

VOTER INDUCEMENT TECHNIQUES AND ELECTORAL POLITICS IN AFRICA: A REVIEW OF NIGERIA'S 2015 GENERAL ELECTIONS

OMODUNBI OLUMIDE O.

**Department of Political Science
Osun State University
Osogbo**

IGE RICHARD A.

**Department of Political Science
Osun State University
Osogbo**

And

OLAWOLE OLUWADAMILARE S.

**Department of Political Science
Osun State University
Osogbo**

Abstract

Historically, elections represent way by which the masses choose those that represent them in political office. However, a review of the general elections conducted in Nigeria in 2015 showed that the political elites identified themselves with the poor by going to the local markets to shop, eating at local restaurants, patronizing road side sellers, using public system of transportation, wearing the local school uniform and so on. All in a bid to attract love from the poor masses and induce the electorates for their political party on Election Day. This paper seeks to investigate the rising trend of voter inducement and how this has continued to widen the gap of poverty and inequality in Africa. Using the historical and analytical approach, Findings indicated that unlike what is obtainable in developed democracies, the Nigerian experience shows that in the 2015 general elections, the political elites clearly used the poor masses as way of getting to power as electioneering campaign lacked serious policy issues but was based on the personality of the candidates and how he/she has been able to cajole the poor masses into believing their electoral promises. This paper concluded that election campaign should be issue based and that the poor masses should be wise enough to look beyond the scheming and plotting of the political elites.

Keywords: Elites, Masses, Election, Inequality, Inducement.

Introduction

Election has remained an important unit in every democratic system through which the citizens are empowered to determine their representatives at each level of government at constitutional intervals and time frame work. These representatives makes certain decisions that affects the socio-economic and political structure of the state and should in case they fail in their duties, the electorates have the power to recall them. However, electioneering process in a democracy stands as medium for recruitment of political leadership. (Obakhedo, 2011). In African elections, those who contests for political offices maintain and rely on extensive patronage networks for electoral support. In most African countries today, democracy has seized to serve it purpose and election has become the shadow of itself as those who presents themselves as aspirants place much attention on distributing material gifts, money and making use of other inducement techniques to buy the vote of citizens or electorates. Most of the times, these aspirants are not fit and worthy of these political positions but because they have been able to distribute goods or cash during election campaigns, masses dance to their tune.

However, such practices present major obstacles to democratization and economic development because they constitute hindrance to timely provision of public goods, exacerbate incumbents' already considerable advantage and may trigger violent reaction and actions from the opposition (Easterly and Levine; Vicente and Wahtchekon 2009).

In Nigeria, incentives in exchange for votes during election campaign have become a culture. In fact, as politicians are preparing to do this, vast number of electorates are getting ready to receive these incentives. (Adeleke, 2006). Unfortunately, in a country like Nigeria where there is no working system for the masses, the fund used in providing material goods that are distributed during election campaign is often taken back from the funds that should be used in providing infrastructures, stable electricity, good education and other socio-economic benefits. In fact, because of the irresponsibility of political leaders and lip services during campaigns, voters have often resort to meeting their immediate needs with the fear politicians leave them to their fates after they have been elected. Because of high level of poverty, any available incentive is grabbed with two hands whether in form of cash or commodities. In major general elections in Nigeria, money and other items (foodstuffs, salt, drinks, soap, plates) and sudden identification with the poor masses have often been used as inducement techniques to buy peoples vote and which has not produced a fruitful result for nations growth over the years.

The statement of problem here is the rising trend of inducement in Nigeria elections which has even turned to a culture especially during political campaigns. In fact, the rising trend of inducement in election period has succeeded in showing that it is only in election period that political elites and incumbent political office holders who seeks to retain their political seats considers Nigerian citizen a human being. This means that the masses are only remembered only during election period. Though ignorance, poverty, lack of education and some other factors are responsible for the rising trend of inducement in Nigeria elections, Nigerians have refused to learn from the self-inflicted suffering when they are successfully induced by Nigerian politicians who are most times visionless and desperate to assume political offices without readiness to serve and represent those who have voted them in. Nigeria would have been a better place to live if politicians identify with the poor and masses and respond positively to their social, economic and political plight while they are serving but because of selfishness, endemic corruption, and indifference to plight of masses and irresponsibility, masses are now to be only remembered by political office holders when election draws near.

