



An Assessment of the Mass Media as a Medium for Campaign Against Vote Buying During Elections in Nigeria 2023 Presidential Election

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the “An Assessment of the Mass Media as a Medium for Campaign Against Vote Buying During Elections in Nigeria 2023 Presidential Election” The objective aimed to assess the effectiveness of mass media campaigns in combating vote buying during the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria. The study adopted the survey method. The findings provided insights into the perceptions, behaviors, and challenges faced by the Nigerian electorate in the context of vote buying. Utilizing a sample size of 400 respondents of which 350 were returned and found valuable. The study recommended to allocate sufficient resources to support mass media campaigns against vote buying, ensuring comprehensive coverage and greater impact. And developing strategies to overcome limited reach, particularly in underserved areas, to ensure that anti-vote buying messages reach all segments of the electorate.

Keywords: Mass Media, Vote Buying, Campaign, Election, Nigeria

Introduction

Elections serve as a crucial method for selecting representatives, forming a cornerstone of democracies worldwide. However, the integrity of this process is constantly undermined by vote buying, a concern that resonates among Nigerians. Academics interpret vote buying as a commercial transaction, where voters sell their votes, disrupting the democratic tenet. This practice, rampant in Nigeria, precedes the restoration of democracy in 1999.

The media, especially television, plays a pivotal role in influencing public opinion and combating electoral malpractices like vote buying. Ochonogor (2016) emphasizes the communication role in community development, disseminating knowledge to foster civic engagement. The Nigerian press, a powerful force pre-independence, contributed significantly to political awareness. Despite dictatorial challenges, the media played a role in establishing democracy.

Television, being an audio-visual channel, becomes a potent tool for socialization and political orientation. It serves as a conduit between the government and the governed, hosting programs like "Sunday Politics" and "Democracy Today," which address political issues. Ochonogor and Ukeagbu (2010) assert that television campaigns effectively mobilize the public against electoral fraud, such as vote buying.

In the context of democracy, politics, and campaigning, elections must be free and fair to uphold democratic principles. The absence of manipulation, violence, and fraud is crucial, and institutions like the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) play a vital role. Television, with its audio-visual capabilities, serves as a communicative force, reminding people of their civic duties and contributing to the democratic process..

Undoubtedly, political enlightenment campaigns on television serve as reminders of civic duties, aiming to educate and mobilize the public. Persuasion, mobilization, and sensitization efforts are more effective through television's audio-visual capabilities, tapping into latent potentials and physical capacities that direct individuals toward positive civic engagement.

Okunna (1999) underscores the communicative force of television, highlighting its historical significance. Television, as a medium, shapes societal norms, disseminates contemporary ideas, and refines traditional practices and values. Its effectiveness in instilling awareness and sensitization makes it a crucial tool for changing a nation's social and political orientation.

Television hosts like Seun Okinbaloye and Ijeoma Osamor, presenting programs such as "Sunday Politics" and "Democracy Today," play a significant role in keeping the general public informed about urgent matters of national importance. Their inclusivity in addressing viewers of diverse backgrounds fosters awareness and understanding of critical issues, including those related to the democratic process.

Nevertheless, the influence of television on public opinion, political awareness, and civic engagement is undeniable. Its role in combating electoral fraud, like vote buying, contributes to the integrity of the democratic process. As a communicative force, television continues to shape the narrative, enlighten the public, and serve as a vital component in the democratic framework.

Jega (2014) highlighted the prevalence of electoral malpractices, including manipulation, ballot stuffing, and vote buying, influencing the Nigerian election process. Late President Yaradua acknowledged irregularities in his election, prompting the initiation of election reforms before his demise. The label of Nigeria as a corruption hub and poverty epicenter is a consequence of rampant vote buying, where electorates compromise their futures for immediate gains. This study aims to explore the effectiveness of the Mass Media in campaigning against vote buying during the 2023 Presidential Election in Nigeria, addressing a crucial gap in assessment.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The seventh presidential election in Nigeria since the restoration of democracy in 1999 featured 18 candidates, but the realistic contenders were Atiku Abubakar, Peter Obi, and Bola Tinubu. Dominated by concerns about Nigeria's economy and national security, the campaign addressed rising inflation and high rates of violent crime. Bola Tinubu emerged as the winner; however, legal petitions from the main opposition parties seek to invalidate the election, calling for a new one.

