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INCENTIVES AND DECISIONS: VOTERS' KNOWLEDGE OF THE LAWS ON VOTE BUYING AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR GHANA'S DEMOCRACY

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ABSTRACT: *This paper sought to investigate whether the incentives given to voters affect voters' decisions at the polls. It also looks at whether Ghanaians are conversant with the laws and legislations on elections and for that matter vote buying. The mixed method approach with explanatory sequential design was employed for the study. The population for the study comprised the entire group of potential voters in the Shama District in the Western Region who are 18 years and above. Probability and non-probability sampling methods were employed to select the sample of district, communities and respondents for the study. Data from questionnaire was triangulated with interviews. The Pearson Chi-Square was used in finding significant differences. The p-value is the probability for showing differences and a critical value of alpha=.05 was adopted for sig differences in the statistical analysis. It was concluded that the economic status or the income level of electorates has no effects on decisions about the person to vote for. There is a relationship between vote buying incentives and voters' decisions. This makes incentives effective in winning votes.it was therefore recommended that the governments should make it a point to reduce poverty by enhancing wealth redistribution by creating or providing jobs especially for the rural folks.*

KEYWORDS: democracy, electoral laws, Ghana, voters, vote buying, voting incentives

INTRODUCTION

Several countries in the world currently select their national leaders through multi-party elections. However, in some developing countries especially in Africa, the quality of elections still varies widely as elections have been plagued with problems such as ballot fraud, intimidation, multiple voting, low voter education, snatching of ballot boxes, violence, giving out of electoral incentives or buying of votes and others (Stokes, 2005; Schaffer, 2007; Kramon, 2009; Baidoo, Dankwa & Eshun, 2018).

Just as democratic elections have spread across the globe since the early 1970s, so has electoral incentives and buying of votes (Baidoo et al., 2018). Vote buying has been widespread in many countries that have continued along the path towards democracy. In the words of Vicente (2014), vote buying happens frequently in many parts of the world.

Vote buying appears in different forms in every society. It may take the form of direct payments to voters (Baidoo et al., 2018, p. 2). To Schaffer & Schedler (2005), vote buying in its literal sense, is a simple economic exchange. Candidates "buy" and citizens "sell" votes, as they buy and sell apples, shoes or television sets. He adds that the act of vote buying is a contract, or perhaps an auction, in which voters sell their votes to the highest bidder. Parties and candidates who offer material benefits to voters may generally aspire to purchase political support at the ballot box in accordance with the idea of market exchange.

Existing literature and theoretical perspective have identified three dominant arguments to explain the foundations of vote buying in elections. First it is argued that socio-economic factors, especially poverty, unemployment and illiteracy, play a major role in promoting the market for votes in democracies. Second, it is argued that the voting methods in a particular electoral system may also guarantee the predominance of vote buying during elections. The third explanation is predicated upon the belief that vote buying is a product of the nature of partisanship and party organization in a particular state (Onapajo & Okeke-Uzodike, 2015).

Again, civil institutions and stakeholders of elections in Ghana such as the Ghana Centre for Democratic Development (CDD, Ghana), Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) and Coalition of Domestic Observers (CODEO) through workshops and reports from pre-election surveys towards the 2012 and 2016 general elections have provided evidence on vote buying and warned of the threat the phenomena poses to Ghana's democratic process since each election year, politicians and political parties are accused of distributing electoral incentives to voters (Baidoo et al., 2018).

It is alleged that in Ghana, politicians sometimes attach conditions to these acts of vote buying. There have been reports that indicate that voters who benefit from the electoral incentives are sometimes made to swear in the name of a deity in order to compel voters to honour their part of the agreement. It is also alleged that some voters are also asked to disclose the candidate they voted for with evidence of taking a photo of their ballots before they are paid for compliance. These acts undermine ballot secrecy as enshrined in electoral laws and the constitution of Ghana (Baidoo et al., 2018, p. 6).

