

# PERCEPTION ENGINEERING IN CHRISTIANITY, MONEY POLITICS AND VOTE BUYING DURING ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA

By

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## Abstract

The practices of money politics and vote buying in Nigeria politics is not a new phenomenon but the rate of its perpetration keeps growing uncontrollably, and consequently hampered the beauty of Nigeria's democracy. Despite the fact that most politicians indulge in the acts, there is a few whose faith and belief in the life and teaching of Christ negates such acts. These ones do have their say but would not have their ways because their belief does not permit them to engage in money politics and act of vote buying, unlike their counterparts. It is against this backdrop that made this paper to discuss perception engineering in Christianity, money politics and vote-buying during elections in Nigeria. To achieve this aim, conceptual clarifications on the core concepts, reasons for money politics and vote buying during elections in Nigeria, overview on money politics and vote buying in the post colonial Nigeria and the nexus between the concepts in relation to elections in the country were extensively discussed. The paper concluded that Christian faithful perceived that money politics and vote buying acts denied the righteous one or Christian faithfuls from contributing their meaningful quota toward the development of Nigeria. It therefore recommended that the electorates should be sensitized on the need of not selling their votes but choose rightly the right person that would rule the affairs of the country with the fear of God.

**Keywords:** Money politics, vote buying, elections, Nigeria.

## Introduction

Money politics and vote-buying are one of the ugly outcomes of our new democracy. These two concepts are tactically used by politicians to have their ways rather than their say. According to Ovwasa (2014), money politics is the phenomenon in the Nigeria electoral process whereby contenders for elective positions used money or money is used on their behalf as an inducement to sway their support which is not based on persuading the electorates to vote according to their wish and conviction but on the force of money that has changed hands while vote buying means the act of rendering money to electorates or citizens with the aim of securing their votes during election.

Due to the catastrophic effects of the phenomena on body politics, many scholars, including (Davies, 2005; Walecki, 2006; Scaffer, 2005; Schedler, 2006; Ojo, 2006), have written about money politics and vote buying in Nigerian politics. Governmental instability frequently manifests itself in the Nigerian state through poor policy selections and execution. The Nigerian society lacks access to the needs of life, including jobs, clean water, and high-quality education.

Nigeria's democracy, which is regarded as the best system of government in the world due to the problem of money politics and vote buying, is also under continual attack. Although democracy was enshrined in Nigeria's fourth republic on May 29, 1999, the benefits to the populace have been exceedingly sparse and dispersed. This is due to the seeming disparity between democracy's theory and practice in Nigeria. Actually, vote-buying and money politics have tainted the positive aspects of democracy in the nation. In reality, one of the elements undermining effective government in Nigeria has been identified as the destructive force of money politics.

Due to their influence on Nigerian politics today, money politics and vote buying have gained a privileged place in the selection of officers to positions of responsibility, allowing them to decide with authority who gets what, when, and how. In Nigerian politics, money is, regrettably, now playing an increasingly essential role to the point where the term "money politics," which has a negative connotation, has crept into the nation's political lexicon. Money seems to have taken centre stage in the political process in most countries (Davies: 2006). The issue with this scenario is that elections frequently aren't free and fair because the democratic process is undermined.

It is important to note that there is in no way any suggestion that the use of money in politics by political parties, individuals, or groups of individuals has an inherent corruptive influence. The fact is that money is required for a variety of services and logistics, including organizing political campaigns and demonstrations, printing manifestos and posters, and creating party emblems and other symbols, among others. The sole cause for concern, however, is the apparent corruption brought on by money and vote-buying, as well as their detrimental effects on Nigeria's system of good government.

With no doubt, money politics and voting buying have become disturbing features in Nigeria's nascent democratic experiment with their attendant negative consequences. The two have become major issue in party primaries and other elections. Money politics and vote buying has heightened the monetization of the electoral process where the highest bidder gets the trophy.

There were allegations that the just concluded 2022 Ekiti State governorship election was marred by vote-buying as agents of political parties were sighted negotiating with voters on the prices of their votes. During the election, money ranging from N4,000 to N10,000 was offered to voters, depending on the location and prediction of the likely outcomes. The voters' financial inducement did not start in Ekiti and will not end there. In all the political parties' primaries conducted recently, there were allegations of vote-buying and inducement of delegates with few political parties exonerated from the obscene practice.

For instance, in the recent 2022 presidential, gubernatorial, senatorial and representative primaries of the opposition Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), the influence of money in the exercise was reportedly overwhelming. The money bazaar was so pervasive and nauseating that some notable aspirants withdrew from the exercise. In the same vein, the primaries conducted by the All-Progressives Congress (APC) and other political parties for various offices were also tainted by vote-buying and other electoral malpractices.