Elections play a crucial role in politics, requiring freedom from irregularities to fulfill their purpose. Vote buying has gained prominence in Nigerian elections, evident in off-season elections in Edo, Anambra, Ekiti, and Ondo. Accusations of vote buying were directed at both the People Democratic Party and the All Progressive Congress, raising concerns about the legitimacy of the electoral process. Various media, especially television, have been instrumental in addressing this issue and preventing the continuation of such malpractices.

This study aims to assess the effectiveness of television in combating vote buying before and during Nigerian elections, recognizing the medium's role in curbing this multifaceted challenge.

1.3 Objectives of the study

This study's main goal is to assess how the mass media effective using the television medium as a channel for the fight against vote-buying in Nigeria.

1. To assess the effectiveness of mass media campaigns in combating vote buying during the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria.
2. To examine the role of different mass media platforms in raising awareness and educating voters about the negative consequences of vote buying.
3. To identify the challenges and limitations faced in utilizing mass media for anti-vote buying campaigns and propose strategies for improvement.

1.4 Research Questions

The following are the research questions:

1. How effective were mass media campaigns in countering vote buying during the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria?
2. What was the role of various mass media platforms, such as television, radio, newspapers, and social media, in disseminating information about the dangers of vote buying to voters?
3. What were the key challenges encountered in utilizing mass media as a medium for the campaign against vote buying, and how can these challenges be mitigated in future elections?

Theoretical Framework

Corporate Social Responsibility Theory

This study is grounded in the Social Responsibility Theory and the Political Economy Approach. The Social Responsibility Theory, originating from the Hutchins Commission on Press Freedom in 1947, posits that with freedom comes responsibility for the press to serve the community through objective and truthful reporting. In the context of this study, it evaluates the media's responsibility in launching awareness campaigns against vote buying in Nigeria, considering media's role in social transformation.

The Political Economy Approach, supported by proponents like Marx, Ake, and Chikendu, emphasizes the economic conditions driving societal dynamics. It asserts that postcolonial regimes, seeking economic advancement, engage in intense political struggles for control of state power. In the

context of this study, the approach helps analyze how electoral fraud, including vote buying, is rooted in politicians' quests for state authority and financial gain.

Together, these frameworks provide a comprehensive lens for understanding the role of media and the underlying economic factors in the context of combating vote buying in Nigerian elections.

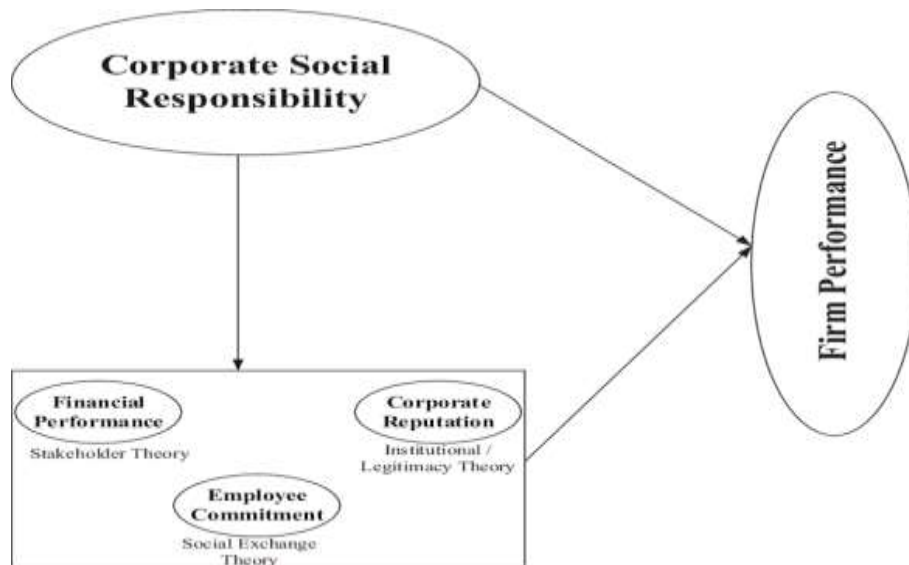


Fig. 1: Corporate Social Responsibility Model

Source: Wikipedia, 2024.

In applying the Social Responsibility Theory to this study, the emphasis is on the press's duty to society and its role in fostering vibrant, creative communities. The theory underscores the importance of fairness, balance, and objectivity in media practice. The study assesses how television, as a powerful medium, contributes to the education against vote buying, especially evident in the notable decrease in its prevalence during the Nigeria presidential election in February 2020. The success of the television campaign supports the justification for adopting the Social Responsibility Theory in the study.

