



AN ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPACT OF EFCC IN CURBING VOTE BUYING IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *This paper is an assessment of the performance of the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) on the fight against vote buying in the Nigerian elections. Vote buying is a major problem in the Nigerian electoral system. The phenomenon reached an epidemic level in 2019 when the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) introduced a level of digitalization of the electoral process through the use of permanent voters' card and card reader machines in the Nigerian electoral system. The introduction of card reader machines and permanent voters' cards reduced the incidences of electoral infractions like 'results writing' and 'impersonation' because the voters are expected to confirm their identities at the polling booths through the authentication of card reader machines. This technological innovation by INEC made the political class to concentrate more on vote buying. The paper shows that EFCC has not been effective in carrying out its duty as the government agency that has the legal responsibility of curbing vote buying in Nigeria.*

KEYWORDS: Election, Vote Buying.



INTRODUCTION

Following the digitization of some aspects of the Nigerian voting system in 2019 when the card reader's technology was introduced as a voters' accreditation procedure, vote buying as an election rigging machinery became popular with Nigerian politicians. This is possible because the electoral landscape in Nigeria is poverty-laden. Poverty is the main factor that propels vote buying. According to the Nigerian Bureau of Statics (2022), as at the year 2022, one hundred and thirty-three million residents of Nigeria, representing 63% of Nigerian residents were multidimensionally poor, thereby making them susceptible to selling their votes to the highest bidder.

However, it should be noted that vote buying is a criminal offense in Nigeria. Under the Electoral Act, 2022, the law that governs the electoral process in Nigeria, the Act clearly specifies in Sections 22, 121 and 122, that vote buying is an offense and it also specifies the punishments for it. Section 22 prescribes a fine of ₦500, 000 or imprisonment of not more than 2 years or both for the purchase of a voter's card. Section 121 prescribes a maximum fine of ₦100, 000 or 12 months imprisonment or both for anyone who bribes a voter to influence who he or she should vote for and Section 122 prescribes ₦100,000 fine or imprisonment of 3 months or both for anyone who wants to know who a voter will vote for at a polling booth.

In Nigeria, the government agency that is responsible for the arrest of the perpetrator of the vote buying is the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). The body was established by an Act of the Nigerian National Assembly on December 12, 2002. The Act empowers EFCC 'to combat economic and financial crimes, thereby enabling the Commission to prevent, investigate, prosecute and penalize economic and financial crimes' (EFCC, n.d). In the gubernatorial elections that were held in Ekiti and Osun State, South West Nigeria in 2022, Nigerians started to see the involvement of EFCC in arresting politicians who were buying votes. This paper attempts to assess the performance of the body in arresting the incidence of vote buying in Nigeria. The paper also discusses the root cause of vote buying and suggests how the agency can be effective in performing its duty in curbing vote buying.

The paper adopts rational choice theory to explain the phenomenon of vote buying and the organizational effectiveness approach to explain the expected performance of EFCC in its statutory allocated responsibility of curbing vote buying. The paper also explains the nature of vote buying in Nigeria and highlights the various mediums and factors that are influencing it in Nigeria. The paper assesses the role of EFCC in curbing vote buying with emphasis on the role it played in curbing vote buying in June 2022 and July 2022 of cycle gubernatorial elections in Ekiti State and Osun State respectively, as well as the 2023 general election. Lastly, the paper highlights the positive impacts of EFCC, its shortcomings, and the issues militating against its efficiency in its quest to curb vote buying and suggests a few solutions.



RELATED LITERATURE

As the word implies, vote buying is about the purchasing of votes by the politicians from the electorates. Simeon (2008) sees vote buying as a phenomenon that offers particularistic benefits in exchange for vote choices. It can be done before, during and after the election. Vote buying is typically seen as offering particularistic benefits in exchange for vote choices (Nichter, 2008). It is seen as a purely economic transaction in which the electorate sells his votes to the highest bidders (Schaffer, 2002). Caplan (2006) sees vote buying as a system through which voters delegate their rights to their rulers. Some scholars on election manipulations have attempted some sort of typology on vote buying. For instance, Vicente (2008) talked about crude vote buying, indicating a form of vote buying that is directly based on cash exchange between the seller (election candidate) and the buyer (electorate). He also talked about door-to-door vote buying, indicating a process whereby election candidates visit the homes of electorates to pay him cash to vote for him.