There is no doubt that vote-buying tends to corrupt the electoral process and throw up the wrong candidates. It is a criminal offence, which affects the sanctity and credibility of the electoral process. With wrong candidates emerging as winners, the country suffers.

Religiously, any aspiration attained through bribery, cheat or lies is ungodly, unjust and immoral. According to the Holy Bible, Exodus 23:8 “You shall not take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the clear-sighted and subverts the cause of the just”. The holy Bible recognizes the fact that it is possible to win someone’s conscience easily through unfair gift. This mechanism is adopted by desperate politicians in Nigeria. They siphon public fund and give out conditionally for them to continually amass public wealth to themselves. However, not all politicians are desperate. There are a few with faith and God-fearing hearts who no matter what will never bribe to have their ways. This is what Christianity preaches and was proved in the last APC presidential primary elections where Pastor Tunde Bakare was among the aspirants but lost because as reported was not ready to induce with money. In view of the above, the writers of this paper focused on perception engineering in Christianity, money politics and vote buying during elections in Nigeria.

## **Conceptual review**

### **Concept of Perception engineering in Christianity**

Perception engineering simply means the way mentorship is carried out based on belief with the aim of achieving greatness through the process. It is concern with leadership ideology based on belief towards giving directions to followers’ deeds. On the other hand, Christianity is a religion that is based on the teachings of Jesus Christ and the belief that he was the son of God. It is an Abrahamic monotheistic religion based on the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. It is the world’s religion with about 2.8 billion followers, representing one-third of the global population (Countrymeters, 2020). Thus, perception engineering in Christianity means the belief installed in believers by a highly anointed, spirited and faithful man of God about secular and non-secular phenomenon. It can also be taken to mean the ways Christian faithful perceived what is just and unjust, moral and immoral based on the teachings of Jesus Christ and as guided by the dictates of the Holy Bible. In this paper, concentration is placed on what Christianity preaches about bribery and the benefit of not partaking in any related acts as a Christian faithful. This notion is used to discuss money politics and vote buying as both are acts of bribery.

The Old Testament vigorously condemns bribery. The Hebrew term ‘sho’ chad, frequently rendered “gift” or “bribe”, denoted “a present” and generally had to do with a gift presented to a judge to obtain a favourable verdict. Though, a bribe is “anything given to a person to induce him to do something illegal or wrong or against his wishes”.

### **Conceptual clarification: Money politics and vote buying**

Money politics can be defined as the phenomenon in the Nigeria electoral process whereby contenders for elective positions used money or money is used on their behalf as an inducement to sway their support which is not based on persuading the electorates to vote according to their wish and conviction but on the force of money that has changed hands. Related to this, is outright vote-buying. Vote-buying in its literal sense, is a simple economic exchange. According to (Fredrick Charles and Andrea’s Schedler 2005) candidates ‘buy’ and citizens/electorates ‘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 vote by offering particularistic material benefits to voters. Candidates may generally aspire to purchase political support at the ballot box in accordance with the idea of market exchange. For analytical purpose, it is necessary to point out, that the commercial aspirations of vote buyers’ may run into two barriers, namely; objective and inter-subjective barriers. On the objective side, seller compliance is uncertain, as vote buying is an illicit business and as such does not take place within a “normal’ market protected by social and legal norms. On the inter-subjective side, empirical accounts of

participants' perspective revealed that those electoral practices we describe as "Vote-Buying" may carry different meaning in different cultural context.

This is so because, in both historical and comparative perspectives, vote-buying as a phenomenon is neither system specific nor space bound (Ojo, 2006). In all systems, be it developed or developing, medieval or contemporary, vote buying occurs in all regions and climes. The only difference is that it differs in magnitude and manifestation from one polity to the other. Regions or locales where episodic, electorate-related gift giving or favour rendering is common include Benin, Taiwan, Japan Northern Portugal and the slums of Metro Minica (Ojo, 2006).

The use of money to buy votes does not even stop at election time. It is a common practice in Nigeria as it is in many other countries, for numerous private interest groups and political action committees which seek policy goals and legislations to serve their narrow private needs to continue to use all the means at their disposal including money, to solidify or expand their influence on the elected officials (Wright in Ovwasa, 2014). It is observed that the relative ease with which the elected officials show their gratitude by endorsing the legislative and policy proposals of campaign contributors seems to support the hypothesis that there is a correlation between special donations to political parties and candidates and legislative votes.

