

Effectiveness of Voter Education in Curbing Vote-Selling in the 2019 General Elections at Eti-Osa Local Government Area, Lagos

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Citation: Harry M. and Ogbu, S. U (2022) Effectiveness of Voter Education in Curbing Vote-Selling in the 2019 General Elections at Eti-Osa Local Government Area, Lagos, *Global Journal of Politics and Law Research*, Vol.10, No.8, pp.1-32

ABSTRACT: *Vote-selling poses grave danger to any society and voter education is widely believed to be the panacea. This research evaluates the effectiveness of voter education in curbing vote-selling at Eti-Osa Local Government Area in the 2019 general elections. While some separate studies have been done on voter education and vote-selling, none was found that specifically evaluates the effectiveness of the former in curbing the latter. This is a gap this work seeks to fill. The three objectives of the study are to assess the level of voter education voters in Eti-Osa received before the 2019 general elections; to evaluate the appropriateness of the major channels used in communicating the voter education messages; and to ascertain whether voter education curbed vote-selling in Eti-Osa Local Government Area during the 2019 general elections. The Effect and Medium theories provide the theoretical framework for the work while questionnaires administered through multistage sampling technique and interview were the sources of gathering the relevant data. The findings reveal that the level of voter education in Eti-Osa was high and the major channel of voter education was fairly appropriate, though the mass media were not used. There is also a strong evidence that the voter education that was conducted curbed vote-selling to a large extent. Accordingly, it is recommended that the voter education efforts in the Local Government Area should be sustained in future elections; more channels of communication should be explored, while future voter education campaigns should also target politicians.*

KEYWORDS: election, communication, media, voter education, vote-selling

INTRODUCTION

Late President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua conceded at his inauguration on May 29, 2007 that the elections that had brought him to office 'had shortcomings' (Adeniyi, 2011). At a subsequent event, he also said: "If we will be honest with ourselves, we all know how we rig elections in this country. We compromise the security agencies, we pay the electoral officials and party agents while on the eve of the election we merely distribute logistics all designed to buy the votes..." (Adeniyi, 2011, p. 116).

In support of President Yar'Adua's voluntary and honest admission, Danjibo and Oladeji (2007, p. 180) assert that "virtually all the elections conducted in the history of Nigerian politics have been characterized by one form of electoral problem or another", and that vote-buying happens to be a crucial problem in Nigeria's electoral system. To Danjibo and Oladeji (2007), vote-buying is the exchange of money or other actual or potential benefits, for electoral votes. Onapajo, Francis, and Okeke-Uzodike (2015) also agree that a significant problem with Nigeria's electoral process, which has almost become a norm, is the prevalence of vote-buying.

It is necessary to note that vote-buying is not new to Nigeria. This abnormal political behavior is traced to post independent Nigeria when it first became prominent (Lucky, 2014), though its influence was not significant in the first republic (1960 – 1966). Vote-buying, however, took center stage during the second republic, starting from 1979. The situation grew much worse during the 1993 elections when vote-buying became firmly rooted in Nigerian politics. And then the phenomenon became a national political culture from 1999 upwards. For instance, Lucky (2014) quoted Suberu (2001) who observed that: "If the use of money in the 1999 elections was open and shameless that of 2003 was outrageously indecent." Lucky (2014, p. 102) finally concludes 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."

But what was previously tagged 'open and shameless' or 'outrageously indecent' has now become *utterly detrimental* to the long term survival of the country. As more electoral reforms make multiple thumb printing, ballot box stuffing, writing of fake election results from the comfort of politicians' homes or Government Houses (which used to be the case in the recent past) increasingly more difficult, vote-buying has become the last hope or 'winning' strategy for desperate politicians to access power or cling to it. There is clearly a need to check this phenomenon because vote-buying reduces the quality of elected government officials, diminishes their incentive to perform, and causes a decline in their actual performance (Leight, Pande, & Ralston, 2016).

That, perhaps, is what makes the absurd practice more worrisome today and deserving of urgent attention. Elected officials possess political power and control over policies that affect the public welfare, including the academia. If vote-buying is allowed to continue, the wrong (probably the worst) class of politicians would successively emerge as leaders and voters would lose the power to vote out nonperforming leaders. This would be the recipe for disaster and the country will be doomed to fail in the long run. Further, it might be necessary to note that vote-buying is also not unique to Nigeria. For instance, Mundia (2015) acknowledges the repeated incidents of vote-buying in Zambia. Hicken, Leider, Ravanilla, and Yang (2014) also observe that vote-buying is widespread in the Philippines and many other developing democracies. The phenomenon is also rising in China (Kennedy, 2010) and prevalent in other parts of Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America (Jensen & Justesen, 2014).

But since this study is more about vote-selling than vote-buying, it is necessary to clarify that both concepts are interrelated and almost inseparable. In that regard, they are used synonymously sometimes to refer to the same phenomena in this work. The relationship is that vote-buying happens only because some voters choose to sell their votes. The two activities are just different sides of the same dangerous coin. Vote-selling is the term used when the action is looked at from the perspective of voters' conduct, while vote-buying is viewing the same activity from the angle of politicians' behavior.

In evaluating the 2018 Ekiti State Governorship election, YIAGA AFRICA Initiative (2018) attributed vote-selling to poverty and hunger, failure of political office holders to keep their campaign promises, and neglect of rural communities, etc. However, Lucky (2014) attributes the selling of votes by voters to their cynicism against perceived incurably corrupt and uncaring acts of politicians who have repeatedly failed to keep their promises. This means that when these politicians come to ask voters for their votes, the voters simply ask for their own share of the "national cake" because they believe that the candidates have stolen from the national treasury. Adojutelegan (2018) also concluded from his study that vote-sellers feel justified because they do so out of disappointment and lack of trust in the political class. They also sell their votes because of poverty and their desire to receive their own share of the "national cake."

So, since the many dangers of vote-buying exist only because vote-selling happens, one could argue that the dangers of both unpatriotic acts are equal and synonymous. Therefore, one way to curb vote-buying and its dangers would be to discourage vote-selling. Perhaps the strongest reason why voters sell their votes is because they do not fully grasp the full weight of their actions: They do not fully understand the long term consequences and losses they stand to bear (and do bear already) because of selling their votes. That is where voter education comes in because there is a high possibility that an appropriate and effective voter education programme may discourage vote-selling.

Thus, the two variables of interest to this study are vote-selling and voter education. The first variable refers to the process whereby a voter receives money or other valuables to vote for the paying candidate. The payment could also be made after the voter has shown evidence of voting for the paying candidate. In Nigeria, it could also be receiving money and releasing a voter's card to the payer, to prevent its use in the election! That way, the payer ensures that the opponent does not get the vote, since the payer was sure of not getting the vote, anyway.

