



## **Implications of Vote Buying on Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria: A study of the 2023 National Assembly Election in Ebonyi Central Senatorial Zone**

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### **Abstract**

The study examined the implications of vote buying on democratic consolidation in Nigeria with a focus on 2023 National Assembly election in Ebonyi central senatorial zone. The study aimed at identifying the manifestations, impacts and the catalyst to vote buying in the National Assembly election in Ebonyi Central Senatorial zone in particular and Nigeria in general. The study adopted the quantitative method which was supported by the qualitative method of data collection and used clientelism as the theoretical framework. The data collected was presented in tables and analyzed using simple percentage. The hypotheses were tested using a T test. The study discovered that vote buying largely affected the outcome of the 2023 National Assembly Election in Ebonyi Central Senatorial zone and identified some factors such as poverty, lack of voter's education and poor execution of sanctions as catalyst of vote buying. The study concluded that without tackling the catalyst of vote buying in Nigeria election, vote buying will keep on thriving.

**Keywords:** Vote buying, Elections, Democratic consolidation, National Assembly, Nigeria.

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### **Introduction**

One of the critical aspects of democracy is election, which must be conducted in line with the acceptable norms set by the national laws of a given state to enable a peaceful transfer of power from one legitimate government to another, (Sule & Tal, 2018). Election according to (Nkwede, Nweke, Moliki, & Dauda, 2019), refers to the process by which electorates choose by voting officers either to act on their behalf or to represent them in an assembly with a view to governing



or making administration. The efficacy of election is indispensable in democracy since it gives the citizens more opportunity to participate in governance by choosing those who steer the affairs of leadership in the state, (Nnoli, 2006).

Democracy, today, is unarguably the most preferred form of government the world over. One of its cardinal principles is the participation of the people by making a choice on who governs them (Elaigwu, 2014). Hence, it is germane that a functioning democracy requires an informed and active public that understands how to voice its interests, act collectively, and hold government officials accountable through credible electoral process (National Democratic Institute, 2011). This can also be achieved through democratic participation, debate, and, most importantly through voting at elections. Elections involve a set of activities leading to the selection of one or more persons out of many to serve in positions of authority in a society. Political scientists and development theorists link free, fair and credible elections to democratic governance, peace and development. In brief, they argue that free, fair and credible elections provide the basis for the emergence of democratic, accountable and legitimate governments with the capacity to initiate and implement clearly articulated development programmes.

Vote buying has been an integral element of money politics in Nigeria. Recent experiences however show that vote buying takes place at multiple stages of the electoral cycle and has been observed eminently during voter registration, the nomination period, campaigning and election day. It is more predominant during Election Day, shortly before or during vote casting. In the Vote for Cash approach a person has to show evidence that he or she has voted for the party in order to receive payment for the vote. Like a typical market place, the politicians, political parties, and party agents are the vote buyers while prospective voters are the sellers. The commodity on sale is the vote to be cast while the medium of exchange could be monetary and non-monetary items. The market force that determines the value or price of a vote is the level of desperation of politicians to win in a locality. Voting is the main form of political participation in democratic societies. Voting is one of the most fundamental aspects of civic engagement. Many political scientists link voting with the vibrancy of the democratic process and argue that declining voting rates may be symptomatic of a —democratic deficit. Vote buying and voting



behavior are key phenomenon in Nigeria electoral process. Vote buying occurs when a political party or candidate seeks to buy the vote of a voter in an election. Vote buying can take various forms such as a monetary exchange, as well as an exchange for necessary goods or services. The practice of vote buying appears in many societies and organizations, and in different forms. Obvious examples include direct payments to voter's donations to legislators, campaign by special interest groups, the buying of the voting shares of a stock, and the promise of specific programs or payments to voters conditional on the election of a candidate. This practice is often used to incentivize or persuade voters to turn out to elections and vote in a particular way.

Money politics or vote-buying have become strategies by many politicians today in the world, Nigerian and Ebonyi state politicians in particular. The simple logic behind the adoption of the method is because of their inability to convince the electorate through their manifesto as what they stand for, their mission and vision and most importantly, what the electorate stands to benefit if voted into power. Vote-Buying connote the exchange of voting right by the voters with money from the candidates in an election. It is a process whereby voter's conscience and views are manipulated to the advantage of the political parties' candidates in an election through the use of money or other material things to induce and appeal to the electorate directly or indirectly.