Do our politicians need to distribute naira notes to electorates during political campaign if the economy is favourable to all? If Nigerian politicians at all levels are responsible and are doing what they are supposed to do, do they need to distribute bags of rice and vegetable oil to electorate before they are convinced to vote for them? Definitely, electioneering campaigns lack serious policy issues and is now meant to cajole electorates to believe promises which Nigerian politicians hardly fulfill. Against this background, this research work seeks to identify the promoting factors of inducement in Nigerian elections over the years and also identify the inducement techniques used by politicians in the last general elections conducted in 2015. To achieve these objectives, this paper employs an historical and analytical approach and adopted secondary data which was sourced from journals, newspapers, periodicals, and internet.

Literature Review

Understanding the concepts of election and voters inducement is important in the general build-up to this study. However, while semantic analysis is enough for the concept of election, operationalizing the concept of voter inducement is inevitable.

Dye (2001) sees election as a medium for recruitment of political office holders in a democratic setting; the power to participate in a democracy; and a means of accruing legitimacy to government. Huntington (1991) observed that the major element of democracy is its electioneering process and that democracy is not possible without election. He observed that the extent at which a political system is democratic is dependent on the organised free

and fair elections through which representatives compete for votes from the constitutionally recognized and eligible voters. Elections according to him extend and enhance the involvement of masses in the political activities of a state. However, identity politics and religious sentiments have been the bane of credible elections in Nigeria which has often result to violence and raised the consciousness of national security showed by the country men. Ozor (2009) provides a broader meaning of election. He observed that it means the way by which eligible electorates choose their most preferred representatives to offices in a country for the purpose of running the government.

According to English dictionary the word inducement means realizing a certain goal through the use of enticing commodities, cash or promises. The concept of voters' inducement is not new in Nigeria election and campaign. Adeleke (2006) noted that in Nigeria election and campaign, financial and material rewards such as money, plates, and cooking pans, salt. Bags of rice, vegetable oil are often being used by aspirants to buy the heart of voters rather than using achievement in terms of infrastructures, job provision, security and other good life enhancing programmes to win the hearts of the voters. During campaigns, some will even identify with the poor, petty traders on the street all in a bid to have these people vote for them.

It is good to note that the concept of voter inducement is similar to old concepts such as vote buying and money politics and different scholars such as Brusco, Nazareno and Stokes (2004) define vote buying as the act of gifting the voters with cash or commodity goods by political parties, aspirants to have the recipients vote. Also, Finan and Schechter (2012) see it as offering goods to specific individuals before an election in exchange for their votes. Kramon (2009) sees it as deliberate allocation of certain material rewards in exchange for political support.

Sohner (1973) observe that 'money has in fact been turned to mother's milk of politics', which is expedient for political office holders to take to remain in business. Electioneering process in Nigeria is highly marked by the use of financial incentive by contenders as an inducement to obtain their support which is not based on pervading the electorates to vote according to their wish and conviction but on the force of money that has changed hands. Wantchekon (2003) sees voter inducement from the perspective of electoral clientelism and he defined it as transaction between politicians and citizens whereby material favours are offered in return for political support at the polls. Levine (1997) focuses on the relation aspect rather than monetary aspect. He sees voter inducement from the perspective of politicians' especially incumbent ones creating a scene of relating with the needy or poor in the society especially during election campaign. However, he also sees as when goods or cash are distributed during political campaign

Voter inducement in Nigeria: An historical perspective

The act of inducing voters during campaigns in Nigeria became prominent after independence in Nigeria, though the effect was not so pronounced then. Taking a look at the first republic between 1960-1966, appeals to ethnic and religious sentiments were used as weapons by political leaders to win elections. This was possible because the strength and popularity of the major political parties and their allies were essentially enhanced by the primordial ties they had with the people in their regions. As Dudley observed 'candidates in the elections were less important as the parties took the centre stage , appealed to ethnicity played alliance politics and used highly emotive terms that ignited the fire of violence. The funds expended on the election were provided by the parties. (Dudley 1982). However, it should be noted that although politicians were known to distribute T-shirt, caps, food stuffs

and sundry items to voters, there was no huge spending by individual candidates to win elections as obtains currently in the political activities of candidates.