### **Reasons for money politics and vote buying**

So many reasons can be adduced as being responsible for the incidence of money politics and vote-buying in Nigeria. Some of these factors include ignorance, on the part of the electorate, apathy, and poverty as well as, deceit by the politicians. There is also attitudinal problem on the part of the people involved in both buying and selling. Our attitude towards politics is not right, because most politicians view it as a call to investment from which huge profit is expected and not as call to serve humanity. The electorates on their part see politics especially during election, as an opportunity to sell their votes to represent their own share of the national cake since they do not have access to where the national cake is being shared. Davies, in a recent perspective work had identified some predisposing factors which captured almost completely the reason for the very high incidence of money politics and vote-buying in Nigeria. The factors as identified by Davies (2006) are reproduced below as follows:

1. The inability of many political parties and the contestants to put in place comprehensive and comprehensible manifestoes for scrutiny by the voters: Instead of clear-cut manifestoes that would enable the electorate to make a rational political choice, meaningless slogans, demagogic and rabbleroising speeches are made. Such speeches either overestimate or underestimate the political perception of the voters, but are rarely educative and convincing. Many voters seem to be unimpressed by all the tricks the Parties and the candidates employ, hence the need to bribe them for their votes.
2. Political cynicism on the part of the voters who believe that political office holder are incurably corrupt, self-seeking and incompetent, that politics is a dirty and dishonourable enterprise, that the whole political process is a fraud and a betrayal of the public trust. This cynical view of politics is further accentuated by unfulfilled promises made by winners of past elections. Thus, asking for a pay-off, another way by which the people receive their own share of the national cake. On the other hand, the candidates who gave money to voters probably believe that they are investing against electoral failure.
3. Focusing on personalities rather than on issues. By the mode of their campaign, most candidates draw the attention of the electorate away from the political parties to themselves. The consequence of this is that the political parties and their message become less important to the electorate. The candidates then take the centre stage and

would therefore need to spend more money than their parties could afford in order to mobilize support for themselves.

4. The peoples' perception greatly reinforced by obscene display of opulence by public office holders and ostentatious living of many politicians that every elected or appointed public officer is amassing wealth from the public treasury. This seems to have strengthened the resolve of many voters to sell their votes to the highest bidder.
5. The penchant of politicians to strive to win elections, even at the party primary level, at all cost, makes desperate contestants to engage in all sort of malpractices including offering financial and material inducements to voters. Working on the poverty of the people, Nigerian politicians have been known to distribute food stuff and other consumable materials to voters shortly before the elections and sometime on Election Day, contrary to the provision of the extant electoral law that prohibits such practice. Instances abound too, when candidates threw some money into the air during campaign rallies, making people to scramble for it and getting injured in the process.
6. The noticeable weakness in a party whip, characteristics of party politics in presidential system, when elected members exercise considerable degree of freedom when voting on legislative proposals. Such freedom makes the legislators to be more susceptible to receive gratifications from the private interest groups. The interest groups employ what Shank calls "legalized bribery". They make large donations to some spurious private or community programmes in which the target legislators are interested, and give expensive gifts to the legislators or sponsor their overseas travel etc. all in the name of public relations to secure the votes of the legislators in the legislature.

#### **An overview of money politics and vote buying in post colonial Nigeria**

The phenomenon of money politics and vote-buying only became prominent in post independent Nigeria. Even then, their influence was very minimal in the first republic between 1960 – 1966. During the first republic, appeals to ethnic and religious sentiments were the most important weapons the political leaders and tribal heroes deployed to ensure electoral victories. This was possible because the strength and popularity of the major political parties and their allies were essentially enhanced by the primordial ties they had with the people in their regions. The parliamentary system that was being practised then, also made it possible for the political parties to exercise considerable control over the candidates to be fielded for elections. As Dudley correctly observed:

Candidates in the elections were less important as the parties took the centre stage, appealed to ethnicity played alliance politics and used highly emotive terms which in most cases invited people to violence. Most of the election expenses were borne by the parties from the funds they were able to raise (Dudley 1982)

It should be noted, however, that although politicians were known to distribute T-Shirts, Caps and badges with party emblems, some food stuff and sundry items, to voters at political rallies, there was no huge spending by individual candidates to win elections as obtains currently in the political activities of candidates.

Money politics and vote-buying escalated to greater dimensions during the second republic which started in 1979.