On the other hand, the Political Economy Approach delves into the economic conditions that shape societal dynamics. This approach sheds light on how politicians, driven by the quest for state authority, engage in power struggles, often resorting to electoral malpractice. In the context of Nigeria, where postcolonial regimes seek control of both political and economic power, this approach provides insights into the motivations behind actions like vote buying during elections.

By combining these two frameworks, the study gains a nuanced understanding of the interplay between media responsibility, economic factors, and political dynamics in the context of combating vote buying in Nigerian elections. The Social Responsibility Theory highlights the media's duty to society, while the Political Economy Approach unveils the economic and political forces influencing electoral practices.

Review of Relevant Literature

Throughout history, especially in developing nations like Nigeria, significant political changes have shaped the political governance landscape. The press, facing notable challenges, plays a crucial role in providing regular updates to the public and stakeholders, fostering knowledge about politics, policy, and the economy. Sustainable democratic governance requires citizens to possess the knowledge and awareness to participate in the democratic process, including voting and selecting political candidates (Nwankwo 1992; Diamond, 2004; McCombs and Reynolds, 2009; Grabber, 2010).

The mass media, particularly television, plays a key role in educating citizens about democratic principles, rules, and practices. It helps voters understand their roles before, during, and after elections, promoting political tolerance, trust in democratic governance, and respect for the rule of law (Okoro 2013). Achieving national unity in Nigeria involves ensuring fair access and distribution of information resources, addressing persistent issues like tribal cohesiveness (Chikelu 2000).

Research on the connections between media and development explores theoretical models on media effects, emphasizing citizens' motivation for national integration and ethnic unification (Okoro 2013). Television, as a powerful tool for political education and inspiration, encourages healthy discourse, political participation, and critical examination of government (Okoro 2010). Mass media, encompassing various communication channels, serve as the means to disseminate information to a large, dispersed audience. However, their influence raises concerns about democratic bias and the power to shape political agendas (Nwosu 1996; Afamuefuna 2007).

In a democracy, the media's role is to reflect the people's will and opinions, ensuring their active participation in policy-making. The majority's voice prevails, highlighting the democratic process's essence. Despite this, challenges exist, with a few influential individuals controlling the government process in Nigeria (Tsegyu and Dogara 2016).

Vote Buying

Vote buying poses a significant challenge in various countries, including Nigeria, as it involves exchanging money or gifts for votes. This practice undermines democratic integrity, potentially leading to the election of corrupt or unqualified candidates. Numerous studies, including those by the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), have shed light on the extent of vote buying in Nigeria.

In the 2019 general elections, CDD's study revealed that politicians distributed cash and incentives to voters in exchange for support. IFES's study focused on the 2018 gubernatorial election in Ekiti State, reporting that 57% of respondents experienced offers of money or gifts for votes.

To combat vote buying, various stakeholders, including the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), have initiated awareness campaigns. INEC, for instance, launched a public education effort to sensitize voters about the perils of vote buying and encourage reporting of electoral fraud. Civil society organizations like CDD have also played a role in advocating against vote buying, fostering awareness, and encouraging citizen participation in the democratic process. These initiatives aim to address the issue and enhance transparency and accountability in elections.

Political Campaigns on Vote Buying in Nigeria

Political campaigns against vote buying in Nigeria have become a focal point for politicians and civil society organizations, aiming to combat electoral fraud and enhance transparency. The "Vote Not For Sale" campaign, initiated by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in 2019, sought to sensitize voters about the dangers of vote buying and discourage acceptance of bribes from politicians or their agents.

Certain political parties, such as the Social Democratic Party (SDP), integrated the fight against vote buying into their campaigns during the 2019 general elections, utilizing slogans like "Sell Your Vote, Sell Your Conscience." Civil society organizations, including the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD), actively campaigned against vote buying through public debates, town hall meetings, and media engagements, emphasizing the risks of electoral fraud and advocating for transparent and accountable electoral processes.

International organizations like the European Union (EU) supported anti-vote buying campaigns in Nigeria. The EU's campaign ahead of the 2019 general elections aimed to raise awareness about the perils of vote buying and promote transparent and accountable electoral practices.

While these campaigns have contributed to increased awareness and attention to the issue of electoral fraud, there is a continued need for comprehensive efforts to address and eliminate vote buying, ensuring the integrity of elections and fostering a democratic electoral process in Nigeria.

Mass Media Coverage on Vote Buying in Nigeria 2023 Elections

Vote buying remains a prominent issue in Nigerian elections, prompting responses from the government and civil society organizations. Utilizing mass media, including television, radio, and social media, has proven to be an effective strategy in the fight against vote buying. These mediums play a crucial role in exposing instances of electoral fraud, promoting transparency, and encouraging accountability in the political process.