The use of financial rewards in voter inducement took very firm roots in the political activities of contestants in 1993. This was because the political campaigns for the conduct of the 1993 election demonstrated the use of money during the party primaries and the presidential elections despite the fact that the elections conducted was monitored by the military. Nwosu (1996) affirms that money was given to some party officials; who maintained that offices could only be won when they are given financial reward. However, voter inducement took a consummative dimension in the 1999 elections such that Obasanjo states that 'with so much resource being deployed to capture elective offices, the correlation between politics and the potential for high level corruption is obvious. In this kind of situation, the voters are usually the masses whose hope in the political system is dashed and subverted by financial rewards and thus money becomes an important yardstick in elections. Can we not move from politics of money materialism to politics of ideas, issues and development? (Obasanjo, 2005).

However, the fact is that the use of money or any other inducement for that matter, to perverse justice creates problems for good governance. Commenting on the high use of inducement in Nigeria electoral politics, the Guardian of May 31st, 2008 comments that 'in a country where money politics is very high, the opposition candidates are in disadvantaged position before the polls. The fact that a politician is out of power, having lost patronage easily loses followership makes matter worst. And because most politicians of today cannot look beyond their nose, they become orphaned (The Guardian: 2008)

From the above analysis, it is obvious that voter inducement is unbridled and the polity is characterized by this reckless use of money, material things to buy votes and even conscience of masses. The politicians are ready to channel their financial and material resources to secure electoral victory at the polls.

What are then the promoting factors of inducement strategies over the years?

In Nigeria, politicians have always deceived the electorates especially during political campaign. Only lip services are aid and despite all these, electorates have refused to be wise and look beyond material things that are being used in securing their support for politicians. However, inducing voters through gifts, money and some other techniques have always worked for politicians because of ignorance on the part of electorate, poverty, apathy, and deceit by politicians. In fact, there is also attitudinal problem on the part of people towards politics because most politicians view it as a call to investment from which huge profit is expected and not as call to serve humanity. The electorates see politics especially during election, as an opportunity to sell their votes for their share of the national cake since they do not have access to where the national cake is being shared. Davies (2006) identified other five promoting factors of inducement in Nigeria election. They include;

1. The win at all cost syndrome of politicians. Even at the party primaries level, politicians make desperate attempts to win at all cost. These push them into forms of malpractices including offering financial and material inducement to voters. Working on the poverty of the people, Nigerian politicians have been known to distributing foodstuff and other consumable items to voters shortly before the elections and sometime on Election Day. Instances abound too, when candidates throw some money into the air during campaign rallies, making people to scramble for it and getting injured in the process.
2. Lack of comprehensive and comprehensible manifestoes for scrutiny by the voters. Instead of clear-cut manifestoes that would enable the electorate to make a rational political choice, meaningless slogans, demagogic and rabbleroxing speeches are made. Such

speeches either over estimate or under estimate the political perception of the voters but are rarely educative and convincing. Many voters seem to be unimpressed by all tricks the parties and candidates employ, hence the need to bribe them for their votes.

3. The people's perception greatly reinforced by obscene display of opulence by public office holders and ostentatious living of many politicians that every elected or appointed public officer is amassing wealth from the public treasury. This seems to have strengthened the resolve of many voters to sell their constitutional right to the candidates who spends most.
4. Unfulfilled promises made by winners of past elections. Because of unfulfilled promises made in the past, asking for pay-off is another way by which people receive their own share of the national cake on the other hand; the candidates who gave money to voters probably believe that they are investing against electoral failure.
5. Focusing on personalities rather than on issues. By the mode of their campaign; most candidates draw the attention of the electorate away from the political parties to themselves. The consequence of this is that the political parties and their message become less important to the electorate. The candidates then take the center stage and would therefore need to spend more money than their parties could afford in order to mobilize support for themselves.

Voter Inducement Techniques as it Relates to 2015 General Election in Nigeria

Nigeria's 2015 general elections the fifth since 1999, was scheduled for 14th and 28th February 2015 respectively and later changed to 28th March and 11 April 2015 respectively. Presidential and Gubernatorial polls were held in all states in the country. Election for Federal and State parliament (State and National assembly's) was also conducted. General elections in Nigeria have always been turbulent and violent affairs. Violence has always been the hallmark of General elections in Nigeria. However, 2015 General election was another election that afforded Nigerians the chance to elect political leaders into various positions. The outcome of the 2015 general election was a stunning one as the all progressives' congress was able to unseat People's Democratic Party after 16 years of dominance.

