigeria.

i. The lack of thorough and clear manifestos provided by political parties and candidates hinders public scrutiny, hence enabling the practice of vote purchasing.

ii. The lack of awareness among Nigerian candidates on the programmes, if any, of their respective political parties is a matter of disgrace. Politicians often engage in the manipulation of issues with the intention of gaining support, even when such actions contradict their own personal convictions. Although the aforementioned image advocates for representational democracy, it fails to foster participatory democracy, hence promoting the practice of vote buying.

iii. Moreover, the electorate’s political cynicism posits that public officials are inherently unethical, driven by self-interest, and lacking the ability to effectively carry out their responsibilities. The pessimistic perspective on politics is exemplified by the historical phenomenon of election winners failing to uphold their commitments. Thus, it is tantamount to offering a reward to candidates competing for votes; this is yet another method by which the general public obtains a share of the country’s resources. However, it is likely that candidates who seek financial contributions view such contributions as a strategic investment intended to prevent electoral failure.

One extra aspect to consider is prioritising individuals above problems. The majority of politicians employ campaign methods aimed at redirecting people’s attention from political parties to the individuals themselves in order to garner support. According to Best (2008), there is a decrease in

voter interest in political parties and their agendas as a result. Nevertheless, the primary factor influencing the likelihood of vote buying is likely the severe poverty experienced by the majority of Nigerians (Adetula, 2008).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Rational Choice Theory of Election

The origin of the rational choice theory in the field of economics is propounded by Anthony Downs’ in 1957 based on the proposition of rational choice in consumer behaviour. This theory sought to examine the optimal allocation of limited resources in order to achieve an optimal result (Babayo and Muhammed, 2018).

The theory of rational choice is based on evaluative and non-evaluative aspects of human behaviour. The evaluative aspect is based on the concept that citizens participate in an election by exercising their franchise based on their satisfaction and perception with the performance of the governing body or a particular political party candidature. Lindberg and Morrison (2008) and Babayo and Muhammad (2018), the non-evaluative argument is based on clientelistic factors, which includes ethnic connections, familial kinship, and personal advantages that individuals may gain by accepting to vote a particular candidate through financial or non-financial voting methods.

The study is grounded in the rational choice theory. This theory is more comprehensive of the motivations and actions of political actors and voters who engage in vote-buying transactions can be achieved through the use of rational choice theory. It is imperative to consider, however, that the act of vote buying is widely denounced as unlawful within democratic nations like Nigeria, because it contravenes the fundamental right of fair election. Although it may provide some insight into the motivations behind individuals’ behaviour, vote buying

is not justified within the framework of rational choice theory.

The effectiveness of vote buying can be as a result of several factors, such as, the legal and institutional framework, voter education campaigns, monitoring procedures and enforcement procedures. Rational choice theory gives a valuable insight into the underlying motivations behind vote-buying. However, it is important to note that this perspective is just one among several theories that are used to study the intricate nature of this phenomenon.

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Julius (2023) study that investigates the impact of currency redesign on vote buying, election process integrity, and governance standards in Ekiti State. The study's findings revealed that despite the ban on explicit vote buying and selling following the implementation of the new currency, politicians in Ikere Local Government Area election persisted in pursuing alternate methods to sway votes. This study suggests that to enhance transparency, justice, and the integrity of the democratic procedure, it is imperative for the government, with a special focus on security agencies, to increase their efforts in apprehending and prosecuting those involved in vote buying. This can be achieved by employing exceptional intelligence capabilities. This will have a deterring effect on future elections.

Pillah (2023) conducted a study to analyse the effects of the currency redesign on Nigeria's monetary policy. The literature analysis suggests that the rationale behind the redesign of the Naira was driven by economic considerations, including the need to mitigate inflation, deter counterfeiting, address financial instability, and reduce the overall volume of currency in circulation. Furthermore, research suggests that a revamped national currency can diminish the impact of money on elections by deterring vote-buying and incentivizing electoral authorities. This study suggests that the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) should implement regulations to control the monetary inflows to banks. This regulation would aim to prevent the devaluation of the Naira currency, thereby facilitating elections at INEC-monitored polling places in accordance with the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS).

Osaloni and Efuntade (2023) conducted a study examining the effects of currency redesign on deposits in Nigerian banks, focusing specifically on security, technical advancements, and economic stability. The study's findings suggest that the act of depositing monies in banks has the potential to decrease the occurrence of fake currency, while also improving security measures. To enhance the uptake of novel technologies and enhance the efficiency of service

provision and protocols, it is advisable for the government to give precedence to the restructuring of the currency. The study of Henry, Hyacinth and Anthony (2019) which investigate the phenomenon of money politics and vote-buying within the context of the fourth republic of Nigeria revealed that the key factors contributing to disagreements, poor governance, social conflicts, violence, ethno-religious crises, militancy, insurgency, separatist agitations, and other risks to property, life, and national security have been identified as vote-buying and money-politics. According to the study, Nigeria's electoral process has been marked by a significant presence of money-politics and vote-buying since 1999. The incumbent's dominance, along with the efforts of moneybags, special interest groups, political machines, and godfathers, has resulted in a security problem and friction in the political system.