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) collaborated with media outlets for a national public awareness campaign opposing vote buying ahead of the 2019 Nigerian elections. This comprehensive campaign involved social media marketing, community outreach initiatives, television and radio advertising, and more.

Ongoing media coverage leading up to the 2023 Nigerian elections continues to highlight cases of vote buying and electoral fraud, contributing to the discourse on the challenges facing Nigeria's democratic process. Such media attention aids in fostering transparency and accountability in politics, while also raising public awareness about the risks associated with vote buying.

Despite these efforts, vote buying and other electoral fraud issues persist. Sustained funding for public education and awareness initiatives, alongside measures promoting transparency and accountability, will be crucial for addressing these concerns in Nigeria's electoral landscape.

Television Coverage on Voters' Apathy in the 2023 Presidential Elections

Television coverage of voter indifference in Nigeria's 2023 presidential elections has sparked concerns among political analysts and stakeholders. Leading channels like Channels Television, Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), TVC News, Arise News, and Silverbird Television have extensively covered the reasons behind voter apathy, citing issues such as a lack of confidence in the electoral system, credibility concerns with candidates, and skepticism about the impact of individual votes.

Channels Television's "Politics Today" featured discussions on voter indifference, emphasizing the need for the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to enhance openness and accountability to restore public confidence. Similarly, NTA's "Good Morning Nigeria" hosted a civil society organization member, urging political parties to present deserving candidates and address electorate concerns in their manifestos.

While television coverage has contributed to raising awareness and fostering public debate on addressing voter apathy, there's acknowledgment that more efforts are required to encourage voter participation and ensure a transparent, credible, and accountable electoral process in Nigeria.

Vote Buying: Origin, Causes, Implications and Solution

The prevalence of vote buying in Nigeria is attributed to politicians' desperation to win elections, seeking power and wealth, and the high poverty rate, especially in rural areas. With Nigeria having a significant population living in extreme poverty, individuals may be more susceptible to selling their votes to meet immediate needs.

The impact of vote buying is far-reaching, raising election costs, promoting corruption, and undermining the legitimacy and integrity of elections. It can discourage qualified individuals from seeking office and erode public trust in government institutions, fostering a cycle of poor governance.



Fig. 2: Cartoon Analysis Showcases Voter Buying

Source: Wikipedia, 2024.

To address this issue, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has taken measures such as nullifying votes from locations involved in vote buying. Civil society organizations advocate for the arrest and prosecution of those engaging in vote trading. Collaboratively, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and INEC have developed a strategic framework to monitor political parties' campaign finances, aiming to reduce election fraud, including vote buying.

Challenges in Utilizing Mass Media for Anti-Vote Buying Campaigns

Utilizing mass media for anti-vote buying campaigns presents a range of challenges that can impact the effectiveness of these initiatives. These challenges encompass financial constraints, media reach disparities, and the prevalence of disinformation, each posing significant hurdles to the success of campaigns aimed at combating vote buying.

1. **Financial Constraints:** Adequate funding is imperative for the successful implementation of mass media-led anti-vote buying campaigns. Limited financial resources can hinder the creation of high-quality content, widespread dissemination, and sustained engagement. Sufficient funding is required to develop compelling advertisements, engage skilled professionals, secure prime time slots, and ensure the longevity of campaigns (Nkanga et al., 2019). The absence of robust financial support can undermine the reach and impact of campaigns, limiting their ability to effectively convey the message against vote buying to a diverse and wide-ranging audience.
2. **Media Reach Disparities:** Media reach disparities pose challenges in ensuring equitable access to anti-vote buying campaigns across diverse demographic groups. Certain regions or marginalized communities may have limited access to traditional media platforms such as television and newspapers (Ogunleye & Azeez, 2018). This uneven distribution of media reach can perpetuate information gaps and prevent the campaigns from effectively reaching the entirety of the electorate. Overcoming media reach disparities requires tailored strategies that leverage alternative media channels, including radio and localized community platforms, to ensure inclusivity and maximize campaign impact.

3. **Disinformation and Misinformation:** The prevalence of disinformation and misinformation in the digital age presents a formidable challenge to the credibility and effectiveness of anti-vote buying campaigns. False narratives and misleading content can distort campaign messages, erode public trust, and undermine the campaign's objectives (Osuala & Ikegbunam, 2019). Additionally, online platforms may amplify deceptive information, making it difficult for accurate campaign messages to cut through the noise. Addressing disinformation necessitates vigilant fact-checking, strategic messaging, and partnerships with social media platforms to mitigate the spread of misleading content.

Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive and multifaceted approach that integrates strategic funding allocation, innovative engagement strategies, and rigorous content verification mechanisms. Overcoming financial constraints, bridging media reach disparities, and countering disinformation will be pivotal in enhancing the impact and effectiveness of mass media-led campaigns against vote buying.

Public Perception of Mass Media's Effectiveness

Understanding the public perception of mass media's effectiveness in combating vote buying is crucial for evaluating the impact of anti-vote buying campaigns. Research by Nwodu and Obiora (2018) showed that exposure to anti-vote buying messages through mass media increased awareness and resistance among respondents. The study emphasized the role of mass media in amplifying public consciousness about the negative consequences of vote buying.

Moreover, the perceived credibility of campaign messages is linked to the effectiveness of mass media. Ali and Isah (2017) found that voters trust information from mass media channels like television and radio, enhancing the credibility of anti-vote buying campaigns and increasing message acceptance.

Factors such as message clarity, exposure frequency, and authenticity also influence public perception. Udende and Torjir (2019) stressed the importance of culturally sensitive and contextually relevant messages, indicating that campaigns tailored to local contexts receive positive feedback.

However, the public's perception of mass media's effectiveness in combating vote buying is pivotal. Studies suggest that a significant portion of the electorate views mass media as influential and credible for raising awareness and shaping attitudes against electoral malpractice. Aligning campaign messages with media credibility and local context enhances the public's perception of mass media-led efforts against vote buying.

Factors Influencing Voter Attitudes towards Mass Media Anti-Vote Buying Initiatives

Voter attitudes towards mass media anti-vote buying initiatives are shaped by a complex interplay of various factors that impact their reception, acceptance, and engagement with campaign messages. Understanding these factors is crucial for designing effective campaigns that resonate with the electorate and foster a sense of ownership and commitment to combating vote buying.

1. **Message Clarity and Relevance:** The clarity and relevance of campaign messages are significant determinants of voter attitudes. Campaigns that use straightforward language, clear visuals, and relatable narratives tend to resonate better with the electorate (Iyengar & Simon, 2000). When voters perceive campaign messages as directly relevant to their daily lives and concerns, they are more likely to engage actively and adopt anti-vote buying attitudes.
2. **Media Credibility and Trustworthiness:** Voters' perceptions of mass media's credibility and trustworthiness significantly influence their attitudes towards campaign messages. A study by Ekpo (2016) revealed that individuals are more inclined to accept and internalize anti-vote buying messages when they perceive the media as credible and unbiased sources of information. Media outlets with a history of accurate reporting and ethical journalism are more likely to elicit positive attitudes and higher levels of message acceptance.
3. **Personal Identification and Empathy:** Campaigns that facilitate personal identification and evoke empathy among voters tend to have a more substantial impact. When individuals can relate to the stories of fellow citizens who have resisted vote buying attempts or have experienced its negative consequences, they are more likely to adopt anti-vote buying attitudes (Entman, 2004). Empathy-driven narratives create an emotional connection that enhances message resonance and encourages attitudinal change.
4. **Social Norms and Peer Influence:** The influence of social norms and peer networks plays a pivotal role in shaping voter attitudes towards anti-vote buying campaigns. Research by Cialdini and Trost (1998) suggests that individuals are more likely to adopt attitudes that align with perceived social norms. If voters perceive that resisting vote buying is a widely accepted and valued behavior within their social circles, they are more likely to adopt similar attitudes and behaviors.

Statistics Analysis how the masses Votes in 2023 Presidential Elections in Nigeria

According to a report from Premium Times Newspaper, Bola Tinubu, the candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC), emerged victorious in the presidential election held on May 29. Tinubu secured 8,794,726 votes, the highest among all candidates, fulfilling a goal he declared as a lifelong ambition in January 2022. Despite winning, his victory marked one of the lowest thresholds in Nigeria's Fourth Republic, securing 37 percent of the total votes

cast. His closest rival, Atiku Abubakar of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), scored 6,984,520 votes. Tinubu's win has sparked calls for reconciliation, with rivals demanding a cancellation of the poll, citing alleged voter suppression and INEC's failure to upload polling unit results as stipulated.