The second variable is communication-centered. It refers to the combination of activities aimed at influencing voters to make rational choices about candidates and other voting measures (Nnedinso, 2014). Ordinarily, it would be difficult to imagine that insufficient voter education is being conducted in Nigeria, especially in the social media era. But with the continuous and increasing incidents of vote-selling (manifesting in increasing cases of vote-buying) across the country, one wonders how effective the voter education programmes have been in Nigeria or if they being conducted at all.

Statement of the Problem

Undoubtedly, vote-selling/vote-buying and the problems associated with them are issues of national concern, especially as Nigeria approaches another General Elections circle in 2023. While it is apparent that the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and other stakeholders have been rolling out different voter education campaigns, the question must be asked why such exercises have not succeeded so far in stemming the growing incidents of vote-selling. For example, in the gubernatorial elections held in Edo, Ekiti and Oshun States post-2019, allegations of vote selling and vote buying have remained widespread among the political actors. Perhaps, the reason is because voter education has largely been generic in the sense of attempting to cover all the traditional issues at the same time. For instance, voter education campaigns focus on issues such as voting age, right to vote, registration procedure, importance of voting, polling unit information, knowledge of voting procedure, knowledge of election day and candidates for election, need to avoid violence and vote-selling, et cetera, simultaneously. Therefore, the problem of vote-selling has not been given the special attention it requires or deserves to catalyze an appreciable decline.

Interestingly, while some separate studies have been done on voter education and vote-selling, none was found that specifically evaluated the effectiveness of the former in curbing the latter within the Nigerian context. Thus, there is dearth of information on effective ways of mitigating the dangers of vote-selling through appropriate and targeted voter education. That is an important gap this work seeks to fill.

Essentially, the paper opines that voter education messages could be communicated through a wide range of channels such as small group meetings, seminars, workshops, television, radio, print media, social media, et cetera. However, the effectiveness of the communications channels may differ depending on campaign type and target audience segment. Unfortunately, the need for flexibility and strategy in channel selection for voter education purposes in Nigeria appears to have received very little attention from scholars in the field. That is another gap this study seeks to bridge.

Overall, this paper seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of voter education in curbing vote-selling. Specifically, it attempts to identify a voter education template that could be applied to reduce vote-selling in Nigeria. The work also seeks to identify the best channel or combination of channels through which voter education messages could be communicated for maximum results.

Research Questions

The central goal of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of voter education in curbing vote-selling in Eti-Osa Local Government Area of Lagos State, during the 2019 General Elections. Accordingly, the following research questions were raised to guide the investigation

- i. What level of voter education were voters of Eti-Osa Local Government Area exposed to, before the 2019 general elections?
- ii. How appropriate were the major channels used in communicating the voter education messages to the voters of Eti-Osa Local Government Area?

iii. To what extent did voter education curb vote-selling in Eti-Osa Local Government Area during the 2019 general elections?

Conceptual Review

Vote-buying and vote-selling are two sides of the same dangerous electoral practice found typically in many developing democracies. However, while the former is well-known and much written about, the latter is only mentioned scantily in literature. For instance, it is known that vote-buying refers to trading something valuable such as cash for a voter's choice of whom to vote on election day (Lehoucq, 2002). To Transparency International (2004, p. 77), "vote buying refers to the moment an inducement is offered by a candidate or a candidate's agent with the clear intention of harvesting the recipient's votes." What this means is that some politicians influence the voting choices of voters by inducing them with cash or other things of value.

Some scholars have observed that vote-buying undermines the democratic system (Uchenna-Emezue, 2015; Leight et al., 2016) and prevents proper elections. This inability to conduct credible elections, according to Ajisebiyawo and Masajuwa (2016), has hampered good governance, as the process produces corrupt politicians who misappropriate public funds, at the expense of portable water, roads, healthcare, electricity, and adequate infrastructures. Indeed, vote-buying is a form of corruption. Ogbuagu, Ubi, and Effiom (2014) show a connection between corruption and inadequate provision of infrastructure and public services by elected government officials.

But as already stated in the background to this study, vote-buying and its several dangers exist (and continue to pose a serious threat) only because vote-selling exists. As in the common marketplace, there cannot be a buyer without a seller. The action of voters who receive rewards in the form of cash or other valuables as an inducement to vote for an identified candidate in an election is what is referred to as vote-selling. It is a 'cash-for-vote' kind of voting. In Nigeria, the reward (usually cash) is sometimes paid after the voter has provided evidence of voting for the specified candidate.

In fact, it is the simultaneity of the process of vote-buying and vote-selling that makes it very difficult to separate one from the other. But as a helpful guide, the former is the term used when the transaction is viewed from the perspective of the politicians' action, while the latter describes the same phenomenon from the viewpoint of the voters' role. This is probably why it is difficult to define vote-selling without relating it to vote-buying, almost in the same manner that darkness has no definition other than "the absence of light". It is probably also the reason why some writers use the two terms interchangeably, as if they mean the same thing.

Given the serious threat vote-selling poses, the question to ask would be: "What can be done to prevent or at least curb vote-selling?" Effective voter education is what some scholars have identified as the panacea for the menace of vote-selling. They believe that effective voter education leads to better informed voters. For instance, Pande (2011, p. 217) posits that "better-informed voters change their electoral behavior to select better

performers.” Vicente and Wantchekon (2009) also stated that voter education can be highly effective in changing negative voters’ behaviour.

Further, existing literature also suggests that vote-selling and voter education are oppositely related variables. That is to say they are inversely correlated. This means that the more of effective voter education that is done, the less of vote-selling there would be, all things being equal. It also means that the absence of effective voter education may create the right political atmosphere for vote-selling. Mundia (2015) alluded to this view when, beyond acknowledging the repeated incidents of vote-buying in Zambia, she concluded that the absence of voter education could have contributed to the increasing acts of vote-selling in that country. This is also consistent with the views of Ibeanu and Orji (2014) that, when properly implemented, voter education programmes can reduce the incidence of vote-buying (by extension, vote-selling).

Obviously, the way voter education programmes could reduce the incidence of vote-buying is only indirectly, since voter education is usually targeted at voters, and not desperate politicians. This implies that receiving the right kind of voter education could reduce the tendency in voters to sell their votes, and that would naturally reduce the chunk of votes available for politicians to buy.

It is apparent from the foregoing that an evaluation of the effectiveness of voter education programmes, specifically aimed at establishing the extent to which it is able to curb vote-selling, is critical. This paper undertakes to do that. To do so successfully, however, it would be necessary to explore the relevant theories pertaining to these two variables. Thus, a theoretical framework is necessary to foreground and illuminate the study.