Over the years the country's democracy has been under serious threats due to illegal activities by politicians to buy the votes of electorates. It is widely believed that politicians allocate public resources in ways to maximize political gains. Politicians face intense pressure to provide gifts in exchange for votes. Ghanaian politicians face pressure to allocate private benefits to voters, often at great personal expense. Nugent (2007) notes that "voters expect to be showered with gifts as evidence that the candidate genuinely does have the interests of the local people at heart." However, failure to do so sends a negative signal to voters.

Political parties in the nation have one way or the other offered incentives to buy votes from electorates. Evidence from pre-election surveys conducted by CDD Ghana towards the 2016 presidential and parliamentary elections as well as other elections in Ghana suggest that a great

deal of vote-buying occur in the days and weeks leading up to the elections. Allegedly, the electoral incentives range from contracts, employment, community projects (such as roads and schools), vehicles, gas cylinders, cash, building materials, outboard motors, motor bikes, laptops and others. Ghana practices the universal adult suffrage which allows all qualified adult citizens of sound mind and having attained the age of eighteen years and above the right to vote in all general (presidential and parliamentary) and district assembly and unit committee elections. Leading up to these elections, it has always been alleged that Ghanaian politicians distribute incentives and gifts including motor bikes, construction materials (especially roofing sheets and bags of cement), outboard motors, mobile phones, t-shirts, food items and cash to electorates. Certain communities also benefit from "last minute" projects which allegedly include roads, school buildings, electricity and toilet facilities (Baidoo et al., 2018). This practice which is usually called "vote buying" and meant to coerce voters to vote or not vote for certain candidates and political parties is assuming an alarming rate.

Despite the prevalence of this phenomenon, understood as the exchange of incentives for votes before elections, it is unclear whether there is a relationship between vote buying and the decisions and choices of voters although there has been ample evidence from pre-election surveys conducted by Centre for Democratic Development that candidates do target certain voters with gifts and incentives. This has necessitated this study to investigate the relationship between vote buying incentives and the decisions and choices of electorates during elections in the Shama District of Ghana. The core of this study sought to determine whether electorates are familiar with the laws on voting and whether or not there is a relationship between vote buying incentives and the decisions of voters during elections.

The following questions were formulated to direct the study (1) What is the relationship between vote buying incentives and voter decisions? and (2) What knowledge do voters have on vote buying laws in Ghana? This Research Hypothesis - There is no significant difference between income and vote buying incentives was also tested. The study was therefore delimited to knowledge of laws of voting and its implications to Ghana's democracy. It was further delimited to Shama District in the Western Region of Ghana. Vote buying carries different meanings to different people. These meanings can vary not only by class, but also by religion, ethnicity, levels of education, and the like. In the view of Schaffer (2008), they can lead to unhappy consequences. It's on this gap that this study seeks to fill by assessing voters' knowledge of the laws on vote buying and its implications for Ghana's democracy.

LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL REVIEW

Several attempts have been made by writers and researchers to define the concept of vote buying. This is because vote buying carries different notions in different countries depending on the country's historical, cultural, political aspects and its election models (Schaffer, 2007, p. 25).

One of the most cited definitions on vote buying is from Etzioni-Halevy who defined vote buying as "the exchange of private material benefits for political support" (Heidenheimer, Johnston &

LeVine 1989, p. 287). The definition stresses on gaining private material benefits by voters in return for their political support. In other words, it is about giving voters some benefits in the form of gifts or incentives for them to reciprocate with their votes by voting for the giver or the candidate. In effects, voters are given items for their private use and they are expected to return this gesture from candidates or political parties by voting for them. She sees this act as an exchange in the sense that the materials are given to the electorates in anticipation that the electorates would consider the gift received and vote for them.

Similarly, Fox sees vote buying as "exchanging political rights for material gains" (Fox, 1994, p. 151). His focus is on the right of a person to exercise his/her franchise. His definition, also stresses on an exchange which is also seen as a transaction. Thus, selling one's right by accepting a gift, incentive or benefit to vote for a candidate or a political party. To Fox, the aspect of exchange between the material benefit and the political support is more significant than the objective of the exchange.