According to Fredrick and Andrea (2005), candidate buy' and citizens/electorate sell vote', as they buy and sell apples, shoes or television sets. The act of Vote-Buying by this view is a contract or perhaps an auction in which voters sell their votes to the highest bidder. Parties and candidates buy votes by offering particularistic materials to voters. Candidates may generally aspire to purchase political support at the ballot box in accordance with the idea of market change. Vote-buying may carry different meaning in different cultural context (Owasa, 2013). Money and vote buying have vitiated the good qualities of democracy in the country. Despite the incident of vote buying that is wide spread, it is important to note that Vote buying is prohibited in Nigeria and be categorized as serious offense too. For instance, Article 130 of the Electoral Act 2010, as amended, states that:

A person who — (a) corruptly by himself or by any other person at any time after the date of an election has been announced, directly or indirectly gives or provides or pays money to or for any



person for the purpose of corruptly influencing that person or any other person to vote or refrain from voting at such election, or on account of such person or any other person having voted or refrained from voting at such election; or (b) being a voter, corruptly accepts or takes money or any other inducement during any of the period stated in paragraph (a) of this section, commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a fine of N100,000 or 12 months imprisonment or both. Similarly, the 2018 Revised Code of Conduct for Political Parties in section VIII (e) provides that, all political parties and their agents shall not engage in the following practice: buying of votes or offer any bribe, gift, reward, gratification or any other monetary or material considerations or allurements to voters and electoral officials.

Notwithstanding its prohibition, vote buying continues to be a widespread practice in Nigeria's recent elections. Although money and other valuables can be used to effectuate vote buying, political actors have adopted two main approaches to buying votes for Election Day.

- The first is the Cash for Vote approach. It involves giving or promising the prospective voter some agreed amount of money well before the individual casts his or her vote at the polling station. The payment is done before the actual voting, and could be within the vicinity of the polling station or farther away. The settlement is made secretly or in the open. Often, the vote buyers demand evidence of ownership of a voter's card and assurance that the voter will vote for their party before offering the money. In this approach, trust is key to the contract. It is also known as the pre-paid method of vote buying.
- The second approach is the Vote for Cash. It involves giving or rewarding the voter with the agreed amount of money or material compensation after the individual has shown evidence that he or she voted for the party. There are several ways the voter can prove to the vote buyer that he or she voted for the agreed candidate. One method is where the voter shrewdly displays the ballot paper that (s) he has thumb printed in favour of a particular party, so that the party agent standing strategically nearby can confirm compliance with the unholy contract as (s)he emerges from the cubicle at the polling station. Another method is for the voter to photograph the thumb printed



- ballot paper to show as evidence. Thereafter, compensation in cash and/or kind can occur either immediately or at the close of balloting, and may take place within the precinct of the polling station or at an agreed place. In this approach, evidence is key to the consummation of the contract. This approach is also known as the —see and buy or the post-paid method.

Against this backdrop, the study examined the implication of vote buying on democratic consolidation in Nigeria with particular attention to the 2023 National Assembly Election in Ebonyi Central Senatorial zone. Specifically, the objectives are to:

1. To examine the implications of Vote buying in the 2023 National Assembly election in Ebonyi Central Senatorial zone of Ebonyi state.
2. To determine the impact of Vote Buying on the 2023 National Assembly election in Ebonyi Central Senatorial zone of Ebonyi state.
3. To ascertain the factors that encouraged vote buying in the 2023 National Assembly election in Ebonyi Central Senatorial zone of Ebonyi state.

The following research questions were formulated for the study.

1. What were the implications of vote buying in 2023 National Assembly election in Ebonyi Central Senatorial zone of Ebonyi state?
2. What are the impacts of Vote Buying on the 2023 National Assembly election in Ebonyi Central Senatorial zone of Ebonyi state?
3. How to ascertain the factors that encouraged vote buying in the 2023 National Assembly election in Ebonyi Central Senatorial zone of Ebonyi state?