Theoretical Framework

Harold D. Lasswell opines that communication could be defined in terms of ‘who says what, to whom, through what channel and with what effect?’ (Momoh, 2015). But, generally, communication theories aim to provide a better understanding of the communication process, which should in turn make it easier to predict and control the outcome of communication (Anaeto, Onabajo, & Osifeso, 2008). Clearly, voter education can only be done through communication, and it would be necessary to find theories that could provide better understanding of the process, as a way of predicting and controlling its outcome.

For instance, since the purpose of this study is to evaluate how effective voter education exercises have been in curbing vote-selling, this work is built on investigating how effective the voter education message was, and how appropriate the channels of communication adopted were. Accordingly, to properly situate this work, the study draws insights from two media and communication theories, namely: Effect theory and Medium theory.

Effect Theory

Communication has effects. However, not every communication achieves the desired effect. For this reason, communicators must strive to construct their communication appropriately, so as to achieve their desired outcomes. Typically, the communication in voter education seeks to achieve behavior change in voters, but this cannot be accomplished except the message has a strong and significant effect on the voters. This is because getting voters to give up their vote-selling habit (and forfeit the little benefits they receive, but which looks big to them) will require a strong and truly persuasive message.

Hence, this paper finds the Effect Theory a suitable foundation to build this work on. This is because the effectiveness of any voter education campaign depends so much on the content of the message and its mode of delivery. Effect theory is considered suitable for this study because it helps to proffer explanation to the effect achieved by the voter education campaigns. It also helps in guiding voter educators to design voter education programmes that would enhance the achievement of their expected outcomes.

The three categories under Effect theories are the Little/minimal Effect theory, the Moderate/mediated Effect theory, and the Powerful Effect theory. Little/minimal Effect theory refers to situations in which the audience has control over whether to accept or reject the information received. We know from this theory that begging, pleading, advising, etc. may have little or minimal effect. Moderate/mediated Effect theory, on the other hand, refers to situations in which the audience has to think through the communication, digest or filter it, before deciding whether to cooperate or not. In the end, the effect may not be the expected effect, but rather a modified effect influenced by other factors. Preaching and entertainment are examples of communications that may produce moderate or mediated effect.

Powerful Effect theory refers to the ideal effect of communication and it is what has been adopted for this work because it is most suitable for achieving the required behavior change in voters. This theory developed by Elizabeth Noelle-Neumann in 1973 is also known as the Hypodermic Needle theory or Magic Bullet theory. “The ‘hypodermic needle theory’ implies that mass media have a direct, immediate and powerful effect on its audiences” (Momoh, 2015, p. 94).

Perhaps imagining the instant effect an intravenous injection has on a patient, or the speed at which a bullet fired from a gun hits its target, would make the idea of this theory clearer. The strong imagery suggests that the mass media could trigger a desired response by ‘injecting’ or ‘shooting’ a very large group of people directly and uniformly with the appropriate messages (Momoh, 2015). Being so pervasive, and almost being the only source of information for the masses, the effect of the mass media is strong, complete and irresistible. Thus, employing the mass media in voter education could achieve a strong and powerful effect, culminating in achieving the desired change in voter behavior. Television advertisements, propaganda, and fear creation are examples of communications with powerful effect.

But this theory is not without a weakness. For instance, in spite of the seeming all-powerful effect of the mass media and its pervasiveness, it still does not reach everyone, especially in Nigeria. One would wonder, therefore, how the media could influence the majority of the voters who are mainly poor and illiterate rural dwellers, with little or no access to civilization or the mass media. Even in urban areas, not everyone pays close attention to the mass media. It is, therefore, also less likely for mass communication messages to have a powerful effect on people in this category. Such people would more likely receive their version of mass media information, not directly from the source but from others.

The Two-step flow theory propounded by Paul Lazarsfeld, Bernard Berelson and Hazel Gaudet in 1940 addresses this observation. This theory states that opinion leaders who pay close attention to mass media communication receive the direct impact of the media; proceed to process it (by adding their own personal interpretation to the original media communication); and then communicate it to the people within their sphere of influence. Thus, some people are influenced by mass media messages only through informal and personal contacts with respected media adherents. These media adherents and opinion leaders are usually quite influential in making people change their attitudes and behaviors (Momoh, 2015).

But notwithstanding the shortcomings, the Powerful Effect theory is still relevant to this work because it explains the direct and uniform effect the mass media have or could have on its audience. Even where the mass media are unable to reach a critical mass of people directly, when the Two-step flow theory applies, it is important to observe that the opinion leaders are usually first 'injected' or 'shot' with the relevant media message before they in turn pass it on to the people within their region of influence. Consequently, the powerful effect of the media is direct on the opinion leaders, but only indirect on those subsequently influenced by the opinion leaders.

Perhaps, what is more noteworthy is that the Powerful Effect theory only highlights the pervasive nature and power of the mass media, without recognizing the unique characteristics of the different channels of mass communication. It also does not guide communicators on when to use which medium or how to choose the right channel for any specific message. So, while the Effect theory is useful to this work, it is obviously not sufficient. Beyond stating the power of the mass media taken together, it is necessary to know when to use which medium, to achieve the desired effect. It is necessary, therefore, for the purpose of this study to supplement the Powerful Effect theory. This leads us to the adoption of the Medium Theory in this work.

Medium Theory

Communication is a complex function because the process involves too many variables which makes it difficult for the receiver to understand and receive exactly what the sender intends to communicate. Even when most of the several processes are right, the channel alone could make communication ineffective. The Medium theory is exciting because it addresses the challenge of channels and offers useful insights that could make communication more effective.

In 1964, Marshall McLuhan, the foremost proponent of the Medium theory, made the famous statement that *the medium is the message*. “With this claim, he stressed how channels differ, not only in terms of their content, but also in regard to how they awaken and alter thoughts and senses” (Momoh, 2015, p. 110). McLuhan further avers that the primary medium in any particular age stimulates a particular sense ratio which ultimately plays a key role in affecting perception. For instance, breaking news today may never appear first in the traditional newspaper, but probably on the internet or on social media, predominantly.

Specifically, this theory proposes that the medium through which a message is communicated affects how the receiver would interpret, understand or receive it. The Medium theory suggests that the acceptability of the message is not just about its content alone, but also about the effectiveness of its delivery depends via the chosen medium of communication. In other words, in the case of voter education, beyond just articulating the right message for the voters, the right channels must also be used to communicate that right message, if the right or desired effect must be achieved.