Bryan (2005, p. 4) also defines the concept as "the use of money and direct benefits to influence voters." While the first two definitions did not actually focus on the use of money, Bryan specifically includes money in his definition. His definition, unlike other existing literature does not restrict vote buying to only money but includes other materialistic items like food. In this instance, electorates are given money and other direct benefits to manipulate their decisions. Thus, they are given these items to influence their decisions or choices at the polls. Again, voters are also given these direct benefits and may be expected to abstain from voting. Thus, to vote in a particular way or not to vote.

In the nutshell, while some cultures and literatures restrict vote buying to the handing out of cash for votes, others also extend vote buying to the distribution of materials for votes. As Schaffer (2007) puts it, "political operatives frequently hand out not just cash, but also a wide range of goods and services such as bags of rice, chickens, whisky, clothing, soccer balls, Viagra, haircuts, and teeth cleaning."

Again, while other literatures see the concept as payments made before one goes to the poll, others define the concept in terms of "a reward" which is usually given to the person after going to the poll. Thus, in some instances, a voter receives the incentive before going to the poll while in other instances too, a voter only receives the incentive after he s/he has gone to the polls or performed his/ her part of the contract.

From the aforementioned definitions, vote buying can therefore be explained to be the use of monetary or non-monetary materials or items to influence the decisions or behaviours of voters in an election. It is thus; any reward given to a person for voting in a particular way or for not voting. Vote buying does not only involve money but also other materialistic items.

On the perceptions on vote buying incentives, Kramon (2011) in his paper "Why do politicians buy votes when the ballot is secret?" posits that vote buying signals a willingness and capacity to deliver small private goods which tend to be more highly valued by poor voters. In other words, politicians buy votes because of the information it conveys to voters about their credibility with respect to the provision of targeted, particularistic, or patronage goods to poor voters. He sees vote buying to signify credibility as a patron for the poor and as a candidate who understands the needs of poor constituents. He adds that a candidate who is willing and able to finance widespread vote buying during a campaign is perceived to be more likely to provide poor constituents with targeted benefits in the future.

Bratton (2008) in his paper "Vote buying and violence in Nigerian election campaigns" asserts that vote buying enhances partisan loyalty. Parties may offer incentives or benefits to core supporters during elections to sustain electoral coalitions. This is explained from the fact that the distribution of incentives to party supporters is a recognition and affirmation of their membership to the party. This stabilizes the support base of the party, by ensuring that party supporters do not defect to or vote for the opposition as Gans-Morse, Mazzuca and Nichter (2009) put it, "unless operatives provide particularistic benefits, supporters may become swing or opposition voters during the next election." This indicates that, it encourages them to turn out on election day to vote for the party. In other words, it eliminates apathy among supporters. In effect, parties may distribute rewards to voting supporters to prevent the erosion of partisan loyalties over time. All these become necessary as it is being perceived that electorates may not be aware of the laws on vote buying. This study further seeks to ascertain that.

There are issues of legislations against vote buying. Vote buying seems to be a complex phenomenon in terms of both its causes and consequences. The problem of vote-buying seems to remain a threat to democracy as it poses serious challenge to free and fair elections and the legitimacy of political office holders.

Elections are key to participatory democracy. The conduct of public elections is defined by the electoral system. "Electoral systems evolve out of electoral rules that have become embedded in a political culture (Taagepera 2002, p 249). Electoral rules are thus, an 'outer-layer' of an electoral system which absorbs the stakeholder manipulations for their self-interest. The electoral system sets out the structure and procedures for the conduct of public elections (Aiyede, 2007). The relationship between voters, candidates, the political parties and the electoral management body are regulated. The electoral laws situate the conduct of public elections within a country's political and socio-economic environments as well as its legal provisions. In Africa, the different national constitutions set out electoral systems based on the national laws of the individual countries. In Ghana the electoral laws define the process before voting, during voting, results of voting and the adjudication process in election related disagreements. The key electoral laws in Ghana are;