Philip (2017) conducted a study that investigated the occurrence of vote purchasing and its potential consequences for the integrity of elections in Nigeria. There have consistently been highlighted threats to Nigeria's efforts to establish and uphold the most effective democratic norms, as well as to safeguard the integrity and sanctity of the election process. The study suggests implementing measures to alleviate poverty in Nigeria and revising the Electoral Act of 2010 to include electronic voting as a precautionary measure against vote buying.

METHODOLOGY

The research design employed in this study was a descriptive survey. The survey method was chosen based on its objective of not manipulating the variables of the sample. Instead, its purpose was solely based on the outcomes that occurred (Asika, 2018). According to the Premium Newspaper (2023), the study's population comprised 11,245 accredited electors who were registered in Yewa South Local Government, specifically in Ward One. The study population was used to obtain a sample of 389 respondents using the Taro Yamane formula. Questionnaires were administered on information regarding the redesign of voting currency using a simple random sample technique. The data were subjected to analysis using the SPSS version 23 with a focus on determining frequency and percentage.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS

Out of three hundred and eighty-nine (389) questionnaires were distributed to the respondent, three hundred (300) questionnaires were properly filled and returned. The analysis for this study was based on the retrieved questionnaires.

Table 1
Poverty is one of the causes of Vote buying

Assertion	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agreed	136	45.3
Agreed	45	15.0
Undecided	50	16.7
Strongly Disagreed	52	17.3
Disagreed	17	5.7
Total	300	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2024

Table 1 shows that 136 (45.3%) respondents strongly agreed that poverty is one of the causes of vote buying, 45 (15%) respondents agreed with the statement, 50 respondents (16.7%) were undecided with the statement, 52 (17.3%) respondents strongly disagreed with the statement while 17 (5.7%) respondents disagreed with the statement. Therefore, majority of the respondent strongly agreed with the assertion.

Table 2
Lack of education influences vote buying

Assertion	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agreed	20	6.7
Agreed	162	54.0
Undecided	61	20.3
Strongly Disagreed	44	14.7
Disagreed	13	4.3
Total	300	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2024

Table 2 shows that 20 (6.7%) respondents strongly agreed that lack of education influences vote buying, 162 (54.0%) respondents agreed with the statement, 61 (20.3%) respondents were undecided with the statement, 44 (14.7%) respondents strongly disagreed with the statement while 13 (4.3%) respondents disagreed with the statement. Therefore, majority of the respondent agreed with the statement.

Table 3
Culture of impunity may be a cause of vote buying

Assertion	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agreed	21	7.0
Agreed	164	54.7
Undecided	39	13.0
Strongly Disagreed	58	19.3
Disagreed	18	6.0
Total	300	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2024

Table 3 shows that 21 (7.0%) respondents strongly agreed that culture of impunity may be a cause of vote

buying among voters, 164 (54.7%) respondents agreed with the statement, 39 (39.0%) respondents were undecided with the statement, 58 (19.3%) respondents strongly disagreed with the statement while 18 (6.0%) respondents disagreed with the statement. Therefore, majority of the respondent agreed with the statement.

Table 4
Weak institution may allow politicians to engage in vote buying practice, knowing that they are unlikely to be caught or punished.

Assertion	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agreed	145	48.3
Agreed	54	18.0
Undecided	40	13.3
Strongly Disagreed	37	12.3
Disagreed	24	8.0
Total	300	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2024

Table 4 shows that 145 (48.3%) respondents strongly agreed that weak institution may allow politicians to engage in vote buying practice, knowing that they are unlikely to be caught or punished, 54 (18.0%) respondents agreed with the statement, 40 (13.3%) respondents were undecided with the statement, 37 (12.3%) of the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement while 24 (8.0%) respondents disagreed with the statement. Therefore, majority of the respondent strongly agreed with the statement.

Table 5
The currency redesign caused confusion, and complication for voters which affects participants negatively in the electoral process.

Assertion	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agreed	133	44.3
Agreed	39	13.0
Undecided	52	17.3
Strongly Disagreed	54	18.0
Disagreed	22	7.3
Total	300	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2024

Table 5 shows that 133 (44.3%) respondents strongly agreed that the currency redesign caused confusion, and complication for voters which affects participants negatively in the electoral process, 39 (13.0%) respondents agreed with the statement, 52 (17.3%) respondents were undecided with the statement, 54 (18.0%) respondents strongly disagreed with the statement while 22 (7.3%) respondents disagreed with the statement. Therefore, majority of the respondent strongly agreed with the statement.

Table 6
The negative effects of the currency redesign is greater than the benefits of electoral process in Yewa Local Government Area

Assertion	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agreed	27	9.0
Agreed	168	56.0
Undecided	33	11.0
Strongly Disagreed	47	15.7
Disagreed	25	8.3
Total	300	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2024

Table 6 shows that 27 (9.0%) respondents strongly agreed that the negative effects of the currency redesign are greater than the benefits of electoral process in Yewa Local Government Area, 168 (56.0%) respondents agreed with the statement, 33 (11.0%) respondents were undecided with the statement, 47 (15.7%) respondents strongly disagreed with the statement while 25 (8.3%) respondents disagreed with the statement. Therefore, majority of the respondent agreed with the statement.