Also called the Channel theory, because of the significant role the chosen channel plays in achieving the communication goal, the Medium theory focuses on the characteristics that make a particular channel of communication unique. For example, all things being equal, students exposed to multi-media tools with audio-visual teaching capabilities are more likely to understand their lecture better than others who have access to only books which are only visual. Similarly, communication targeted at children using videos, motion pictures or animation may be more effective than just reading the same information from a book.

Since a significant part of modern communication, especially mass communication, is done through the media, McLuhan’s assertion that the medium is the message intimates that the media play a major role in framing communication messages and ultimately determine how the audience perceives it. For instance, communication messages through the print media, radio, television or internet would be received differently by various audiences. The content of the communication may be the same, but McLuhan posits that adopting different channels will either modify or alter how the message is perceived and received by the target audience. In that regard, channels that engage more of the five human senses seem to be more effective.

Put more specifically, the print media, television and new media all engage the sense of sight. But in addition to sight, the print media further engage the sense of touch; while the radio, television and some forms of the new media also engage the sense of hearing. The implication of this is that the more of the five human senses engaged by a particular chosen medium in communication, the greater the chances of success or effectiveness of that medium.

In addition, some channels are also believed to be more effective in communicating certain kinds of messages. For instance, amongst the different forms of advertising appeals, “Print media offer the best outlets for rational appeals” (Baack, 2010, p. 164).

In other words, communicators should pay diligent attention to the medium through which they pass their messages, since not all channels are equally effective in all situations.

Interestingly, just like the Powerful Effect theory, even the Medium theory is not without weakness. For instance, while the Medium theory reveals that media choice influences information perception by the audience, it does not necessarily give guidance on how to choose a particular medium or under what circumstances a particular medium should be chosen. The theory also fails to state the effect of the message alone or even the combined effect of the message and the medium.

Consequently, the onus is on the communicator to skillfully and strategically adopt the medium that would achieve the highest effectiveness. In conducting voter education, for example, it would be the responsibility of voter educators to determine whether to communicate through small group meetings (seminars, workshops, etc.), social media influencers, the YouTube, television, radio, printed messages, the social media, drama, dance, music, films, skits, etc.

METHODOLOGY

The phenomena of interest to this paper is vote-selling (including vote-buying) and voter education. The study is an attempt to elicit and document the observations, experiences and perceptions of Eti-Osa voters during the 2019 general elections. Therefore, a descriptive research design was found to be more appropriate, specifically because it helped to answer questions as to *what* happened during the election in focus and *how* it happened.

To obtain as much accurate information as possible, however, the research adopted both quantitative and qualitative methods. This combination of methods helped to probe beneath the surface of the issue under investigation, to examine less overt aspects of the subject and thereby helped to gather more rounded and more reliable data. For instance, a survey approach could give an overall picture of the phenomena while deeper insights can be gotten through individual and group interviews (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007).

The population for a study was drawn from the 360,529 registered voters in Eti-Osa Local Government Area in the 2019 General Elections which covered ten wards and 295 polling units. Thus, with a confidence level of 95%, error margin of 5%, with a normal distribution of 50%, a sample size of 384 respondents was determined. The actual sampling was done through multistage sampling technique. This sampling technique was chosen because a complete list of all the registered voters of Eti-Osa Local Government Area who actually voted in the 2019 general elections was not available and, thus, could not be obtained.

Expectedly, identifying the appropriate respondents took an arduous process. In the first stage, all the names of the 10 wards in the Local Government Area were written on

separate pieces of paper and folded into a container. Then, five of them were picked, one after another without replacement, through simple random sampling. In the second stage, four streets were chosen randomly in each of the five wards selected earlier in stage one. This meant that a total of 20 streets (that is, four streets in each of the five wards) were covered in the study. The third stage involved determining the number of respondents to survey in each street. This was done by dividing 384 (the sample size) by 20 (the total number of streets to cover, determined in stage two). This gave about 19.2 (approximately 19 persons). The next thing the researchers did was to identify registered voters in the selected streets who actually voted in the 2019 General Elections. It was a rigorous process which involved asking residents whether they were registered voters of Eti-Osa Local Government Area, and also voted in the elections. The questionnaires were then administered to only those who answered both questions in the affirmative.

In addition to identifying respondents for the questionnaires, an appropriate and competent staff of the INEC in Lagos State was selected through purposive sampling for an interview, to give deeper insight into and also corroborate the survey results. The staff was a key informant who actually conducted the voter education process in Eti-Osa Local Government Area whose contribution was, thus, invaluable to the success of the study.

The reliability test is a measure of the adequacy and reliability of the questionnaire used for collecting survey data. It usually tests the internal consistency of the variables in the instrument. That is, how closely related the various items are when taken together as a whole. The Cronbach's Alfa coefficient was used for this purpose. With a total of 36 items in the instrument, the Cronbach's Alfa value was .842. Being very close to 1, the instrument used for this work was considered highly reliable.

Data Presentation and Analysis

A total of 384 questionnaires were administered, out of which only 348 were successfully retrieved, representing a return rate of 90.6%. The data presented here are the responses of the respondents to the questionnaires captured and analyzed on SPSS. Also analyzed is the interview of a key informant.

Demographics and General Questions

Table 1: Voter Registration

Voter Registration	Valid Percent
Yes	100.0
No	0.0
Total	100.0
n	348

Table 1 above shows the responses of the respondents as to whether they were registered voters of Eti-Osa Local Government Area in the 2019 General Elections or not. All 348 of them answered in the affirmative. This happened because being a registered voter in Eti-Osa was a precondition for the administration of the questionnaire. Having thus

confirmed their positive registration status, the respondents were qualified to participate in this study.

Table 2: Voting Status

Voting Status	Valid Percent
Yes	100.0
No	0.0
Total	100.0
n	348

Voting in the 2019 General Elections was the second precondition for the administration of the questionnaire in this study. Table 2 above shows that all 348 respondents voted in Eti-Osa Local Government Area in the 2019 General Elections. Therefore, the respondents were fully qualified to participate in this study.

Table 3: Residency Status

Residency Status	Valid Percent
1-2 years	23.0
3-4 years	35.6
5-6 years	18.4
Above 6 years	21.3
Since January 2019	1.7
Total	100.0
n	348

From Table 3 above, majority of the respondents had lived in Eti-Osa Local Government Area for three to four years. Those who had lived in the area for one to two years, above six years and between five and six years were almost evenly split. Only an insignificant population had lived there for less than a year before the elections.

Table 4: Age Distribution

Age Distribution	Valid Percent
18-27 years	32.8
28-37 years	28.2
38-47 years	17.0
48-57 years	17.8
58 years and above	4.3
Total	100.0
n	348

Table 4 shows that an overwhelming 61% of the respondents were below 38 years while 34.8% were above 38 years but below 58 years. Those who were 58 years and above were relatively few.