- The Constitution of Ghana (1992)
- Political Parties Act, 2000 (Act 574)

- Representation of the People (Amendment) Act, 2006 (Act 699)
- Criminal and Other Offences Act, 1960 (Act 29)
- Criminal Code (Amendment) Act, 2007 (Act 741)

The electoral laws of Ghana recognize the independence of the Electoral Commission (EC) as the sole authority responsible for managing public elections. The Electoral Commission is thus empowered to provide guidelines and regulations to ensure elections in Ghana conforms to democratic principles. Specifically, Article 51 states "the Electoral Commission shall, by constitutional instrument, make regulations for the effective performance of its functions under this Constitution or any other law, and in particular, for the registration of voters, the conduct of public elections and referenda, including provision for voting by proxy" (Constitution of Ghana, 1992). This provision has occasioned the enactment of a Constitutional Instrument (CI) by parliament of Ghana for the regulation of specific elections in Ghana. This CIs provide time table for electoral process, prescribe offenses and punishments in accordance with the criminal offences' according to the laws of Ghana.

The laws in several democratic countries frown upon vote buying but the regulations governing vote buying in modern liberal democracies seem paradoxical. There is legislation on the phenomenon of vote buying in Ghana just as in other democratic countries. For instance, under the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, vote buying is an offence in Section 33 of the Representation of People Law, 1992. According to Section 33 of the law, titled, Bribery, a person commits an electoral offence:

a. If he directly or indirectly acts through another person

i. Gives money or obtains an office for a voter in order to induce the voter to vote or refrain from voting.
ii. Corruptly does such an act on account of a voter having voted or refrained from voting.
iii. Makes a gift or provides something of value to a voter to induce the voter to vote in a certain way or to obtain the election of a candidate.
iv. If he advances or pays money or causes money to be paid to or for the use of a person with the intent that the money or part of it shall be expended in bribery at an election.

These make it an offence to give or receive money or something of value as a means of inducing a person to vote, or not vote, in a certain way. It can be deduced from the above that election officials, a candidate, a voter, or any member of the general public could engage in buying votes, which is also deemed as an electoral offence.

In Ghana, the electoral laws are such that any suspect who is apprehended and proved guilty by a competent court of law, could be fined or sentenced to a certain term of imprisonment or both.

With certain offences, a person could, in addition, be banned from participating in public elections for a certain period of time or from holding public office. Kwofie (2008) posits that no constitutional instruments and laws can avert the menace. In his view, laws do not change people, they only guide people. He asserts that politicians are the ones making the laws and they are the same people flouting them because legality and illegality do not solve problems but they create more problems. Hence, more have to be done to curb the menace.

The theoretical perspectives for the study are is deduced from the General Incentive Model and the Political Clientelism Theory. Firstly, the General Incentive Model which was developed by Clark and Wilson in 1961, posit that if we know the kinds of incentives that an organisation may give to induce members' greater cooperation, then something can be learnt about the incentive system a political party uses to sustain members' participation in its activities. Clark and Wilson (1961, p. 130) pointed out that the internal and external events of organisations may be explained by understanding their incentive systems. They add that all organisations in good standing must provide "tangible or intangible incentives" to their members to induce their optimal contribution.

The definition of an "incentive" can be very broad. The term can therefore be explained in relation to its context. In this context, an incentive is a formal scheme used to promote or encourage specific actions or behaviours by a specific group of people during a defined period of time. Incentives are things that incite or tend to incite an action or greater effort, as a reward offered for increased productivity. Incentive programmes are used in business management to motivate employees and in sales to attract and retain customers. In this wise, vote buying incentives are external measures that are designed and established by political parties or candidates to influence the behaviour of voters in an election. Incentive systems or structures used during vote buying are combinations of several more or less coherent incentives. Parties and candidates use money and materials as extrinsic motivation or incentive to get electorates do their wishes.