Another typology of vote buying was done by Hasen (2000). He classified vote buying into core vote buying and non-core vote buying. According to him, core vote buying is an explicit vote buying and it is completely illegal in most climes, while non-core vote buying is not explicit in many climes and it can be seen in legislative logrolling, corporate elections, payments for turnout, campaign promises and contributions, and special district elections. Nichter (2008) wrote a comprehensive work on turnout buying in his paper on vote buying. Vote buying can also be grouped into monetary and non-monetary vote buying. For instance, Bratton (2008) noted that in vote buying transactions in Nigeria, the political elites offer money as well as non-monetary items such as commodities and jobs. While Bratton is right, the non-monetary items of vote buying in Nigeria extend beyond the items he highlighted. Other items not covered by Bratton include loans and grants for electorates to influence their choice of candidate in the election. Another form of vote buying that has been discussed by some scholars is "abstention buying". This is an unconventional way of purchasing votes whereby political parties or candidates pay the electorate against going out to vote. This reduces greatly the number of votes that a competitor is supposed to amass in his stronghold (Heckelman, 1998; Cox & Kousser, 1981). Some scholars also note that vote buying can be done on an individual basis and in some cases it is done on community basis. According to Hasen (2000), voting is seen as a community responsibility and whatever an induced community decides, every member of the community must fall in line.

On the history of vote buying, several authors noted that vote buying was present in several democracies in the past. From the Roman Republic, to the United Kingdom and the United States of America, and it was only reduced with the introduction of a secret ballot system (Yakobson, 1995). Secret ballot, which at that time looked like an antidote to vote buying, was not received well by the politicians. Dal Bo (2007) noted that there was a belief that secret ballots would work against vote buying. O'Leary (1962) recounted Cicero's thought on the secret ballot that it would "[allowed] a man to wear a smooth brow while it cloaks the secrets of his heart, and leaves him free to act as he chooses, while he gives any promise he may be asked to give". He also recounted that when the United Kingdom first enacted a law for secret ballot, there were uproars that "the Ballot Act had promoted that most un-English practice of taking bribes from both sides or voting against the side from which a bribe had been accepted" (O'Leary, 1962).



However, from the experiences of some democracies, especially in third-world countries like Nigeria and Kenya, the secret ballot system has failed to arrest incidences of vote buying. In Nigeria, political parties have devised means through which they can monitor those they bribed for votes. In most cases, they are paid after voting. During voting, the voter is expected to raise the ballot paper and make sure that the party's agent sees it, a phenomenon that is known as "See and Buy"; afterward he will then proceed to collect his money. In the United States of America where there are still incidences of non-core vote buying in the secret ballot system, voters are transported to the polling booths with the political parties' buses and guide them to vote (Nichter, 2008; Brusco et al., 2004). Similarly in India, political parties' stewards are known to influence electoral officers to frequently empty ballot boxes so that they can monitor those who didn't vote for them (Chandra, 2004).

Several scholars have written on the implications of vote buying. According to Leight et al. (2016), vote buying is a danger to election validation; it makes the public distrust the democratic system and undermines government accountability and its public perceptions. Chu and Diamond (1999) also believe that vote buying encourages corruption and bribery. A study commissioned by Chatham House (2022) found out that vote buying is harmful to democracy, interferes with the right of electorates to fairly assess candidates, restricts election benefit to a few people while jeopardizing the fortune of the majority, makes politicians unaccountable to the public, discourages honest people from participating in politics and gave fraudulent politicians a ready-made excuse to embezzle public fund. Mike Igin, former Returning Electoral Commissioner (REC) for INEC in Akwa Ibom State, South-South Nigeria, also highlighted his thoughts on the implications of vote buying. According to him, vote buying will eliminate performance politics, as people will only be looking for money to buy votes instead of going after the performance and it also reinstates the dichotomy between the poor and the rich in the society as only the rich will be able to contest for election (Ochojila, 2022).