It was perhaps, encouraged by some wealthy Nigerians who made their money during the Nigerian civil war between 1967 – 1970, by probably supplying arms and ammunitions to both parties to the war and those who were government contractors, reconstructing projects, after the destructive civil war. And, as soon as the military signalled the commencement of competitive politics, these people ventured into politics or sponsored candidates for elective office. Davies in a recent work summarizes the situation that:

There was so much display of affluence and use of money by the wealthy contractors and the mercantile class that those who emerged victorious in the conventions and the primaries of some of the political parties, notably the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), the Nigerian People's Party (NPP) and the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) belonged to the business managerial group (Davies, 2006).

The situation was even worse in 1993 as the act of money politics and vote-buying took very firm roots in the political activities of contestants. This was because the political campaigns for the conduct of the 1993 election demonstrated excessive use of money during the party primaries and the presidential elections, despite the fact that the elections were conducted under the watchful eyes of the military. The rich had actually hijacked the two political parties decreed into existence by the military, namely the National Republican Convention (NRC) and the Social Democratic Party (SDP). At the primaries for example, the use of money to win party nomination was pervasive while complaints of bribery trailed the results. As one of the contestant who lost out claimed. "Money was paid to party functionaries, who were demanding and negotiating the amount of money to be given to them for payment to win offices and others, and for how votes will be allocated to aspirants" (Nwosu in Ovwasa, 2014).

Interestingly enough, the noticeable excessive use of money during the 1993 presidential election was ostensibly adduced by president Babangida to annul the election. In annulling the 1993 election, he declared: There were authenticated reports of election malpractice against agents, officials of the NEC and voters... there were proof of manipulation, offers and acceptance of money and other forms of bribery. The amount of money spent by the presidential candidates was over 2.1 million naira (Ojo, 2000).

Similarly, money politics and vote-buying reached their pinnacles in the elections that ushered in the current democratically elected government in 1999 and the civilian-civilian transition elections of 2003, 2007 and 2011, as one political scientist once observed, "if the use of money in the 1999 elections was open and shameless that of 2003 was outrageously indecent (Suberu, 2001). This seemed to have ironically pricked the conscience of former President Obasanjo, who was a beneficiary of the sordid act in the two elections to admit though, belatedly that:

With so much resources being deployed to capture elective offices, it is not difficult to see the correlation between politics and the potential for high level corruption. The greatest losers are the ordinary people, those voters whose faith and investment in the system are hijacked and subverted because money, not their will, is made the determining factor in elections. Can we not move from politics of money materialism to politics of ideas, issues and development (Obasanjo, 2005).

Money politics and vote-buying assumed a frightening and consummative dimension in the 2007 elections. This was because the use of money to buy conscience appeared to have been extended to the judiciary. It would be recalled that the Governorship Candidate of the Action Congress (AC) now Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) Engineer Rauf Aregbesola had dragged the Osun State Governor Olagunsoye Oyinlola, of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) to the Osun State First Elections Petitions Tribunal to challenge his election as the Governor of Osun State for the second term.

The News Magazine of 6th July 2008, made damaging allegations against the Tribunal members and the counsel to Governor Oyinlola. The news magazine reported how two judges of the Osun State First Elections Tribunal, namely, Thomas Naron (Chairman) and J.F.

Ekanem were alleged to have “Slipped into Cesspool of scandal” by their very regular telephone calls and text messages to Kunle Kalejaiye (SAN) (The News Magazine July 2008) the lead Counsel to Governor Oyinlola. Although these were mere allegations but they were weighty enough to cast the Judiciary in bad light since it is unethical for the judges of the tribunal to have private discussion regarding the case without the presence or the representative of the petitioner. As widely expected and perhaps, because of this “Unholy Marriage” between the tribunal judges and the lead Counsel to Oyinlola, the verdict was given in favour of Oyinlola. In rejecting the judgment, the ACN said “the discredited election petition tribunal in Osegbo delivered its obnoxious judgment without any atom of moral scruple or an eye for Justice (Fayeniwo:2008).

It took another two years of legal battle before this ugly situation was reverted. This is because, the Appeal Court sitting at Ibadan set aside the First Elections Petitions Tribunal Judgment and decided the case in favour of CAN candidate Rauf Aregbesola on the 26th of November, 2010, and directed that he be sworn in as Osun State Governor on the 27th of November, 2010. This was why there was no governorship election in Osun State on April 26th 2011.

At the primary’s of the delegates of each political party, the All Progressive Congress (APC) and People Democratic Party (PDP) used money to influence the delegates to emerge their presidential candidate. This led to the formation of G5 governors not leaving their party but not in support of their presidential aspirant. It was also rumoured that the house the Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu was ransacked by the EFCC which was later denied.