Table 7
Currency re-design can make it more difficult to prosecute vote buyers

Assertion	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agreed	138	46.0
Agreed	45	15.0
Undecided	56	18.7
Strongly Disagreed	41	13.7
Disagreed	20	6.7
Total	300	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2024

Table 7 shows that 138 (46.0%) respondents strongly agreed that currency re-design can make it more difficult to prosecute vote buyers, 45 (15.0%) respondents agreed with the statement, 56 (18.7%) respondents were undecided with the statement, and 41 (13.7%) respondents strongly disagreed with the statement while 20 (6.7%) respondents disagreed with the statement. Therefore, majority of the respondent strongly agreed with the statement.

Table 8
The scarcity of the new bank notes in circulation reduced its use for vote buying

Assertion	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agreed	25	8.3
Agreed	164	54.7
Undecided	46	15.3
Strongly Disagreed	36	12.0
Disagreed	29	9.7
Total	300	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2024

Table 8 shows that 25 (8.3%) respondents strongly agreed that the scarcity of the new bank notes in circulation reduced its use for vote buying, 164 (54.7%) respondents agreed with the statement, 46 (15.3%) respondents were undecided with the statement, 36 (12.0%) respondents strongly disagree with the statement while 29 (9.7%) respondents disagreed with the statement. Therefore, majority of the respondent agreed with the statement.

Table 9
The introduction of the new banknotes led to changes in the types of incentives used in buying votes

Assertion	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agreed	22	7.3
Agreed	42	14.0
Undecided	171	57.0
Strongly Disagreed	40	13.3
Disagreed	25	8.3
Total	300	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2024

Table 9 shows that 22 (7.3%) respondents strongly agreed that the introduction of the new banknotes led to changes in the types of incentives used in buying votes, 42 (14.0%) respondents agreed with the statement, 171 (57.0%) respondents were undecided with the statement, 40 (13.3%) respondents strongly disagreed with the statement while 25 (8.3%) respondents disagreed with the statement. Therefore, majority of the respondent undecided with the statement.

Discussion of Results

The findings indicate that currency re-design has impact on vote buying in Yewa South Local Government. Currency re-design can influence vote buying due to some factors such as poverty, lack of education, culture impunity and weak institutions. In addition to this, currency redesign has impact on vote buying as it causes confusion and complications for voters which negatively affected their ability to participate in the electoral process; the negative effects of currency redesign is greater than the benefits for the electoral process; currency redesign make it difficult to prosecute vote buyers; and scarcity of the new bank notes make it difficult for vote buying. The findings provide empirical support, for the relation between currency re-design and vote buying in general through the result frequency table and percentage using SPSS that was carried out.

CONCLUSION

The practice of vote purchasing remains a substantial factor that impacts the integrity and legitimacy of

Nigeria's election system. In spite of the government's attempts to mitigate the issue by implementing new electoral categories in the weeks leading up to elections, occurrences of voter manipulation and vote buying persisted, prompting politicians to seek alternate tactics in order to ensure electoral success. Further investigation is required to determine the fundamental variables that contribute to the widespread occurrence of vote buying in the Yewa South Local Government Area and throughout the country. In order to enhance the credibility of democratic elections in Nigeria, it is crucial to evaluate the efficacy of various techniques that may be utilised to address the issue and highlight exemplary approaches.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of the study, the researcher formulated a set of pragmatic suggestions with the objective of addressing the issue of vote purchasing.

i. Voter education plays a crucial role in addressing the potential risks associated with vote purchasing. It is imperative for both the electoral authority and the government to undertake a robust voter education campaign with the aim of deterring the practice of vote purchasing and selling.

ii. In light of the fact that poverty plays a significant role in the occurrence of vote purchasing in Nigeria, it is crucial for the government to persist in implementing measures aimed at mitigating poverty. This would empower residents to make well-informed judgements pertaining to their electoral preferences.

iii. To effectively address the issue of vote buying, it is crucial to enhance the robustness of the electoral system. It is imperative for INEC to possess the capacity to oversee the electoral financing of political parties and candidates throughout the electoral process. Security services tasked with overseeing elections are required to surpass anticipated levels of effectiveness in their endeavours to seize and extradite individuals involved in the sale and purchase of votes, in order to face legal consequences.

iv. Strict compliance with the 2023 Election Act is crucial, particularly in regions where the act of buying votes has been made illegal. In order to dissuade others from engaging in vote purchasing, it is necessary to assign whole responsibility for the crime to those who are found guilty.

v. To strengthen the quality of the democratic process and promote transparency, it is recommended that the government, particularly security services, intensify their efforts by leveraging advanced information to apprehend and prosecute individuals involved in vote purchasing. This will deter the execution of future elections.

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