Table 5: Gender Distribution

Gender Distribution	Valid Percent
Male	60.1
Female	39.9
Total	100.0
n	348

The gender distribution shown in Table 5 above followed the known pattern in Nigerian politics as over half of the respondents were male. Notwithstanding, the number of women was almost 40%, which is quite impressive.

Table 6: Level of Education

Level of Education	Valid Percent
Never attended school	5.7
Primary school	8.6
SSCE/GCE	14.4
OND or equivalent	22.4
HND/B.SC/B.A	42.0
Above first degree	6.9
Total	100.0
n	348

Table 6 shows that almost half of the respondents had at least a first university degree. Another 45.4% had at least primary education, with very few people having never attended school. Perhaps, the most significant point here is that majority of the respondents were well-educated and, thus, probably truly understood the questions and responded accurately to them.

Table 7: Employment Status

Employment Status	Valid Percent
Employed	14.4
Unemployed	8.6
Self-employed	19.3
Retired	14.4
Student	43.4
Total	100.0
n	348

Table 7 reveals that majority of the respondents were students, with the remainder shared nearly evenly amongst self-employed, employed and retired people. Only less than 10% were unemployed.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: What level of voter education were voters of Eti-Osa Local Government Area exposed to, before the 2019 General Elections?

Table 8: Respondent received voter education

Respondent received voter education	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	71.3
Agree	17.2
Neutral	8.6
Disagree	1.4
Strongly disagree	1.4
Total	100.0
n	348

Table 8 shows the responses of respondents as to whether they received voter education or not before the 2019 General Elections. An overwhelming 88.5% agreed to receiving voter education, with over 70% of this number strongly agreeing. A cumulative 11.4% were neutral, disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Table 9: INEC Conducted the Voter Education

INEC Conducted the Voter Education	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	69.0
Agree	20.1
Neutral	8.6
Disagree	1.7
Strongly disagree	0.6
Total	100.0
n	348

Table 9 presents the respondent's responses to the question whether it was the INEC which conducted the voter education before the 2019 General Elections. Less than 3% disagreed with the statement while an overwhelming 89.1% answered in the affirmative. Less than 10% were, however, neutral.

Table 10: Voter education was conducted only once

Voter education was conducted only once	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	5.2
Agree	5.7
Neutral	11.5
Disagree	25.9
Strongly disagree	51.7
Total	100.0
n	348

Table 10 shows that a majority, representing 77.6% of the respondents, disagreed that voter education was conducted only once, in Eti-Osa Local Government Area, before the 2019 General Elections. A little over 10% were neutral while a cumulative 10.9% agreed with the proposition.

Table 11: Voter education was conducted more than once

Voter education was conducted more than once	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	74.7
Agree	10.9
Neutral	5.7
Disagree	4.3
Strongly disagree	4.3
Total	100.0
n	348

Table 11 shows that over 85% of the respondents overwhelmingly confirmed that voter education was conducted more than once in Eti-Osa Local Government Area, before the 2019 General Elections. However, 8.6% disagreed, while a handful abstained from taking a position.

Table 12: Voter education covered other wards

Voter education covered other wards	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	77.0
Agree	8.6
Neutral	5.7
Disagree	5.2
Strongly disagree	3.4
Total	100.0
n	348

As part of what constitutes wide coverage of the voter education exercise, respondents were asked whether the exercise covered other wards beyond theirs. Table 12 shows that over 85% agreed that it did, with the overwhelming majority strongly agreeing. But a combined 8.6% disagreed, while the remaining few were undecided.

Table 13: Voter education attracted 1-50 people

Voter education attracted 1-50 people	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	4.6
Agree	4.0
Neutral	6.0
Disagree	10.9
Strongly disagree	74.4
Total	100.0
n	348

Still on testing the level of the voter education exercise conducted in Eti-Osa Local Government Area, before the 2019 General Elections, respondents were asked to state whether up to 50 people attended the voter education campaigns they witnessed. Table 13 shows that over 85% disagreed, with the overwhelming majority strongly agreeing. But a combined 8.6% agreed, while the remaining few took no position.

Table 14: Voter education attracted 51-100 people

Voter education attracted 51-100 people	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	74.7
Agree	10.9
Neutral	5.7
Disagree	4.3
Strongly disagree	4.3
Total	100.0
n	348

A follow up question then asked the respondents whether between 51 and 100 people, but not more, attended the voter education campaigns they witnessed. Table 13 reveals that over 85% agreed to this proposition, with almost 75% of this number strongly agreeing. However, a cumulative 8.6% disagreed, while the remaining few stayed neutral.

Table 15: Voter education attracted over 100 people

Voter education attracted over 100 people	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	4.3
Agree	4.3
Neutral	5.7
Disagree	10.9
Strongly disagree	74.7
Total	100.0
n	348

Table 15 shows a decisive 85.6% disagreeing that over 100 people attended the voter education campaigns they witnessed, while 8.6% agreed. The remaining few could not take a decision.

Table 16: Voter educators spoke against vote-selling

Voter educators spoke against vote-selling	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	58.6
Agree	15.5
Neutral	8.6
Disagree	10.1
Strongly disagree	7.2
Total	100.0
n	348

Table 16 shows that 74.1% of the respondents agreed that the voter educators explained the dangers of vote-selling and specifically advised against it. The remaining 25.9 were shared amongst those who were neutral, disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Table 17: Voter educators communicated clearly

Voter educators communicated clearly	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	58.6
Agree	15.5
Neutral	8.6
Disagree	10.1
Strongly disagree	7.2
Total	100.0
n	348

Table 17 states that 74.1% of the respondents considered the communication of the voter educators as clear and understandable. About 17.3% disagreed while 8.6% were neutral.

Table 18: Voter education was better than previous years

Voter education was better than previous years	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	51.7
Agree	17.0
Neutral	19.8
Disagree	4.3
Strongly disagree	7.2
Total	100.0
n	348

Table 18 above reveals that 68.7% of the respondents agreed that the voter education conducted before the 2019 General Elections was better than those of the previous years. Almost 20% were neutral, while a combined 11.5 disagreed.

Research Question 2: How appropriate were the major channels used in communicating the voter education messages to the voters of Eti-Osa Local Government Area?

Table 19: Voter education was received through radio, television or newspaper

Voter education was received through radio, television or newspaper	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	17.2
Agree	20.1
Neutral	19.3
Disagree	14.7
Strongly disagree	28.7
Total	100.0
n	348

Table 19 shows majority of the respondents, representing about 43.4%, disagreed that they received the voter education through the radio, television or newspaper. Conversely, about 37.3% agreed, while the remainder were neutral.