In the use of incentives to buy the votes of electorates, politicians often use monetary and non-monetary incentives to coerce voters. These incentives are usually targeted on the poor or less educated class of opposition backers to not turn out and vote which is referred to in this model as 'negative vote buying, swing voters and a party's main supporters to turn out and vote which are also referred to in this model as 'turnout buying' (Cox & McCubbins, 1986). While negative vote buying reduces votes for the opposition party, Turnout buying increases votes for the party buying votes.

Vote-buying incentives provide goods which are short-term, private, and have a high degree of certainty (Desposato, 2007; Stokes, 2007). Because of this, poor voters assign higher values to vote-buying where uncertainty of the compensation for her vote is low (Desposato, 2007). Two main purposes are intended to be achieved during the distribution of these vote buying incentives: Thus, to ensure positive or participatory vote buying and also to achieve negative turnout. Positive or participatory vote buying is where the incentives are used to influence party supporters and swing voters to go out and vote for the party issuing the incentives. On the other hand, negative

vote buying is where core supporters or backers of the opposition are coerced with incentives so that they do not turn up and vote for their party. Hence, electoral incentives are intended to increase turnout for the distributing party while it reduces turnout for the opposing party, giving the distributing party an upper hand to win the election.

The poor and less educated among electorates are almost always the target during the distribution of vote buying incentives. This is attributed to the fact that gifts have more force among the poor. Hence parties will buy the votes of the poor before trying to buy those of the wealthy (Stokes, 2005). For example, the poor who finds a cedi on the street will be made happier by finding it than will a wealthy person. This is due to diminishing marginal utility of income.

A party that wants to win enough votes to get elected at the lowest possible cost would start by giving the poorest person something, then the next poorest, and so on until the party has purchased just enough votes to win. This justifies why Dixit and Londregan (1996) conclude that vote buying starts at the bottom, and not at the top, of the income distribution. Parties pay for poor people's votes before attempting to buy the votes of wealthier people; they can pay poor voters a relatively modest price, whereas they would have to pay wealthier voters more. Parties therefore buy more votes among the poor by offering even relatively modest amounts to each voter. For instance, Bratton (2008) reports that during Nigeria's 2007 elections the most common amount of money offered to voters was US$4. These economic mechanisms are likely to make poor voters the prime targets of vote buying by political parties who want to maximize their (re)election chances. It follows that the same outlay of resources by the party will buy more votes among poor than among wealthy voters. As the party moves up the income distribution, each next voter's support has to be purchased at a higher price.

In a nutshell, vote-buying can be a greater motivation to the poor to vote than the enticement of public goods, as the poor are oftentimes forgotten about in the distribution of public goods. Desposato (2007, p. 104) says 'poor voters, on average, should have higher utility for immediate private goods than for delayed public goods." Moreover, unless a voter has an alternative source of income and simply did not need the incentive, it is unlikely that poor voters will therefore be able to resist vote-buying incentives (Magaloni, Diaz-Cayeros & Estevez, 2007).

The second theoretical perspective the work is situated into is Political Clientelism. The transactional nature of politics highlights relationships between power and influence. This was further entrenched with Lasswell (1936) definition of politics as "Who Gets What, When and How". The definition highlights a deep-rooted feature of transactions, which is patron – client relationship. This relationship is at the core of Political Clientelism. Lemarchand (1972) considered political clientelism as an analytical concept which look at relationship between political actors. Clientelism presents politics in a hierarchical order in which a patron is expected to provide for a client identified benefits in return for political support. As Hopkin puts it, "clientelism is a form of personal, dyadic exchange usually characterised by a sense of obligation,

and often also by an unequal balance of power between those involved" (Hopkin, 2006. p.2). In clientelism there is a duty of care on the patron and a reciprocal obligation of loyalty by the client. This is based on the acknowledged pattern of unequal relationship within the political space.