Hypotheses that guided the research were formulated as follows:

1. Vote buying had no impact on the 2023 National Assembly election in Ebonyi Central Senatorial zone of Ebonyi state.
2. There were no factors encouraging vote buying in 2023 National Assembly election in Ebonyi Central Senatorial zone of Ebonyi state.



## Literature Review

### Democracy

Democracy means different things to different people: a platform for power contestation and not the least a class struggle. Nwoye (2001) notes that democracy is premised on effective representation and participation, adding that while the specificity of democracy differs cross-culturally, there are still basic underlying features that are common and genuine to all democratic processes which include: free elections, majority rule, participation of political parties, unimpeachable judiciary and parliament. Similarly, the word "democracy" according to Bangura (2013) is used to describe three different political systems. 'According to him, this system of government has to do with the rule of many and also a representation of the true interests of the people. These characteristics of democracy differentiate it from other forms of government that are dictatorial and which does not take cognizance of the wishes and desires of the people in whatever sphere be it in the choice of who represents them in government or in overall decision making.

Democratic elections are thus the opportunity for the people to express their sovereignty through the ballot to confer legitimacy to their government, renew its mandate if necessary or withdraw from it the authority to govern which is the basis of accountability in government (INEC, 2011). Obiyan & Afolabi (2013) see elections as a set of activities leading to the selection of person(s) out of many to serve in positions of authority. They contended that elections are viable instruments for fine-tuning the workings of democracy and consummating representative government, and being a means of leadership turn-over. As Agbaje & Adejumbi (2006) have noted, elections are an expression of the people's sovereign will, helping to confer legitimacy on political leadership. Akindele (2011), however, notes that elections are not just what happen on Election Day, but are subsumed in a process which encompasses activities before, during and after elections. According to him, it includes the legal and constitutional framework of elections, the registration of political parties, party campaigns, the activities of the electronic and print media in terms of access; campaign financing, the activities of the security agencies and the government in power.



Similarly, Onyeka (2002) gave a lucid clarification and interpretation of an election as a process by which the people of a place choose those who will represent them in government, according to Onyeka, these takes place in order to fill public offices at various level of government be it federal, state or local. Villalon (1998:16) rightly argued, “Elections themselves may be a strategy for maintaining power and many African elections have been clearly intended to forestall change, or even strengthen the status quo.” Elections as political stratagems for pursuing these agendas produce quasi-democracies in West Africa. In liberal democratic theory, an election is a viable mechanism for consummating representative government. Apart from facilitating leadership succession, it promotes political accountability, citizens’ participation and gives voice and power to the people (Agbaje & Adejumobi 2006). This brings us to the concept of democracy consolidation.

Scholars have used different definitions of democratic consolidation. These definitions are based on two conceptions of democracy. One is a “minimalist conception”, emphasizing procedural or formal democracy. The other is a “maximalist conception,” focusing on the outcomes of politics, such as institutionalization of political institutions, social justice, and economic equality. Based on the Schumpeterian conception of democracy (that equates democracy, with regularly held electoral competition), Schmitter (1992) defines the minimalist conception of a consolidated democratic regime as “the process of transforming the accidental arrangements, prudential norms, and contingent solutions that have emerged during the transition into relations of cooperation and competition that are reliably known, regularly practiced, and voluntarily accepted by those persons or collectives, that participate in democratic governance.

To Linz (1999), a consolidated democracy is one in which “none of the major political actors, parties, or organized interests, forces or institutions consider(s) that there is any alternative to the democratic process to gain power and that no political institutions or groups has a claim to veto the action of democratically elected decision makers. To put it simply, democracy must be seen as “the only game in town.” In comparison with a minimalist conception of democracy, many scholars adopt “out-come-oriented conceptions” of democracy, or a maximalist conception of democratic consolidation. These scholars argue that both political and socioeconomic democracy



is needed for a country's democracy to be consolidated. This conception includes not only procedural or formal democracy but also substantive democratic elements, such as guarantees of basic civil rights, democratic accountability and responsiveness, civilian control over the military, democratic and constitutional checks on executive authority, and punishment of occupational and human rights abuses.