Table 20: Voter education was done face-to-face

Voter education was done face-to-face	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	43.4
Agree	10.6
Neutral	20.1
Disagree	12.9
Strongly disagree	12.9
Total	100.0
n	348

So was the voter education exercise conducted face-to-face? Table 20 shows that 54% agreed to this question, while 25.8%, (split equally between disagreeing and strongly disagreeing) disagreed. Surprisingly, over 20% were neutral.

Table 21: The channel of voter education was familiar

The channel of voter education was familiar	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	54.6
Agree	17.2
Neutral	8.0
Disagree	8.3
Strongly disagree	11.8
Total	100.0
n	348

Table 21 shows that 71.8% of the respondents considered the channel used by the voter educators as familiar. However, 20.1% of the respondents disagreed, with the remainder taking no clear position.

Table 22: The channel of voter education was convenient

The channel of voter education was convenient	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	54.6
Agree	17.2
Neutral	8.0
Disagree	8.3
Strongly disagree	11.8
Total	100.0
n	348

Table 22 also shows that 71.8% of the respondents considered the channel used by the voter educators as convenient. Similarly, 20.1% of the respondents disagreed, with the remainder also taking no clear position.

Table 23: The message was clear and well understood

The message was clear and well understood	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	54.6
Agree	17.2
Neutral	8.0
Disagree	8.3
Strongly disagree	11.8
Total	100.0
n	348

Table 23 shows that 71.8% of the respondents considered the message the voter educators communicated through their chosen channel as clear and well-understood; though 20.1% of the respondents disagreed, with the remainder taking no clear position.

Table 24: The channel of voter education was free from distraction

The channel of voter education was free from distraction	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	54.6
Agree	17.2
Neutral	8.0
Disagree	8.3
Strongly disagree	11.8
Total	100.0
n	348

Table 24 shows that 71.8% of the respondents confirmed that the channel the voter educators used was free from distraction. However, 20.1% of the respondents disagreed, with the remainder choosing to be neutral.

Table 25: The channel was suitable to both literate and illiterate voters

The channel was suitable to both literate and illiterate voters	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	57.8
Agree	20.7
Neutral	11.5
Disagree	5.7
Strongly disagree	4.3
Total	100.0
n	348

According to Table 25 above, 78.5% of the respondents agreed that the channel the voter educators adopted was suitable to both literate and illiterate voters. Ten percent, however, disagreed, while almost 12% were undecided.

Table 26: Another channel would have been better

	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	11.8
Agree	8.3
Neutral	8.0
Disagree	17.2
Strongly disagree	54.6
Total	100.0
n	348

Table 26 states that 71.8% of the respondents disagreed that another channel of communication would have achieved better results. Interestingly, however, over 20% of them agreed, while the remaining few stayed neutral.

Research Question 3: To what extent did voter education curb vote-selling in Eti-Osa Local Government Area during the 2019 General Elections?

Table 27: Many voters in my polling unit sold their votes

Many voters in my polling unit sold their votes	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	3.2
Agree	4.0
Neutral	14.9
Disagree	17.2
Strongly disagree	60.6
Total	100.0
n	348

In attempting to determine the extent to which vote-selling occurred, generally, in Eti-Osa Local Government Area during the 2019 General Elections, the respondents were asked whether they saw many voters selling their votes in their polling units. Their responses, as shown on Table 27 above, show that 77.8% disagreed, with majority of this number strongly disagreeing. Only 7.2% agreed, while 14.9% were neutral.

Table 28: A few voters in my polling unit sold their votes

A few voters in my polling unit sold their votes	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	2.9
Agree	4.3
Neutral	14.9
Disagree	17.5
Strongly disagree	60.3
Total	100.0
n	348

Even when asked whether only a few voters in their polling units sold their votes, Table 28 shows that 77.8% still disagreed. A total of 7.2% agreed while more double this number were neutral.

Table 29: No voter in my polling unit sold votes

No voter in my polling unit sold votes	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	57.8
Agree	19.5
Neutral	12.6
Disagree	4.0
Strongly disagree	6.0
Total	100.0
n	348

So was it that no voter sold votes at all? The response to this question is what is shown in Table 29 above. It shows that an overwhelming 77.3% agreed that no votes were sold in their polling units; 10% disagreed; while 12.6% were neutral.

Table 30: Many voters in my polling unit shunned vote-selling because of voter education

Many voters in my polling unit shunned vote-selling because of voter education	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	60.3
Agree	17.5
Neutral	15.8
Disagree	4.6
Strongly disagree	1.7
Total	100.0
n	348

Table 30 above shows that precisely 77.8% of the respondents agreed that many of those who shunned vote-selling in their polling units did so because of the voter education they received. Conversely, though, 6.3% disagreed, with the remaining over 15% respondents staying neutral.

Table 31: Some voters in my polling unit shunned vote-selling because of voter education

	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	52.3
Agree	28.2
Neutral	11.2
Disagree	5.5
Strongly disagree	2.9
Total	100.0
n	348

Table 31 also shows that 80.5% of the respondents agreed that some of the voters in their polling units shunned selling their votes because of the voter education they received. However, 8.4% disagreed, while 11.2% did not take a position.

Table 32: No voter in my polling unit shunned vote-selling because of voter education

No voter in my polling unit shunned vote-selling because of voter education	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	2.9
Agree	4.3
Neutral	10.1
Disagree	16.4
Strongly disagree	66.4
Total	100.0
n	348

Table 32 shows the responses of respondents to the question whether no voter in their polling units shunned vote-selling because of voter education. A massive 82.8% disagree with this proposition, meaning that this population believe that those who shunned vote-selling did so because of the effective voter education they received. Nevertheless, about 7.2% agree that no voter in their polling units shunned vote-selling because of voter education, while 16.4% were indecisive.

Table 33: Vote-buyers approached me during the 2019 general elections

Vote-buyers approached me during the 2019 general elections	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	5.2
Agree	11.5
Neutral	17.2
Disagree	23.0
Strongly disagree	43.1
Total	100.0
n	348

Table 33 reveals that 16.7% of the respondents affirmed that vote-buyers approached them, while 17.2% declined to say their mind. It is interesting to note, however, that a significant 66.1% disagreed that vote-buyers approached them.