Generally, the patron is perceived to have control over resources the clients need. Therefore, clientelist exchange is linked to political behaviour where client believe the patron has capacity to monitor their behaviour and reward or punish as the patron decide (Weitz-Shapiro, 2012). Clientelism involves distributive policies which in itself imposes transaction costs on political actors (Magaloni, Diaz-Cayeros & Estevez, 2003). Despite the clientelist cost in such an exchange, the focus of political clientelism is the outcome of the action and not the process. Therefore, the perception of clientelism as an effective 'vote-getting' strategy appeals to political actors especially those seeking political office (Weitz-Shapiro, 2012; van de Walle, 2007). In analysing clientelism, elements worth paying attention to include Income and poverty levels (Weitz-Shapiro, 2012), understanding and acceptance of democratic norms (Gans-Morse & Nichter, 2021), power relations within the political space over resource allocation and political patronage system (Hopkin, 2006). These elements are generally present in voter decision to commodify their votes in a competitive election.

In competitive electoral processes, politicians as patrons develop incentivisation system based on clientelism to guarantee positive electoral outcomes. As Kitschelt and Wilkinson (2007) points out "In many political systems citizen-politician linkages are based on direct material inducements targeted to individuals and small groups of citizens whom politicians know to be highly responsive to such side-payments and willing to surrender their vote for the right price...clientelistic accountability represents a transaction, the direct exchange of a citizen's vote in return for direct payments or continuing access to employment, goods and services" (op.cit, p.2). These phenomena explains that clientelism elevates material benefit over political ideology and group or community interest.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed the mixed method approach with explanatory sequential design. It is likely that the blending of two methodologies in a single research paradigm can produce alternatives that will not be able to represent radical shifts in the short run. Integrating different methods is likely to produce better results in terms of quality and scope. The combination of the two research approaches offers a good benefit on the study of which either could have on the work (Creswell & Plano, 2007). The choice of the research design was also guided by the research questions. The population for this study consists of the entire group of potential voters in the Shama District in the Western region who are 18 years and above.

Five (5) communities or electoral areas in the district were selected for the study. These communities were Atwereboanda, Komfueku, Beposo, Nyankrom and Shama. Information from the District Electoral Commission indicates that there were a total of 12,101 registered voters in these five communities. The communities are scattered but can be easily identified in the district. Questionnaires for the study were administered in all the five communities. Krejcie and Morgan (1970) approximate a sample size of 300 for a population above 12,000. In this wise, a sample size of three hundred (300) was chosen for the quantitative study to respond to the questionnaires while twenty of these people were randomly selected for the qualitative study. Two party activists were also interviewed to support the data.

Three sampling techniques were employed for the study. Firstly, convenience sampling was adopted to select the Shama District. Again, convenience sampling was also used to select the five communities, namely: Atwereboanda, Komfueku, Beposo, Nyankrom and Shama. Also, proportional sampling technique was employed to select the three hundred (300) respondents as there was differential numbers of registered voters in the selected communities. The proportional sampling technique was employed to ensure that the selected five (5) communities have a fair representation in the study. The simple random sampling technique was employed to select the participants.

The basic requirement used in the sampling was that a participant was to be of eighteen years and above. Potential voters in these communities were used as the sample for the study. Four (4) of those who responded to the questionnaire from each of the five of the selected communities were randomly selected and interviewed for the triangulation. Two other party agents who took part in the distribution of vote buying incentives were also interviewed to authenticate the information given by participants. The breakdown of the population according to the communities that formed the sample is as follows:

Table 1. Sample Size According to Communities

Community	Population	Sample
Atwereboanda	274	6
Komfueku	1,446	35
Beposo	1,963	48
Nyankrom	429	11
Shama	7,989	200
Total	**12,101**	**300**

Source: Field Work, 2019

Questionnaire and interview guide were the data collection instruments employed in the study. The two instruments were used to enable the researchers triangulate the information to test the consistency of the findings obtained from each of the instruments used. The questionnaires were used to give the researchers insight on whether is a relationship between vote buying incentives

and voters' decisions or behaviours and respondents' knowledge of the laws on vote buying. Through the use of the interviews, the study explored into detail the items the questionnaire sought to measure from each participant. Questionnaires were used to reach potential voters in the district to solicit their views on the knowledge of the laws on vote buying and examine the relationship between vote buying incentives and voters' decisions.