Despite the 'evil' of vote buying, some schools of thought believe that voters should receive money to vote but they should still follow their conscience and vote their choices, Cardinal Sin, Archbishop of Manila, was reported to have admonished the voters to "take the bait, not the hook" (Allen et al., 2016). Despite all the negative implications highlighted by authorities in vote buying, there is still a dilemma on why such a bad action can still be electorally effective. de Mesquita et al. (2003) reiterate this when they state that bad policies can be good politics and good policies can be bad politics and that vote buying is effective for politics.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This term paper adopts rational choice theory as a tool for understanding the rationale behind vote buying and organizational effectiveness approach to analyze the expected performance of EFCC. Elster (1989) expounded the idea behind rational choice theory. According to him, "when faced with several courses of action, people usually do what they believe is likely to have the best overall outcome". The rational choice theory holds that whatever people do, their behavior is largely the result of conscious deliberate choice among available alternatives. Simpson and Harrell (2015) believe that the actors are rational because they calculate the relative costs and benefits of alternative actions, based on a set of values, beliefs, and preferences and they will choose the action they believe guarantees their



expected utility. Simpson and Harrell (2015) note that the set of alternative actions available to actors is influenced and constrained by factors such as the environment or institutions where they make the decision and that they have adequate information before they make decisions.

Vote buying is a form of voters' inducement. According to Stone (2002), the idea behind inducements is based on the knowledge that a threatened penalty or a promised reward motivates people to act differently than they might otherwise choose. Rational choice explains the decision of a vote seller to sell his vote despite knowing that the person who offered it will not improve his life. One of the reasons behind this decision is the failure of governance and corruption among the Nigerian political elites. Many Nigerians believe that it is better to sell their votes and enjoy momentarily instead of not collecting the money and still not enjoying good governance. The decision to sell votes is further exacerbated by the poverty level in Nigeria where more than one hundred and thirty million people are experiencing multidimensional poverty.

The performance of EFCC on vote buying in this paper is analyzed through the theory of organization effectiveness. According to Barnard (1964), effectiveness is about the accomplishment of an organization's purpose and every organization needs effectiveness for its continuous existence. While many scholars believe that effectiveness can be measured through approaches such as the goal approach (Strasser et al, 1981), this paper appraises the performance of EFCC based on its constitutional role as stated in the Nigerian law that set it up. The goal of EFCC as stated by its Act is "to combat economic and financial crimes, thereby enabling the Commission to prevent, investigate, prosecute and penalize economic and financial crimes" (EFCC, n.d). Michael T. Hannan and John Freeman believe that every organization faces constraints which may be internal and external and that organizational effectiveness depends on the nature of the environment it operates in (Panda, 2020). The environment in which EFCC operates in Nigeria is seriously impacting its ability to function as an unbiased organization that can curb vote buying in Nigerian politics. The agency operates in an environment that is known for enormous corruption. The head of the agency is selected by the President and the ruling party has an immense influence on the actions of the organization. It is not unusual for EFCC to turn a blind eye to the members of the ruling party who are accused of corruption while going after members of opposition parties with a slight premonition of corruption.

The Nature of Vote Buying in Nigeria

Vote buying in Nigeria is unique. It can be classified into three. They are vote buying for public elections, vote buying in the legislative chamber and vote buying during political parties' primaries. Vote Buying during public elections is the most common type of vote buying in Nigeria. Here political parties bribe voters in cash or kind for their votes in the election. Apart from vote buying during public elections, Nigeria has also witnessed incidents of vote buying within the legislative arm of the Government. It is not unusual in Nigeria for the executive and/or its agencies to bribe the legislature to vote in favor of one motion or another in the legislative chambers. In 2006, some members of the Nigerian House of Representatives said that they were bribed to pass a controversial bill that would have permitted the then incumbent President, Olusegun Obasanjo to contest for another term outside the constitutionally guaranteed two-term (Umoru & Erunke, 2016).



There are also incidences of vote buying during the primaries of major parties in Nigeria. Because the tickets of major parties in Nigeria are very competitive, delegates are usually going for the highest bidders when voting for the flag bearers of their parties in elections. For instance, in 2022, the Presidential election primaries of the two major political parties in Nigeria were reported to witness incidences of massive vote buying of the delegates with Nigerian and United States Dollars. Punch NG reported that one of the Presidential aspirants who participated in the primary, Sam Oluwabunwa, relayed how the delegates could not resist the \$10,000, \$15,000 and \$20,000 offered to them by the "four leading contestants," during the presidential special convention. He believed that money had an overwhelming effect on the choices made by delegates (Adepegba, 2022). Similarly, in 2022, there were reported incidents of vote buying during the Presidential primaries of the ruling All Progressive Congress (APC). Rotimi Amaechi insinuated that the party's presidential ticket for the 2023 Presidential election went to the highest bidder (Ibunge, 2022).

Mediums of Votes Buying in Nigeria

Vote buying in Nigeria is done through major mediums. They are direct cash payments and payment in kind.