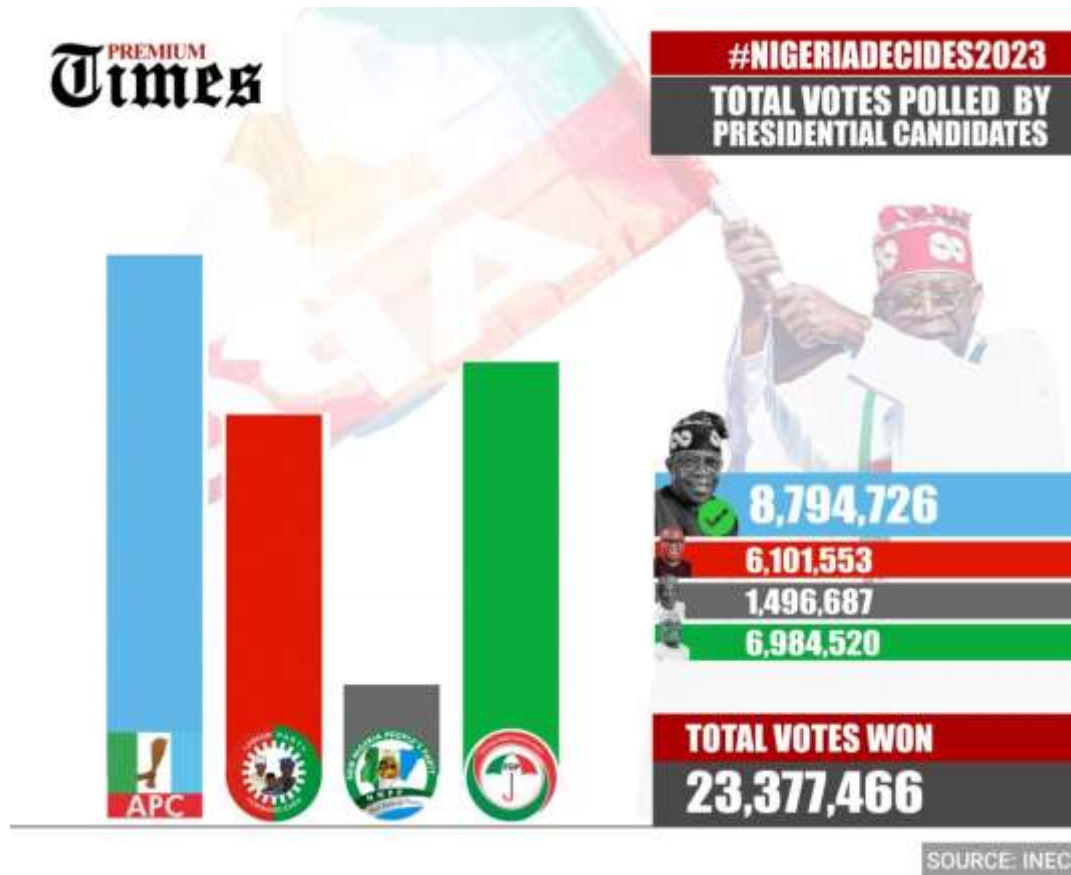


Fig. 3: Statistics Analysis of 2023 Presidential Political Votes

Source: INEC, 2023.



Fig. 4: How the 2023 General Election Successfully Compromise

Source: Wikipedia, 2024.

Research Methodology

The chosen survey research design, focusing on residents of Auchi, Edo State, aligns with the practical limitations of analyzing an entire population. Utilizing a sample size of 400 respondents through a random selection process ensures a balanced and resource-efficient approach to gather valuable

demographic and psychographic data. This methodological choice enables the researcher to explore nuanced perspectives and opinions on the topic of interest within the constraints of a manageable sample size.

Findings

The meticulous distribution of 400 questionnaires resulted in a substantial response rate of 95%, with 350 valid questionnaires forming the basis of our thorough analysis. The data derived from these participants underwent comprehensive scrutiny using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS), allowing for a holistic exploration of our research topic. The subsequent tables present the results, expressing findings in percentages to enrich the depth of our research depiction.

Table 1: Media of Exposure to Campaign Against Vote Buying

Media Platform	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Television	150	50.0%
Radio	100	25.0%
Newspapers	50	12.5%
Social Media	50	12.5%
Total	350	100%

Source Field Survey: 2023

The table 1, showcases the role of different mass media platforms in disseminating information about the dangers of vote buying to voters during the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria. Television emerges as a dominant platform, with 50.0% of respondents indicating its role in raising awareness about vote buying risks. Radio also plays a significant role, as reported by 25% of participants. Newspapers are identified by 12.5% of respondents, while social media holds an equal 12.5% influence. These findings highlight the multifaceted approach of leveraging diverse media platforms to reach a wide audience and communicate the hazards associated with vote buying.