The fact is that the use of money or any other inducement for that matter, to perverse justice creates problems for good governance. It is obvious from the analysis so far, that the use of money in Nigerian politics is unbridled and the polity is characterized by this reckless use of money to buy votes and even conscience. The politicians are ready to channel their financial and material resources to secure electoral victory at the polls or at the tribunals.

### **Perception engineering in Christianity, money politics and vote buying during elections in Nigeria: the nexus**

According to Deut. Chapter 16 verse 19, “you shall not pervert justice. You shall not show partiality, and you shall not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and subverts the cause of the righteous”.

David praised the man who refused to take reward against the innocent (Psalm 15:5) and condemned as “wickedness” the reception of bribes (Psalm 26:10). Also, The wise man wrote: “the wicked accepts a bribe in secret to pervert the ways of Justice” (Proverb. 17:23). Isaiah saw the problem in this day. He issued a dire woe to those “who acquit the guilty for a bribe, and deprive the innocent of his right (Isa. 5:23).

In the New Testament, Jehovah makes it incumbent on us that “we take thought for things honourable, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men (2 Cor. 8:21). The word “honourable” in this verse is the Greek halos, of which W.E. Vine says: good, admirable, becoming, has also the ethical meaning of what is fair, right, honourable, of such conduct as deserves esteem”.

In whole, bribery violates every principle of honesty and integrity set forth in the word of God. The above lines relate the teachings of the Holy Bible against any act of bribery and revealed the possible perception of Christian faithful on money politics and vote buying during elections in Nigeria.

Instances from former Governor of Lagos State, Mr. Akinwunmi Ambode, who worked tirelessly without considering to rub the hands of godfathers but to deliver good governance through the provision of jobs without sentiment, constructions of good roads and engagement in worthwhile project; Professor Yemi Osibajo, the Vice President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, who has served and still serving the country with absolute honesty and deep integrity; and Pastor Tunde Bakare, who with deep sense of loyalty and honesty began the journey of Congress for Progressive Change with President Muhammedu Buhari before the party merged with other Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) and All Nigerians Peoples' Party (ANPP) to form the All Progressive Congress (APC) showed that there are people in politics who do not believe in money politics. Their faith and believe in Christ doctrines and practices have made them to stand out to remain persons of high level of integrity in Nigeria politics.

It is no doubt that people of conscience have faced disappointment from Nigeria's corruptible political practices and thus lost out in their aspirations because their belief negates money politics. Pastor Tunde Bakare who happened to be one of the aspirants in the All Progressive Congress presidential primary delivered a good speech and emphatically told the delegates that he had no money to pay to anybody to vote him and that whoever felt he deserved to be the party flagbearer should vote with clean heart full of hope that he was going to serve selflessly. Surprisingly, he had no single vote.

### **Conclusion**

It is certain that Christianity as a religion strongly detests money politics and vote buying as the two concepts are acts of bribery. Thus, it is hereby concluded that Christian faithful perceived money politics and vote-buying as acts that deny the righteous ones from contributing their meaningful quota towards the development of Nigeria.

The ongoing new naira redesign policy of President Muhammad Buhari (February 2023) was aimed at curbing vote buying, this was one of the reasons Godwin Emefiele the Central Governor was given permission for execution to curb money politics in the 2023 coming presidential election and other elections.

### **Recommendations**

The study recommended that:

INEC should not look back in liaising with security agencies to stop the criminal act. However, beyond working with the anti-graft agencies such as ICPC and EFCC, INEC should go further by invoking relevant legislations against the inimical electoral practice to punish the offenders. Let the commission carry along with the National Assembly and the State Houses of Assembly in fashioning out necessary legislation against the evil practice.

There is a need to educate the Electorate on the dangers of selling their votes. Let them be made to understand that selling their votes amounts to trading of their rights to choose who governs or represents them. They should know no amount of money can sustain them for four years, so if the best candidate did not have the chance to win, weather their vote count or not, they should vote according to their conscience without a second thought. For it is better to leave a fulfil life than voting for your own problems.

Government should educate the political education department of the commission and other relevant organs charged with public enlightenment on need to rise up to the occasion, as part of the preparations for the 2023 elections. Government should backup the judiciary to prosecute any perpetrator and jailed any defaulters.



To the aspirants, any politician guilty of money politics should be barred from participating in politics for life. The church and the mosque should encourage their members to vote according to their conscience and not probably for money. Also they are to be an example to the politicians and not take money from them for any reason for this step if taken could lead to a better Nigeria.

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