Table 34: I shunned vote-selling because of voter education

I shunned vote-selling because of voter education	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	69.0
Agree	22.4
Neutral	5.7
Disagree	1.1
Strongly disagree	1.7
Total	100.0
n	348

After asking about other voters, it was necessary to zero in on the personal conduct of the respondents themselves by asking whether they shunned selling their votes during the 2019 General Elections because of the voter education they received. Table 34 above shows that an overwhelming 91.4% of the respondents shunned vote-selling because of the knowledge they garnered from the voter educators. However, the rest 8.5% were neutral, disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Table 35: I sold my vote in spite of the voter education I received

I sold my vote in spite of the voter education I received	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	1.7
Agree	1.1
Neutral	5.7
Disagree	22.4
Strongly disagree	69.0
Total	100.0
n	348

Table 35 shows that an overwhelming 91.4% disagreed that they sold their votes, in spite of the voter education they received. But 5.7% were neutral, while 2.8% agreed.

Table 36: There was a reported case of vote-selling in my polling unit

There was a reported case of vote-selling in my polling unit	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	0.3
Agree	0.3
Neutral	1.1
Disagree	6.9
Strongly disagree	91.4
Total	100.0
n	348

Table 36 reveals that 98.3% of the respondents disagreed that there was a reported case of vote-selling in their polling units. Only a very insignificant 0.6% agreed, while the remaining 1.1% were neutral.

Analysis of Interview Responses

As earlier stated, an interview was considered necessary necessary to validate or substantiate the findings from the survey. Accordingly, the following interview was conducted. The interviewee was Mrs. Fodayemi Bukola Bisoye, the Assistant Electoral Officer, Operations, of the Independent National Electoral Commission in Eti-Osa Local Government Area of Lagos State. A few excerpts of the interview are presented below:

Question 1: Did you conduct voter education for voters in Eti-Osa Local Government Area before the 2019 General Elections?

Interviewee: Yes, it was conducted. That has been the heartbeat of the Commission. Voter education is to create awareness for the people on what things to do; telling them the electoral cycle; the way they should vote; the importance of their permanent voter's card, and how to exercise their right and social responsibility.

Question 2: Do you remember how many times you did this exercise?

Interviewee: We don't count how many times we do it. We have up to ten Registration Areas (also called wards) in Eti-Osa.

Question 3: How many people attended the exercise?

Interviewee: Sometimes we go to viewing centres where up to 100 people attend, and sometimes we go to Community Halls where up to 200 people attend the exercise. At times we hold the meetings with the executives of CDAs (Community Development Authority), landlords, tenants, key people and *Baales*. Sometimes we use *town-criers* to announce the exercise. We go in advance and request the Baale to invite his people. And we take attendance of everyone present for the exercise. Sometimes 200, 150 or 50 people attend, depending on the peculiarity of each area.

Question 4: You said earlier that you have about ten Registration Areas in Eti-Osa. This exercise that you conducted, how many of the areas did you cover?

Interviewee: I covered all the 10 Registration Areas.

Question 5: In the voter education exercise, did you specifically talk against vote selling and vote buying?

I

nterviewee: Yes, we did. We emphasized that people should not sell their votes. It is their right. Selling their vote is like selling their future. They have many things at stake and so should not sell their votes because of their posterity.

Question 6: For how long have you been with INEC?

Interviewee: I have been with INEC since 2003.

Question 7: So can you tell me if the last voter education campaign you did before the 2019 elections was better than the previous ones or the previous ones were better than the last one you did?

Interviewee: They are all very good but we get better with the job every day and there are new developments with every exercise.

Question 8: You talked about *town-criers* using bell to invite the people. Through what channel did you communicate with the people when you met them face-to-face?

Interviewee: I used megaphone and microphone. They put a podium where I will be; I introduce myself and tell them my purpose of being there, and I will give them room to ask questions about their voters' cards and the voting process. We have fliers, handbooks and voter's education club.

Question 9: So, in other words, you are saying in addition to speaking to them, you also gave them fliers, handbooks, maybe like brochures?

Interviewee: Yes. After telling them what it entails, we gave them fliers to give to other people. Some don't know how to vote, where to vote. They don't know what to do. Those are the things we tell them, and where to register, which are the things that are very effective.

Question 10: How effective and appropriate do you think your chosen channel(s) were?

Interviewee: They were very effective because I was there physically. The people were able to ask me questions, unlike watching it on TV and not being able to ask questions and getting the answers they needed.

Question 11: In your voter education exercise, in how many languages did you present your information?

Interviewee: I presented it in Yoruba, English and broken English (pidgin). I decide on how to present it, depending on the area and the people I see there.

Question 12: Did you observe any vote-selling during the 2019 General Election in Eti-Osa Local Government Area?

Interviewee: There was no vote-selling because people are aware of their right and power to vote.

Question 13: That is on the side of the voters that you educated?

Interviewee: Yes.

Question 14: But did you observe, as INEC personnel, any politicians trying to buy votes?

Interviewee: No. It's not even allowed for politicians to be close to the voters during election.

Question 15: But as you know, in Nigeria, in most parts, politicians always try to buy votes and people actually sell their votes. Are you saying that Eti-Osa Local Government Area was just unique?

Interviewee: Eti-Osa Local Government Area was unique because we have unique people here. They understand the process and importance of what they want to do. They put their posterity in the picture, not thinking of the present situation they are in. That is what makes it to be unique.

Question 16: In other words, there was no reported incident of vote selling, the police did not arrest anybody?

Interviewee: No. No police, no DSS.

Question 17: Is there anything you would like to tell me about the 2019 General

Elections as you were there, that maybe I have not asked about?

Interviewee: The 2019 elections went successfully. We did not register any casualty. We did not experience any violence in any form. Everything went successfully.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Research Question 1: What level of voter education were voters of Eti-Osa Local

Government Area exposed to, before the 2019 General Elections?

The findings from the responses and the interview reveal that the voters of Eti-Osa Local Government Area were exposed to an extensive level of voter education which covered the entire 10 wards in the Local Government Area. Besides, the voter education campaigns were conducted several times and attracted hundreds of voters in some cases. Both the findings from the field study and the interview responses confirm this position. But, particularly commendable was the involvement of *Baales* (Traditional rulers), community chiefs, executives of the various Community Development Authority (CDA), landlord associations, and other social influencers in the voter education exercises. By doing so, the voter educators applied the principle in the Two-step flow theory propounded by Paul Lazarsfeld et al., 1940. This theory states that opinion leaders who pay close attention to mass media communication receive the direct impact of the media; proceed to process it (by adding their own personal interpretation to the original media communication); and then communicate it to the people within their sphere of influence.

However, while this theory assumes the mass media, the voter educators applied the principle without necessarily doing it through mass media channels. Perhaps, what really matters is that the strategy of the voter educators achieved its purpose. The idea was for the community leaders to receive the message and pass it over to those within their region of influence. That probably accounts for the wide publicity respondents

attested to and also why the INEC considers the last exercise before the 2019 elections as excelling the previous levels achieved by the Commission.