Table 2: Effectiveness of the Media in Campaign against Vote Buying

Effectiveness	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very Effective	100	30.0%
Effective	150	40.0%
Somewhat Effective	70	20.0%
Not Effective	30	10.0%
Total	350	100%

Source Field Survey: 2023

The table 2, illustrates the perception of respondents regarding the effectiveness of mass media campaigns in countering vote buying during the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria. A substantial 30% of participants consider the campaigns to be "Very Effective," indicating a strong impact in curbing the practice of vote buying. Additionally, 40% view the campaigns as "Effective," further highlighting their positive influence. A notable 20% find the campaigns "Somewhat Effective," suggesting a moderate level of impact. Conversely, 10% believe the campaigns were "Not Effective," indicating that some respondents perceive limited success in addressing vote buying. Overall, the findings demonstrate a general perception of positive effectiveness in using mass media campaigns to combat vote buying.

Table 3: Most Effective Media of Exposure to Campaign against Vote Buying

Media Platform	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Social Media	150	50.0%
Radio	100	25.0%
Newspapers	50	12.5%
Television	50	12.5%
Total	350	100%

Source Field Survey: 2023

The table 3, showcases the effectiveness of different mass media platforms in disseminating information about the dangers of vote buying to voters during the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria. Television emerges as a dominant platform, with 50.0% of respondents indicating that social media is the most effective media. Radio also plays a significant role, as reported by 25% of participants. Newspapers are identified by 12.5% of respondents, while social media holds an equal 12.5% influence. These findings highlight the multifaceted approach of leveraging diverse media platforms to reach a wide audience and communicate the hazards associated with vote buying.

Table 4: Challenges of the Media for Campaign against Vote Buying

Challenges Encountered	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Lack of Funding	120	32.5%
Limited Reach	80	22.5%
Disinformation	60	15.0%
Low Voter Engagement	50	20.0%
Other (Specify)	40	10.0%
Total	350	100%

Source Field Survey: 2023

The table 4, presents the challenges faced in utilizing mass media for the campaign against vote buying and suggests potential mitigation strategies for future elections. A substantial 32.5% of respondents identify "Lack of Funding" as a significant challenge, indicating the need for increased financial support to amplify campaign efforts. "Limited Reach" is noted by 22.5%, emphasizing the importance of expanding outreach to underserved areas. "Disinformation" poses a challenge for 15% of participants, highlighting the necessity of fact-checking and accurate messaging. "Low Voter Engagement" is a concern for 20%, suggesting the need for strategies to enhance voter involvement. Lastly, 10% specify "Other" challenges, underscoring the importance of addressing unique obstacles. These insights provide valuable guidance for refining mass media campaigns against vote buying in future elections.

Table 5: Engagement level of Audience

Engagement Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very High Engagement	50	20.0%
High Engagement	100	25.0%
Moderate Engagement	120	30.0%
Low Engagement	40	15.0%
No Engagement	40	10.0%
Total	350	100%

Source Field Survey: 2023

The table 5, portrays the extent of engagement and participation of the Nigerian electorate in mass media-led efforts to combat vote buying during the 2023 presidential election. Notably, 20% of respondents indicate "Very High Engagement," showcasing a strong level of involvement. "High Engagement" is reported by 25%, suggesting a substantial participation rate. A significant 30% note "Moderate Engagement," highlighting a notable degree of voter involvement. "Low Engagement" is indicated by 15%, signaling a smaller subset of participants who engaged to a lesser extent. Lastly, 10% report "No Engagement," indicating a portion of respondents who did not actively participate in mass media-led initiatives against vote buying. These findings offer insights into the varying degrees of voter engagement with such campaigns.

Table 6: Extent to Which Media Campaign Brought About Reduction in Vote Buying

Engagement Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very High Engagement	50	20.0%
High Engagement	100	25.0%
Moderate Engagement	120	30.0%
Low Engagement	40	15.0%
No Engagement	40	10.0%
Total	350	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 6, provides insights into the perceived effectiveness of media campaigns in reducing vote buying based on respondents' engagement levels. A total of 350 participants were surveyed, and the results indicate that 20.0% reported a "Very High Engagement" level, 25.0% indicated a "High Engagement" level, 30.0% experienced a "Moderate Engagement" level, 15.0% had a "Low Engagement," and 10.0% reported "No Engagement" in the media campaigns against vote buying. These findings suggest a diverse range of engagement levels among the surveyed population. Notably, a significant portion acknowledged high to very high engagement, implying a positive impact of the media campaigns in reducing vote buying. However, a notable proportion still reported lower engagement levels, indicating room for improvement in the reach and effectiveness of these campaigns across the entire electorate.