(a) Direct Cash Exchange: This is the most common form of vote buying in Nigeria. It involves payment of cash to the electorate in exchange for their promise to vote for the giver. It can be prepaid or postpaid. It is prepaid if it is paid before the vote is cast and it is postpaid if the money is paid after the vote is cast. The amount involved can be as low as ₦500 (five hundred naira) and as high as ₦20,000 (twenty thousand naira only) depending on the political post at stake and the population of the electorates involved. The candidates usually pass the cash to the electorates through the representatives of the political party within the ward where the polling booth is located. After giving the money to the electorate, the representative of the political party will then monitor the electorate to be sure that the electorate cast his or her vote for the buyer. In some instances, the money is paid immediately after the vote has been cast. For the electorate to be paid, he or she is expected to stylishly show the party he voted for to the party representative who will make the payment before he drops the ballot paper into the ballot box. The process described above is called "see and buy" in Nigeria. It means the party confirmed that it was voted for and subsequently made payment.

(b) Payment in Kind: In Nigeria, political parties (especially the ruling party) are known to buy votes in kind, through the issuing of loans and grants to the targeted electorates. A few months before the 2019 general election in Nigeria, the ruling party, APC, gave small loans to thousands of Nigerians. The amount involved ranges from paltry ₦10,000 (ten thousand naira) to ₦300,000 (three hundred thousand naira). Many political analysts believe that the money was meant for vote buying. This makes sense because the loans were also given in States where gubernatorial elections were conducted before the 2019 general election. Because of the popular notion that the money was targeted for vote buying, most of the beneficiaries of the loan did not pay back the loan. More than N10 billion of the loan was not paid back (Ailemen, 2022). There are also incidences of employment that are targeted towards influencing the number of votes. For instance in Rivers State, South South Nigeria, ahead of the 2023 general election, the Governor of the State employed two hundred thousand special assistants that are expected to influence the votes of the ruling party in the State in the general election (Yafugborhi, 2022).



Factors Influencing vote Buying in Nigeria

Vote buying in Nigeria is influenced by a myriad of factors. Some of them are discussed below:

(1) Nature of Nigerian politics and election: Nigerian politics rests on political exclusion and it is based on a zero-sum (winner takes all) contest. In the center, the party that wins the Nigerian Presidency takes over all the resources and instruments of States. The party has several ways to compensate and settle its members and sponsors. The party also has control over all the military and key agencies like EFCC and ICPC, which can be used to hunt its political opponents and even the judiciary and the legislative arms if they refuse to dance to their tune. Members of the Nigerian National Assembly also enjoy incomparable remunerations. They collect all manner of allowances, including furniture allowance. A Nigerian Senator or Representative is believed to earn remuneration more than his counterpart anywhere in the world. Apart from the fantastic remunerations, they also have unfettered authority over what is known as constituency projects. Constituency projects are projects nominated into the national budget by each Senator and Representative for their respective constituency. Most of the time, the Senator or Representative influences the choice of contractor for the project.

In the States, Governors are the Chief Security Officers of their states and they have unimaginable power over the resources of the state. Many of them collect what they call 'security votes' from the purse of the state. Security votes are opaque expenditures that the government takes from their state purse without any budgetary allocation and monitoring by the state's legislature. The Governor also has the authority to borrow loans with little or no caution from the State's Assembly. In most States, where the Governor and the majority of the members of the House of Assembly come from the same party, the House of Assembly is usually a 'rubber stamp' of the wishes of the Governors.

(2) Digitalization of Electoral Process: Due to the digitalization of some aspects of voting in Nigeria, some aspects of election manipulation like 'fake result writing' became impossible, hence the need for the political elite to concentrate on another medium of election manipulation which is vote buying. The use of card reading machines and permanent voter cards from the 2015 general election in Nigeria increased the use of vote buying by the political elite.

(3) High Rate of Poverty Level: One of the issues that are fueling the popularity of vote buying in Nigeria is the high rate of poverty level in the country. Despite its rich resources, Nigeria has been battling multidimensional poverty. As of the year 2022, according to the Nigerian Bureau of Statics, 63 percent of Nigeria's inhabitants (133 million people) are multidimensionally poor. The poverty level in Nigeria can be linked to corruption among the political elites, bad leadership, a high unemployment rate and lack of education among other reasons. Political elites play on the poverty of the people to buy their votes and their conscience by paying them peanuts thereby subverting the popular will of the people. Many Nigerians who don't know where the next meal will come from will be tempted to accept any handout even though they know what they are doing is not right.