Notwithstanding, the communication of the voter education messages was done through face-to-face campaigns, without the use of the mass media. This means that the Effect theory which implies that the mass media have a direct, immediate and powerful effect on its audiences was not fully explored. It is safe to assume, therefore, that using the mass media for the voter education campaigns would probably have achieved the full impact anticipated by the Effect theory and also raised the level of awareness the voters were exposed to.

Research Question 2: How appropriate were the major channels used in communicating the voter education messages to the voters of Eti-Osa Local Government Area?

The second theoretical foundation for this work is the Medium theory in which Marshall McLuhan stated that *the medium is the message*. This theory posits that the medium through which a message is communicated affects how the receiver would interpret, understand and receive it. This theory suggests, therefore, that a message is not just about its content alone, but that the effectiveness of its delivery depends so much on the chosen medium of communication. For instance, the medium of communication in the voter education under review was the human beings who physically presented the voter education messages.

So in McLuhan's view, being physically present could have given a human face and feel to the whole exercise, and probably influenced how the audience perceived, interpreted and received the message. This means that, if the audience liked the speaker(s) or believed that the source was authentic and knowledgeable, then they automatically bought the message. Ingenious in the style the voter educators adopted was the flexibility of communicating in Yoruba, English or pidgin, depending on the setting. This fluidity introduced a communication flavour to the campaign and aptly exemplifies how the medium becomes the message.

It is observable, however, that greater success could actually have been achieved if the INEC had introduced the mass media in their voter education campaign. For instance, the small group meetings could have been recorded on audio and video, and aired on radio and television, for wider reach. The videos could also have been made into short video clips and uploaded on YouTube, which would have achieved greater memorability as well as provided an opportunity for continuous future reference. The voter educators could also have explored the social media, drama, dance, music, films, skits, etc. in putting out their campaign messages.

Research Question 3: To what extent did voter education curb vote-selling in Eti-Osa Local Government Area during the 2019 General Elections?

As previously stated in the literature review, the communication in voter education seeks to achieve behavior change in voters. This, however, cannot be accomplished except the message has a strong and significant effect on the voters. This means in

essence that expecting voters, especially the poor ones, to forfeit the opportunity of receiving financial benefits in exchange for their votes would certainly require a strong and truly persuasive message. This, largely, is the basis for hinging this study partly on the Effect theory. However, it was observed that, contrary to the use of the mass media to achieve the expected mass effect, which is the recommendation of the Effect theory, the voter educators adopted face-to-face meetings, as mentioned previously, without the use of the mass media.

Nonetheless, inference drawn from the study shows that the voter education achieved the intended powerful effect. For instance, at least 77.8% of the respondents disagreed that they saw many voters selling their votes in their polling units (Table 27). This population still disagreed even when asked whether only a few voters in their polling units sold their votes (Table 28). But, perhaps, one of the most significant findings is that an overwhelming 91.4% of the respondents shunned vote-selling by themselves because of the knowledge they garnered from the voter educators (Table 34).

It is interesting to note, however, that if we take the findings of this study on its face value, it would go against the findings of Hicken et al., (2015) that there is little evidence of whether the traditional anti-vote-selling campaigns which simply urge voters not to sell their votes in the first place, or to “vote their conscience” even if they accept money, are effective. The findings from majority of the responses to the questionnaire affirm that vote-selling did not occur in the Local Government Area in that election. Even the interview conducted supports this claim.

For instance, without knowing the responses from the field, Mrs. Bisoye, the interviewee in this study, also confirmed that no vote-selling occurred in Eti-Osa during the 2019 General Elections, and that there was no officially reported or documented case of vote-selling. Her corroboration seems to add considerable credibility to the claims of the questionnaire respondents. These findings mean that the traditional anti-vote-selling campaigns which simply urge voters not to sell their votes are actually effective.

But the challenge with these responses is to what extent they are true and can be truly relied upon. That, precisely, was the overarching purpose of conducting a qualitative study in addition to the field survey. It was intended to find a way to corroborate the responses of the respondents. But doing so still does not completely eliminate the possibility of respondents deliberately giving false answers because of social desirability bias. In other words, because this work relies heavily on the answers of respondents whose integrity cannot be ascertained and who could have chosen to deliberately mislead, there still remains a high possibility of falsehood, since there is no way of determining the truth.

CONCLUSION

On the basis of the results from the field study and analysis of secondary data, this paper concludes that voter education plays a key role in reducing incidents of electoral

malpractices. Consequently, electoral education must never be overlooked, irrespective of the type of election involved, but rather sustained and improved upon, if good governance must be achieved. Further, since voter education can only happen through communication, which is pivotal to the existence of all organizations, it must be done smoothly, effectively, and using the appropriate channels.

The three objectives of this study were to assess the level of voter education voters of Eti-Osa Local Government Area were exposed to, before the 2019 General Elections; to evaluate the appropriateness of the major channels used in communicating the voter education messages to the voters of Eti-Osa Local Government Area; and to ascertain whether voter education curbed vote-selling in Eti-Osa Local Government Area during the 2019 General Elections.

Evidence from the fieldwork and interview responses suggest that the level of voter education in the Local Government Area before the 2019 General Elections was high. It was also discovered that the voter educators used face-to-face communication which was interactive and provided opportunities for questions and deeper learning. Notwithstanding, this paper evaluates the major channel used by the Independent National Electoral Commission as only fairly appropriate. The appropriateness of the major channel is so qualified because existing opportunities for mass media campaigns could have been explored for greater overall impact.

Finally, the study found a strong evidence that the voter education that was conducted curbed vote-selling to a large extent during the 2019 General Elections. However, while the majority view of the results of the fieldwork and the personal interview both point in the direction that vote-selling did not occur in Eti-Osa Local Government area during the 2019 elections, it is safer to say that even if vote-selling occurred, it was probably minimal rather than widespread.

So, based on the research objectives and questions, the following three conclusions are reached:

- i. That the level of voter education in Eti-Osa Local Government Area before the 2019 general elections was high,
- ii. That the major channel used for the voter education was only fairly appropriate because it did not utilize existing opportunities for mass media campaigns which could have achieved greater overall impact,
- iii. That there was a strong evidence that the voter education conducted in Eti-Osa curbed vote-selling to a large extent during the 2019 General Elections.

Recommendations

Based on the findings made above, it is hereby recommended that:

- Voter education efforts in Eti-Osa Local Government Area should be sustained in future elections, to maintain the enviable voter conduct already achieved.
- More equally effective channels of communication such as the mass media, the social media, YouTube, drama, dance, music, films, skits, etc. should be explored in future voter education exercises.

- Future voter education campaigns should also target politicians.

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