According to Diamond (2013), democratic consolidation means the quality, depth, and authenticity of democracy in its various dimensions has been improved: "political competition becomes fairer, freer, more vigorous and executive; participation and representation broader, more autonomous, and inclusive; civil liberties more comprehensively and rigorously protected; accountability more systematic and transparent.

### **Vote Buying**

Vote Buying like most social science concept lacks a universally accepted definition however; some similarities can be identified from the different definitions by scholars. However, the following definitions were adopted for this research; Vote buying is the provision of rewards to groups/individuals pre or during elections in lure of solidifying or changing voter's choice to their favor. These rewards could include cash, goods, service, position, kind or anything that benefits the said receiver in order to sway them over (Nichter, 2014; Nkwede, Abah, 2019)). It is a form of clientelism known as political clientelism: which involves the direct/indirect exchange of vote for benefits by political elites before or during elections (Jensen and Justesen, 2014). Vote buying is also an economic transaction just like buying and selling of commodities such as shoes, bags and food stuffs based on demand and supply so as the electorates are willing to sell, candidates are also available to buy (Fredrick and Andrea's, 2005).

It is interesting to note that vote buying cuts across all countries be it developed or developing countries the only different maybe in manifestation, level or magnitude. In Nigeria and most developing countries vote buying is closely related to an auction procedure where the highest bidder wins the vote. The most common exercise of vote buying in Nigeria can be seen during





electoral campaigns when money and food stuff change hands to induce the electorate to vote for that party (Sakariyau, Aliu and Adamu, 2015).

In the Southeast zone for example as experienced in the 2007 election, political ‘party thugs and paid agents’ took over voting activities in most parts of Ebonyi State as INEC officials were barely seen in most of the polling units during the gubernatorial election. In Enugu State ‘the Peoples Democratic Party had bought over the majority of INEC officials and party security officials which [sic] were seen collecting bribes from party stalwarts’. In Imo State ‘Money was given in exchange for voters’ cards in polling stations like 006 Ugbele ward, Ideato South as well as in all the stations in Nkwerre LGA’. Vote buying also occurred in IM/OW/Primary School New Owerri/006; IM/OW/shell camp/ 001; IM/OW/Alvan/006 and IM/OW/Orij/001. In ward 3 booth 007 of Lude Ahiazu Local Government Area (LGA), INEC officials traded ballot papers with party agents depending on the amount given. In Mbaise Local Government Area ‘there was infighting between PDP supporters and agents over money sharing which was the order of the day’ (Catholic Secretariat 2007, pp 29-32)

### **Theoretical Framework**

The study adopted theory of Clientalism. Clientalism was developed in the 20th century as a framework for explaining political corruption and electoral process globally. It initially originated from the Greek language which refers to obey and patronize (Morse, J.G. Mazzuca, S. & Nichter, S. 2010).

Clientelism theory explains the system of patron-broker-client ties and networks that operates within the politics and government of different societies (Piattoni, 2001). The theory has its tentacles in Economics and Political Science explains the transactions between politicians and citizens whereby material favors are offered in return for political support at the polls (Eisenstadt and Lemarchand, 1981). Clientelism has its origin traced to ancient Rome where the relationships between the patron (patronus) and client (cliens) were seen as crucial in understanding the political process. This kind of clientelism also known as old clientelism or notable clientelism has been likened to feudalism by Lemarchand and Legg although modern French historians such