Positive Impacts of Efcc Activities on Vote Buying

A major response of the Nigerian government to vote buying is to deploy the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) to arrest vote buyers during the election. EFCC was established to combat economic and financial crimes, thereby enabling the Commission to prevent, investigate, prosecute and penalize economic and financial crimes. Vote buying is an economic crime and therefore falls under the purview of EFCC. Since its establishment in December 2002, EFCC has carved a niche for itself as the number one government agency in the fight against financial crime. The agency has been very effective in prosecuting financial corruption, especially in the public sector. The agency has been able to achieve some results in curbing vote buying. Some of its achievements are discussed below:

1. Arrest of Vote Buyers

Since 2022, when it suddenly became alive to its responsibility, the agency has been able to arrest some vote buyers during elections. For instance, in June 2022, during the gubernatorial election in Ekiti State, EFCC arrested an unspecified number of people who were engaging in vote buying. In a video published by Channels Television and reported by Cable News, the agency raided a building where they caught some suspects with packages of money and a register of voters in a targeted polling unit (The Cable, 2022). Also in July 2022, during the Osun State Gubernatorial election, EFCC arrested three suspected vote buyers at polling Unit 002, Ward 2, Ababu, Isale Osun, in Osogbo, the capital of Osun State. During the election, an election monitoring organization CLEEN Foundation alleged that electorates were being paid ₦3000 while the security operatives looked away (Oyeleke, 2022).

Also, during the 2023 general election in Nigeria, EFCC claimed that it arrested no fewer than 65 persons on Saturday, March 18, 2023, across the 28 states where Governorship and State Houses of Assembly elections were conducted for alleged voter inducement. At the time of writing this paper, the agency was still investigating the cases for possible prosecution (EFCC, 2023). Similarly, during the 2023 general election, Yiaga Africa, an election monitoring organization recorded and confirmed 15 cases of vote buying and bribery across eight states during the governorship elections across the country. One of the locations recorded by the organization was Sarkin Mudu Polling Unit (016), Giade Local Government Area of Bauchi, where it claimed that the People Democratic Party (PDP) agents were seen bribing accredited voters "with a thousand naira, a wrapper and a pack of spaghetti each" (Adeyemi, 2023). EFCC also confiscated N32.4m allegedly meant for vote buying on the eve of the 2023 Presidential election in Lagos State at a time when there was a cash crunch in the country due to the cashless policy of the Central Bank of Nigeria (Sanni, 2023).

2. Sensitization of the Public on Vote Buying

Before the campaign of EFCC against vote buying, many Nigerians did not see anything wrong with vote buying. Many saw it as a legitimate avenue for gratification for helping politicians win elections, especially in a country where good governance is very elusive. Polling booths were more or less bazaar centers where politicians strived to outbid each other for the votes of the electorates. One such campaign was at the North Central Stakeholders Roundtable on the 2023 General Elections that was organized by the Centre for Transparency Advocacy, CTA. In that roundtable, the agency reiterated that Nigerians should shun any form of electoral malpractice, including vote buying and that it was adequately equipped to



fight any form of electoral fraud (EFCC, 2023). Also, ahead of the 2023 general election, its erstwhile chairman, Abdulrasheed Bawa attended a series of interviews to sensitize the public on the evil of vote buying. In an interview he did with Channels Television before the Nigerian 2023 general election, the head of EFCC pleaded with Nigerians to work with EFCC in its fight against vote-buying in that election. He stated that vote buying was impacting the future of Nigeria and that it must be eradicated at all costs (Odunewu, 2023).

Shortcoming of EFCC on Votes Buying

While EFCC has performed appreciably in sensitizing the public on the danger of vote buying on good governance and national development, it has a glaring shortcoming in the performance of its legal duty. While the agency has been able to arrest some vote buyers, the agency has not successfully prosecuted any vote buyer to date. To put it in perspective, in the year 2019, EFCC successfully prosecuted 1280 cases with convictions (ICIR, 2021). In 2020, the number decreased to 865 (Ogune, 2020). The number increased to 2220 in the year 2021 and by 2022 the agency was able to secure 3785 convictions (EFCC, 2023). However, it should be noted that despite the large number of cases that EFCC has successfully prosecuted, the agency has never secured the conviction of a single-vote buyer, even though it has arrested several of them.