Discussion of Findings

Research Question One: How effective were mass media campaigns in countering vote buying during the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria?

The table 1 & 2, support the findings indicate a generally positive perception of the effectiveness of mass media campaigns in countering vote buying during the 2023 presidential election. With a combined 70% (30% "Very Effective" and 40% "Effective"), respondents perceive these campaigns as having a significant impact. The results suggest that mass media, as a communication channel, played a substantial role in raising awareness and influencing voter attitudes against the practice of vote buying. However, the presence of 10% considering the campaigns "Not Effective" highlights the need for continuous improvement and targeted strategies to address the remaining skepticism or challenges in curbing vote buying through mass media.

Research Question Two: What was the role of various mass media platforms in disseminating information about the dangers of vote buying to voters?

The table 3 & 4,, support the findings underscore the diverse and influential role of various mass media platforms in disseminating information about the dangers of vote buying. Television emerges as a primary platform, capturing the attention of 50.0% of respondents, while radio maintains a significant presence at 25%. Social media and newspapers each hold an equal 12.0% influence, emphasizing the importance of digital and traditional media channels. These results indicate that a multi-platform approach effectively reached and engaged voters with information aimed at curbing vote buying. The distribution of percentages across platforms demonstrates a comprehensive communication strategy that catered to different audience preferences and media consumption habits.

Research Question Three: What were the key challenges encountered in utilizing mass media for the campaign against vote buying, and how can these challenges be mitigated in future elections?

The table 5, support the findings highlight several key challenges faced in utilizing mass media for the campaign against vote buying during the 2023 presidential election. "Lack of Funding" emerges as a major hurdle, indicating the need for increased financial support to optimize campaign reach and impact. "Limited Reach" emphasizes the challenge of ensuring information dissemination to all corners of the electorate. "Disinformation" underscores the importance of countering misinformation and ensuring accurate messaging. "Low Voter Engagement" suggests the need for innovative strategies to enhance voter participation. The presence of "Other" challenges further emphasizes the complexity of addressing diverse obstacles. These findings offer valuable insights into areas that require focused attention and resource allocation for more effective mass media-led anti-vote buying campaigns in future elections.

Research Question Four: To what extent did the Nigerian electorate actively engage with and participate in mass media-led efforts aimed at combating vote buying?

The table 6, support the findings provide insights into the varying levels of engagement and participation of the Nigerian electorate in mass media-led efforts against vote buying. The presence of 20% reporting "Very High Engagement" and 25% with "High Engagement" signifies a substantial portion of voters who actively engaged with the campaigns. The combined 55% reporting "Moderate" to "High" engagement suggests a significant overall level of participation. However, the presence of 15% indicating "Low Engagement" and 10% with "No Engagement" signals a segment of the electorate that may require targeted outreach and tailored communication strategies to increase their involvement. These findings underscore the need for strategies that cater to diverse levels of engagement and encourage broader participation in combating vote buying through mass media initiatives.

In nutshell, the discussion of these findings illuminates the multifaceted nature of utilizing mass media as a tool to combat vote buying in the 2023 presidential election. The results provide valuable insights for policymakers, campaign strategists, and stakeholders to refine approaches, address challenges, and maximize the impact of future mass media-led campaigns against electoral malpractice.

Conclusion

The study revealed that mass media campaigns played a pivotal role in countering vote buying during the 2023 presidential election. The positive perception of effectiveness, with a significant proportion considering the campaigns "Very Effective" or "Effective," underscores the impact of mass media in raising awareness and influencing voter attitudes against vote buying. Various mass media platforms, including television, radio, social media, and newspapers, collectively disseminated information about the dangers of vote buying, engaging a diverse range of audiences. However, challenges such as limited funding, reach, and disinformation were identified, indicating areas for improvement.

Recommendations

The study's findings suggest several recommendations:

1. Allocate ample resources to bolster mass media campaigns against vote buying for extensive coverage and increased impact.
2. Devise strategies to overcome limited reach, especially in underserved areas, to ensure anti-vote buying messages reach all segments of the electorate.

3. Institute rigorous fact-checking mechanisms to combat disinformation and misinformation, maintaining the accuracy and credibility of campaign messages.
4. Utilize innovative and interactive approaches to boost voter engagement, fostering broader participation in anti-vote buying initiatives.

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