Interviews were also conducted to enable the researchers to probe into some information provided on the questionnaire. Combining different sources and methods in the research process helped the researchers to build on the strength of each type of data collection.

The study employed the combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods for the data analysis. The quantitative data were derived from survey in the form of questionnaires while the qualitative data were derived from interviews.

The quantitative data was analysed into frequencies and percentages. The Pearson Chi-Square was used to determine whether significant difference exists between gender and the distribution of vote buying incentives, income and voting behaviour. The *p - value* is the smallest value (probability) for finding significant differences. The *p - value* is the smallest value (probability) for which the null hypothesis was rejected. A critical *value of alpha* = 0.05 was adopted for significance in the statistical analysis.

The qualitative data entry and analysis was also done through content analysis. Content analysis is a process of deriving meaning out of the responses gotten through interviews (Patton, 2002). The responses were described and explained in the form of narratives. Sometimes responses were quoted verbatim to authenticate claims made. The responses were answers to open-ended questions. Koul (2000) quoted Patton (1982, p. 28) on this issue as expressing the view that "responses from open-ended questions in the form of direct quotations reveal level of emotions of respondents, the way in which they have organised their world, their thoughts and experiences about certain happenings, and their perceptions." Quantitative data were tabulated, organised, analysed and interpreted to draw sound conclusions and generalisations.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Analysis of the Characteristics of Respondents

In all data from 280 respondents were analyzed. This was made up of 148 (52.9%) of the respondents are males, while the remaining 132(47.1%) are females. This discrepancy in the distribution of potential voters by gender could be ascribed to the fact that, generally, more potential male voters were willing to take part in the study than potential female voters.

The age composition is depicted in Table 1.

Table 1. Age Range

Age	Frequency	Percent (%)
18 – 20 years	50	17.9
21 – 30 years	76	27.1
31 – 40 years	62	22.1
41 – 50 years	33	11.8
11 – 60 years	27	9.6
61 – 70 years	31	11.1
71 years and above	1	4
Total	**280**	**100.0**

Source: Fieldwork, 2019

From Table 1, 50 (17.9%) of the respondents were within the ages of 18 to 20 years. Seventy-six (76) representing (27.1%) of the respondents were of 21 to 30 years. Sixty-two (62) potential voters forming 22.1% were within the ages of 31 to 40 years. Thirty-three (33) or 11.8% were within the ages of 41 to 50 whereas 27 (9.6%) were found to be within the range of 51 to 60 years. Again, 31 (11.1%) were between the ages of 61 and 70. Only one, (0.4%) of the respondents was above 70 years. This means that most of the respondents were within the ages of 18 and 40 years.

The educational qualification of respondents is highlighted in Table 2.

Table 2: Educational Qualification

Qualification	Frequency	Percent (%)
None	23	8.2
Basic	58	20.7
SHS	78	27.9
Professional/Training/Vocational	15	5.4
Diploma	26	9.3
Tertiary/ Degree	62	22.1
Others	18	6.4
Total	**280**	**100.0**

Source: Fieldwork, 2019

Table 2 shows that out of the 280 respondents that submitted their questionnaires, 23 of them representing 23 (8.2%) had no formal educational qualification whereas 58 representing 20.7% of the respondents had basic education. Seventy-eight (78) of the respondents who represents 27.9% had a Senior High School educational qualification, 15 respondents representing 5.4% had a

professional, training or vocational education. Twenty-six (26) respondents which represent 9.3% hold a diploma while 62 of the respondents which represented 22.1% had tertiary degrees while the remaining 18 of the respondents who constituted 6.4% had other educational qualifications. This means that more Senior High School graduates were used for the study.