Factors Responsible for Ineffective Performance of EFCC on Vote Buying

The failure of EFCC to effectively perform its functions on vote buying is due to a variety of reasons. Some of them are analyzed below:

(1) Politicization of the operation of EFCC: EFCC operation has been heavily politicized, and this has affected its response to issues under its purview, including vote buying. When EFCC was first created under the administration of President Olusegun Obasanjo, the agency had some semblance of independence to the extent that high-ranking public officials were arrested and prosecuted. One of them was Tafa Balogun, who was appointed the 21st Inspector General of Police on March 6, 2002. In 2004, a Nigerian weekly newspaper, *The News*, accused him of diverting huge sums of money from the Police budget into his private accounts. The newspaper also published pictures of posh buildings in different parts of the country which the newspaper claimed Balogun had allegedly acquired with illicit funds. He abruptly resigned from his position in January 2005. He was later arrested on March 28, 2005, by EFCC for stealing and successfully prosecuted by EFCC. He agreed to forfeit assets and properties that were valued at more than seventy billion naira. In exchange, he was sentenced to six months imprisonment, with the term of imprisonment running concurrently and he was charged N500,000 on each of the 8 counts he pleaded guilty to.

However, after President Obasanjo's administration in 2007, EFCC gradually turned into a political tool for the ruling administration. It got worse under the APC administration that took over in 2007. Many corruption cases suffered due to a lack of diligent prosecution and several members of the opposition party defected to the ruling party to escape diligent prosecution by EFCC. Some politicians who decamped to APC got a lot of waivers including retrieval of their international passports that were taken into custody due to their ongoing court process (Ojoye, 2018).

From the above, it can be seen that EFCC has been politicized and it will be difficult for such an organization to do a thorough job in addressing the issue of vote buying, especially, if it



involves the ruling party. For instance, some of the vote buyers that were apprehended by the organization during the 2022 gubernatorial election in Ekiti State were members of the ruling party, APC, but the case has been kept out of the public since then (The Cable, 2022).

(2) Timing of the operation: Another reason behind the ineffective performance of EFCC in arresting and prosecuting vote buyers is the time they usually go after vote buyers. EFCC goes after vote buyers on election days, by which time some vote-buying transactions have already taken place. Politicians start to purchase votes a few days before the election. The money would have been distributed to their contacts in each polling booth a day before the election, who would have gone ahead to distribute the money to those they believed would vote for them, like the members of their party, leaving the rest for the election's day. That is why the rate of arrest of vote buyers by EFCC is very low on election day.

(3) Mode of operation: Flowing from the point above, the modus operandi of EFCC also affects its performance on vote buyers' arrest and prosecution. On the day of the election, the EFCC usually carries out an overt operation instead of going covert. They usually appear in their official vehicles and their red uniform with EFCC boldly written on it. Their 'announced' arrival helps vote buyers to avoid arrest. They have only been able to arrest a few individuals in remote areas that seem not to know them.

(4) Shortage of operatives and logistics: Perhaps the most crucial impediment to the operation of EFCC on vote buying is the shortage of its operatives. In a presidential election for instance, it will be very difficult for EFCC to be able to monitor all the polling booths in Nigeria. As of 2022, there are 176,846 polling units in Nigeria (Okocha et al., 2023). If the elections were to be held simultaneously in a general election, the current workforce of EFCC would not be able to cover all of them.

CONCLUSION

For EFCC to be effective in vote buying it must redress the deficiencies highlighted in this paper. Firstly EFCC should be allowed to function independently without being influenced by the government of the day. The agency should revise its modus operandi and make sure that it is targeted toward efficiency. Its operatives should work covertly and should be within the area where the election will be held a few days before the election. Also, the EFCC needs to have ad hoc staff for specialized operations like elections and prosecution of election offenders. Those ad hoc operatives will complement the permanent staff of the agency whenever high numbers of operatives are necessary. EFCC can hire ad-hoc operatives like the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) does for elections in Nigeria.

However, it should be noted that despite its prevalence in Nigeria, a couple of studies on the perceptions of Nigerians on vote buying showed that most Nigerians still believe that vote buying is unacceptable. One of them was the Social Norms and Accountable Governance (SNAG) project that was commissioned by Chatham House Africa Programme in 2018. The study disclosed that seventy-eight percent of the respondents found vote buying unacceptable (Chatham House, 2022). However, with a biting galloping poverty rate in the country, the fact that it is unacceptable to the majority may not make it fade away.



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