as Mousnier and Major disagree explaining that clientelism patron-client bond only had a feudal legacy, because there was no oath of homage and no exchange of fiefs in the patron-client bond; choice of master was free; and services were not defined (Eisenstadt and Lemarchand, 1981; Piattoni, 2001). Development of the theory evolved through the English industrialization and French revolution where the patron-client relationship was seen as a personal direct exchange in which on one hand the patron uses resources in which he owns or controls for the behalf of his clients (Parisi and Pasquino 1979). This involved assisting, defending and protecting his clients, by giving them material benefits and an opportunity for career advancement while the clientage on the other hand, was loyal giving the services that is owed to the patron in return for his protection and advancement (Katz 1986). A patron-broker-client relationship is a three-party transaction the patron who is the master that requires loyalty, the broker who acts as a middleman or connector that arranges the exchange of resources between two parties separated by situations such as geo-graphic or personal distance such as differences in rank or office and the client who needs protection or favor (Piattoni, 2001). The theory of clientelism was further expanded by social scientists like Eisenstadt and Roniger, Lande, Brown and Schmidt the different social scientist identified that the changing structures of the state and society also affect the process of clientelism. Eisenstadt and Roniger explained that different systems affect the process of clientelism and it is largely dependent of social setting. Lande explains that variation in patron-client relationships are the result of variations in the substructure to which they are attached. Brown has observed that vertical clientelist power relations have changed over time and in respect to the structure of the state. Schmidt further elucidate that changes in clientage is usually as a result of changes in the larger society (Tarrow, 1967; Weingrod, 1968; Eisenstadt and Lemarchand, 1981).

Notables clientelism or Old clientelism existed to see modern democratic era in different parts of the world, in this contexts patrons, or their agents, stand for election and their clients vote for them, usually as a result of obligation, loyalty or because of what they tend to gain in good or services either already rendered or promised. However as a result of change in time and society this form of clientelism has evolved to the new clientelism which was first noticed in studies on postwar Italy (Tarrow, 1967; Weingrod, 1968; Caciagli and Belloni, 1981). These changes in



society involved the replacement of landlords with organized political parties with structured party system as patrons; the clients on the other hand became electorates who demanded better and more immediate material benefits in exchange for their votes. In the change that brought about new clientelism, patrons had to 'buy' votes by distributing concrete excludable benefits and favours to individual voters or groups of voters (Parisi and Pasquino 1979; Katz 1986). New clientelism as an evolution of the old still shared some fundamental features such as the relationship between the patron and client remained mutually beneficial and the benefits provided to clients was still privately own or public materials controlled by the patron, which the patron rewarded the client from. Some differences also exist such as: the relationship in old clientelism was less hierarchical, while in new clientelism more democratic, the client were less bound to the patron and therefore, can use their vote in exchange for their maximum satisfaction (Parisi and Pasquino 1979; Eisenstadt and Lemarchand, 1981; Katz 1986).

The economic aspect of clientelism can be seen as a market exchange which is influenced by the forces of demand and supply. Based on this context the patron and the client interact with the sole purpose of maximizing utility as they jettison every sense of obligation towards each other. Economic aspect of clientelism does not focus on permanent relationship and the benefit provided by the patron to the client but is determined by the value provided by the client. The determinate of the benefit provided by the patron include how much other patrons intend to pay the client for their votes and the availability or scarcity of good that is individuals ready to sell their votes (Gellner, and Waterbury, 1977).

Clientelism is germane in understanding how vote buying and elections in Nigeria. Application of the theory to this study is hinged on the fact that Nigeria as any society within the modern day democracy is made up by patrons representing organized political parties with structures who are controlled by the political elite, these patrons during elections need the votes of the electorate which represent the client however, sometimes the patron are too far to reach the clients which therefore, requires an intermediary representing the brokers who come to speak or convince the clients to vote for the patrons. The theory also helps us to understand that the clients in the new clientalism does not need to be loyal to the party they are been influenced to vote for as long as



the benefit expected from the patron or party is met, if such benefit dries up they can move over to another patron. The theory new clientelism helps us to understand that the good provided to the client does not necessary need to be private good only but public good like government position, favourable government policy and so on controlled by the patron.

### **Methodology**

The study adopts content analysis as a design to analyze data obtained from secondary sources through the instrumentality of textbooks, journals, newspapers, periodicals etc, while the other source which has to do with observation method includes an eye witness account of events while they happen and media reports of violence as it happened in in Ebonyi State and other parts of Nigeria especially in the 2023 National Assembly election in Ebonyi Central Senatorial zone.