Often time, inducement strategies or techniques are being utilised during political campaigns to influence the decision making process within a specific group or environment. It is targeted at influencing others in order to effect an identified and desired political change (Lynn, 2009). For some years in Nigeria election, political campaign before election has focused majorly on distribution of material thing, money and insincere identification with the masses, the poor in the society and 2015 general election is not an exemption. However, these techniques are directed at winning voters support. This work identifies three major techniques used in 2015 general election to induce voters across the country. The first is the material inducement technique; the second is the money inducement technique and insincere identification with the masses or the poor.

The first inducement technique here is the material inducement technique. In 2015 general election, politicians distributed material gifts such as food items including salt, semovita, bags of rice, kegs of palm oil, vegetable oil, vests, and other consumables in a bid to buy people's vote. Political campaigns organized across the 36 states before the general elections witnessed lot of crowd. However, politician's visionless attitude met with the people's ignorance and thus, political campaign which should be policy and issue based turned into Inducement Avenue and machinery for the politicians. Adeleke G.F, (2006) observed that in Osun state, goods were distributed prior to the Election Day. In fact, in one of the rural areas in Osun state, each compound has compiled names with the Baale (compound heads) and village heads, and with which party leaders distribute goods. To him, the act was a normal tradition for the people so they collected vests, Ankara clothes, kerosene and rice. Adeleke

observes further that politicians in this community formed Kangaroo co-operative societies prior to election time. In these kangaroo parties, they gave different types of goods including clothes, kerosene, customized gifts and other items. In fact, some even distributed network credit cards in the campaigns they organized. Nigerian politicians are known for appearing when election draws near and disappearing after they are elected into political offices but it is unfortunate that people forget so soon the suffering and hardship they have gone through in four years immediately goods are distributed. However, people are failing to look beyond this deceitful strategy of politicians and they keep paying the price of their ignorance with bad roads, epileptic power supply, and poor educational system lack of infrastructural facilities.

Another strategy used for inducing voters in 2015 general election is the money inducement technique. Not only material gifts or goods were used to cajole the electorates especially during political campaign. In fact, in some instances, cash of five hundred naira was given to people at polling booth on election days as Adeleke observed that in the elections that were held in some parts of Oyo, Ogun, Lagos and Ondo, people were enticed with cash and cajoled into voting. The 2015 general election was more of a show of financial strength than the capturing of the wishes of the people. Right inside the entrance of polling booth, the prospective voters asked for cash before going to vote. It is good to note that some of the electorates were not even ready to listen to policies of the party and their programmes as the only language the voters understood was money and nothing else. Independent national electoral commission noted that dollars and new naira notes were distributed openly during the general elections in 2015. Instead of voting for aspirants who uphold values, the highest bidder takes the vote.

The third inducement technique used in 2015 general election is the insincere identification with the masses. As it is the habit of Nigerian politicians to forget those who have elected them into office immediately they hold power and remember these same people when another election draws near, one of the inducement techniques used by Nigerian politicians in 2015 general election was the act of identifying of with the masses, especially poor and needy ones and sometimes average Nigerians who are petty traders on the roads having small shops and kiosks to trade their goods. Nigerian politicians in 2015 general election identified with the people who sell roasted banana, roasted corn, beans cake. Some politicians ate with some people in local restaurants, a place where food can still be afforded by an average Nigerian. This is just to present themselves to the public as people who care for the masses and do anything to achieve a good life for the masses. While their outward gesture towards the public during campaign periods is fake and insincere, these petty traders, the poor and needy sees this gesture as accepted and during campaign period sees these politicians as having a good heart. It should be noted that Nigeria politicians only employed the saying that 'if one must catch a monkey, one must act like a monkey'. They know Nigerians forget the hardship of four years whenever they see a means to satisfy their immediate need. They know Nigerians would not reason beyond campaign and election gifts, money and promises. They know their insincere gesture is enough to win people's vote.

Conclusion

We have examined the concept of voter inducement and electoral politics in Africa using Nigeria 2015 general election as a case study. The study reveals that the act of inducing voters during elections not new in Nigeria. In fact, it is not today that politicians are distributing foodstuffs, money and other items to get people to vote for them. The act of the highest bidder takes all has been right from the first democratic election in Nigeria. Also, it is good to note that while money is needed to run elections in terms of campaign, the excessive use of money is counterproductive to good governance. The study also reveals that politicians

believed in getting their way through to political offices through inducing voters with material things such as soap, T-shirt and foodstuffs such as salt, rice, vegetable oil and so on. Also, the politicians identified with the masses especially the petty traders on the street. However, while identifying with the masses who have elected them is good in itself, politicians did this only to achieve their aim and not because they care so much for the electorates.

The study also reveals that the politicians only remember the electorates once it is election period and once they get hold of power, they become deaf to the plight of the people. However, this work also point out that poverty, lack of political education, ignorance among others helped politicians to successfully induce the electorates to vote for them. The electorates were not able to look beyond this since they see election period as the time they can only get their own share of national cake. However, it is time for the masses to look beyond the deceitful plot of politicians to what they can offer while in office and not the material gifts they can offer during campaigns as this will continue to afford the electorates better opportunity of choosing leaders who are ready to serve the country. By this, people of integrity who wants to serve the country but have no money or gifts to distribute will be elected and people will be able to vote without outside pressures most especially money. To then achieve this desired positive thinking, Nigerian economy must be improved upon to empower the people economically. This is because where poverty is reduced to the bearest minimum, the electorates can then make independent electoral decisions in voting for credible politicians rather than incompetent but money spending politicians.

References

- Adeleke, F. (2006). Political Behaviour among the rural dwellers in selected areas of Osun State. M.Sc. Project: Department of Sociology, University of Ibadan, Nigeria. Xi +163pp
- Brusco, V. Nazareno, M. & Stokes. S. (2004).Vote Buying In Argentina. Latin American Research Review; 39(2):66-88.
- Davies, A.E. (2006)"Money And Politics in the Nigeria Electoral Process: A Memo of Department of Political Science, University of Ilorin – Ilorin.
- Dudley, B. (1982) An Introduction of Nigerian Government And Politics : The McMillan Press, London and Basing Stoke.
- Dye, R. T. (2001) Politics in America, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Upper Saddle Rivers.
- Easterly, W. & R. Levine. (1997). 'Africa's growth tragedy: policies and ethnic Divisions. The Quarterly Journal of Economics 112, 4: 1203–50.
- Finan, F. & Shechter, L. (2012). Vote Buying and Reciprocity. *Econometrica*; 80(2): 863-882.
- Guardian Newspaper (2008) Tribunal Victories, an Exercise in Futility after all? May 31st.
- Huntington, S. (1991). Democracy's and third wave, *Journal of Democracy*, 2(2).
- Voter apathy and the 2015 elections in Nigeria
- Kramon, E. (2009). "Vote-buying and political behaviour: Estimating and explaining vote-buying's effect on turnout in Kenya". Afrobarometer, working paper No. 114
- Lynn, S. (2009). Political campaign planning manual: A step by step guide to winning elections. Retrieved from www.ndi.org/files/political.campaign-planning-manual_malaysia.pdf.
- Nwosu, N.I. (1996) "The Nigerian Presidential Election of 1993" *Indian Journal of Politics*. Vol xxx No 1-2.

- Obakhedo, N.O. (2011) Curbing Electoral Violence in Nigeria: The imperative of political education: African Research review international multidisciplinary journal, Ethiopia Vol. 5, No. 5, pp.
- Obasanjo O. (2005) Political Party Finance Handbook Independent Electoral Commission (INEC) Abuja.
- Ozor, Frederick Ugwu (2009), "Electoral Process, Democracy and Governance in Africa: Search for an Alternative Democratic Model." *Politikon*, 36(2), pp.: 315–336.
- Sohner, C.P. (1973) *The People's Power American Government and Politics Today*, Scott Foresman and Company.
- Vicente, P. C. 2014. 'Is vote buying effective? Evidence from a field experiment in West Africa.' *The Economic Journal* 124: 356–87.
- Vicente, P. C., and L. Wantchekon. (2009). 'Clientelism and Vote Buying: Lessons from field experiments in African elections.' *Oxford Review of Economic Policy* 25, 2: 292–305.
- Wantchekon, L. (2003). 'Clientelism and voting behavior: evidence from a field experiment in Benin.', *World Politics* 55, 3: 399–422.