## Data Presentation and Analysis

### Test of Hypotheses

#### Hypothesis 1: There were no manifestations of vote buying in the 2023 National Assembly Election of Ebonyi Central Senatorial zone

Test value = 0									
	T	DF	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Diff.	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	Lower	Upper	S.D	Standard Error
Party agents give money to the electorates to buy their votes around the polling centres	28.834	1	.000	.000	1.48	1.70	.984	.066	
Candidates use campaign materials such as food stuff, clothing materials and money as instrument for vote buying	30.256	1	.000	1.568	1.47	1.67	.958	.071	
Party agents gave youths groups and association money to influence their voting choice	39.778	1	.000	1.892	1.80	1.99	.952	0.61	
Party agents required evidence of voting before payment were released	40.759	1	.000	2.203	2.10	2.31	.949	0.62	




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Traditional rulers were given	40.164	1	.000	2.247	2.14	2.36	.920	0.62
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money and food stuffs to influence their subject to vote for a particular party and candidate

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SD (Standard Deviation), t (critical) Source: Researchers' field Survey (2023)

The hypothesis was tested using a T test, the table above shows that the t value for all the items which are 28.834, 30.256, 39, 778, 40.759 and 40.164 are all positive, the degree of freedom for all the items (DF) are 1, the P value for all the item is 0.00 which is less than (<) 0.05 and is statistically significant. The Mean differences for all the items are 1.589, 1.568, 1.892, 2.203 and 2.247, all the standard deviation are .984, .958, .952, .949 and .920 which are all less than 1 meaning that there is a concentration of view in agreement to questions asked while the standard error is .066, .071, .061, .062, .062. This indicates that the P value 0.00 which is statistically significant and the t is positive. This reveals that there was actual manifestation of vote buying in the 2018 Governorship election in Ebonyi Central Senatorial Zone therefore, the hypothesis is rejected. This conclusion is in alignment with the claims of all individuals interviewed for the research concerning the presence and manifestation of vote buying in the 2023 National Assembly Election of Ebonyi Central Senatorial Zone. All the interviewed respondent also agreed that vote buying was manifested around the vicinity of the polling center, during party rallies and that party agents required evidence of voting before payment were released. However, the male NYSC adhoc staff alone identified the use of youths and the tradition leaders towards influencing other to vote for a political party or candidate because of money as a manifestation of vote buying according to the questionnaire as well as electorates desire to determine who to vote for based on the highest bidders as other manifestation of vote buying not mentioned in the questionnaire.



**Hypothesis 2: Vote buying had no impact on the 2023 National Assembly Election of Ebonyi Central Senatorial Zone**

	Test value = 0							
	T	DF	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Diff.	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		S.D	Standard Error
					Lower	Upper		
Vote buying results in distrust for candidate	33.341	1	.000	1.833	1.72	1.94	.984	.055
Some voters believe their votes did not count	33.882	1	.000	1.823	1.72	1.93	.961	.054
Vote buying negates the principle of fairness	32.755	1	.000	1.702	1.60	1.80	.925	.052
Vote buying promotes corruption	35.101	1	.000	1.730	1.63	1.83	.972	.049
Some eligible candidates refused to participate in the election due to vote buying	37.442	1	.000	2.139	2.03	2.25	.927	.057

SD (Standard Deviation), t (critical) Source: Researchers’ field Survey (2023)

The table shows that t value for all the items are 33.341, 33.882, 32.755, 35.101 and 37.442 which is positive, the degree of freedom for all the items are 1, the P value for all the items are



0.00 which is less than ( $<$ ) 0.05 and is statistically significant. The Mean difference for all the items are 1.833, 1.823, 1.702, 1.730 and 2.139 which is statistically significant, the standard deviation is .984, .961, .925, .972 and .927 which are all less than 1 meaning that there is a concentration of view in agreement to questions asked while the standard error for all the items are 0.55, .054, .052, .049 and .057. This indicates that P value of 0.00 which is statistically significant and the t is positive. This reveals that vote buying had impact on the 2023 National Assembly Election of Ebonyi Central Senatorial zone, therefore the hypothesis is rejected. This conclusion is in alignment with the claims of all individuals interviewed for the research concerning the impact of vote buying on the 2023 National Assembly Election of Ebonyi Central Senatorial zone. All the interviewed respondent ticked agreed that vote buying made individuals and vote buying negates the principle of fairness which is in accordance to the question asked on the questionnaire. However, The Male INEC staff identified vote buying as a breeder of distrust of the electorates on the leaders which is also included in the questionnaire as an impact of Vote Buying but further identified institutional fragility and unaccountability of leaders to the electorates as other impact of vote buying not mentioned in the questionnaire.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The result above reveals that t value for all the items are 32.684, 32.372, 35.517, 33.956 and 34.521 which are all positive, the degree of freedom for all the items are 1, the P value for all the items are 0.00 which is less than ( $<$ ) 0.05 and is statistically significant. Mean difference for all the items are 1.535, 1.661, 1.776, 2.072 and 1.900 the standard deviation is .926, 1.012, .986, 1.204 and .984 meaning that there is a concentration of view in agreement to questions asked on poverty, security agents turning a blind eye to vote buying and the lack of trust in the promises of candidates as factors encouraging vote buying while a wider range of views about lack of voters education and the believe that individuals who buy votes are generous candidates the standard error is 0.47, .051, .050, .061 and .055. This indicates that P value of 0.00 which is statistically significant and the t is positive. This implies that there were factors that encouraged vote buying in 2023 National Assembly Election of Ebonyi Central Senatorial zone. Notable among them identified in the research includes High rate of poverty among electorates and low voter education showcased in table 4.1.16 and 4.1.17 respectively therefore, the hypothesis is rejected.





This conclusion is in alignment with the claims of all individuals interviewed for the research concerning the factors that encouraged vote buying in the 2023 National Assembly Election of Ebonyi Central Senatorial zone. The entire interviewed respondent ticked agreed that poverty and lack of voter's education are major factors encouraging vote buying which is in alignment with the questions on the questionnaire. However, The Public Relations Secretary of the (PDP) Ebonyi Chapter agree that Security agents and view that voter buyers are generous candidates encourage vote buying in the 2023 National Assembly Election of Ebonyi Central Senatorial zone which is also captured in the questionnaires. He identified other factors encouraging vote buying which include the NYSC corp. members, the INEC officials and the impatience of the Ebonyi Central electorate to wait on the dividend of democracy are also factors encouraging vote buying.

### **Conclusion**

Vote buying has great set back on the electoral process of Nigeria and is a threat to her democracy as it promotes corruption, poverty, and decline in political participation and increase in crime. Some catalyts of vote buying include poverty, ignorance, ineffective sanction on culprits and distrust of the government. Vote buying isn't a new phenomenon but a practice that has been old as the Nigeria. Nevertheless it still remains an electoral offence therefore; culprits should be brought to book. Vote buying isn't done in isolation, however, for the system to work it is necessary that the perpetrators within the system be flushed out. This is because if a candidate decides to begin his/her political journey with corruption by paying for support, rather than competing for votes fair and square. It can be concluded that such candidates has no regard for democratic procedures and is open to using illegal means in his/her administration.

### **Recommendations**

In reality the braze acts of vote-buying cannot be eradicated totally however, specific mechanism should be put in place to reduce the growth and negative effort of vote buying on the electoral process and democracy such as partnership between The Independent National Electoral Commission and the anti-corruption agencies such as the Economic and Financial Crimes



Commission while conducting elections and afterward culprits found in vote buying should be handed over to these agencies for investigation and prosecution. Existing electoral legislation needs to be amended and stringent punishment attached in order to mitigate the advancement of vote buying such as the addition of Capital Punishment for offenders.

Increase in Voter Education were the government does not leave it to Non-governmental agencies but be involved by including voters education to school curriculum as part of social studies and civic education, organizing talk shows and workshops about the woes of vote buying. Improved Poverty Alleviation Schemes need to be implemented so as to counter act its effort as a catalyst for vote buying.

Disqualification of Guilty Candidates and prosecution of culprits of vote buying should be taken seriously as criminalized by sections 124 and 130 of the Electoral Act 2010, as amended. Scrutinizing of Party Finances through mandatory compliance from the parties according to the Electoral Act 2010 concerning submission of account statement, expenditure of the party, an audit of the books of the party before and after an election must be enforced in order to trace suspicious transactions and action of vote buying Contribution to Knowledge.

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