Table 3 displays the income levels of respondents.

3. Respondents' Levels of Income

Income (GHC)	Frequency	Percent (%)
Less than 100.00	101	36.1
100.00 - 250.00	53	18.9
251.00 -500.00	34	12.1
501.00 – 750.00	9	3.2
751.00 – 1000.00	34	12.1
More than 1000.00	49	17.5
Total	**280**	**100.0**

Source: Fieldwork, 2019

From the Table 3, out of 280 respondents, 101(36%) of them are on income level of less than GHC 100.00. Fifty-three (53) representing18.9% of the respondents are within the income ranges of GHC 100.00 to GHC 250.00. Thirty-four (34) forming 12.1% of the respondents are within the income ranges of GHC 251.00 to GHC 500.00. Nine (9) representing 3.2 of the respondents are also within the income ranges of GHC 501.00 to GHC 750.00. Thirty-four (34) representing 12.1% of the respondents fall within the income range of GHC 751.00-GHC 1,000.00 whereas 49 (17.5%) are on an income of more than GHC 1,000.00 per month. This means more of the respondents are on an income of less than GHC 100.00 per month.

Relationship Between Vote Buying Incentives and Voter's Decisions

This section answers the research question-*What is the relationship between vote buying incentives and voter's decisions?* The question sought to find out the relationship that exists between vote buying incentives and voters' decisions. Outcomes from questionnaires were triangulated with interview outcomes. The questionnaire outcome is illustrated in Table 4 below:

Table 4: Relationship between Vote Buying Incentives and Voters' Decisions.

S/N	ITEM	SD (%)	D (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	TOTAL (%)
1	I am affiliated to a particular political party	64 (22.9)	64 (22.9)	78 (27.9)	74 (64.4)	280 (100)
2	I am not aware political parties give out gifts to attract votes	113 (40.4)	95 (33.9)	43 (15.4)	29 (10.4)	280 (100)
3	One should expect the party s/he supports to give him/her some gift before s/he votes for them.	159 (56.8)	63 (22.5)	33 (11.8)	25 (8.9)	280 (100)
4	One should vote for a certain party / candidate because of a gift they offered him/her.	154 (55.0)	85 (30.4)	25 (8.9)	16 (5.7)	280 (100)
5	A gift from a political party should influence one's vote	135 (48.2)	68 (24.6)	38 (13.6)	39 (13.9)	280 (100)
6	Even if I get an incentive from a party, I would still vote with my conscience	44 (15.7)	39 (13.9)	71 (25.4)	126 (45.0)	280 (100)
7	Voting for a party should depend on issues than gifts/incentives.	39 (13.9)	54 (19.3)	57 (20.4)	130 (46.4)	280 (100)
8	A swing voter should vote for the party that offers one gift(s).	157 (56.1)	94 (33.6)	16 (5.7)	13 (4.6)	280 (100)
9	If I am paid to vote for a certain party/candidate I would do just that.	145 (51.8)	96 (34.3)	26 (9.3)	13 (4.6)	280 (100)
10	I will vote for the party I support but would accept any incentive from any party	62 (22.1)	55 (19.6)	82 (29.3)	81 (28.9)	280 (100)
11	I am ready to vote for any party/candidate that would buy my vote.	163 (58.2)	64 (22.9)	36 (12.9)	17 (6.1)	280 (100)
12	I will vote for a party I am opposed to because I was offered an incentive to do just that.	154 (55.0)	87 (31.1)	28 (10.0)	10 (3.9.)	280 (100)
13	If a party pays me so that I do not turn out and vote I would oblige.	160 (57.1)	69 (24.6)	35 (12.5)	16 (5.7)	280 (100)

Source: Field work, 2019

Item 1 of Table 4, which is - *I am affiliated to a particular political party* shows that 64 (22.9%) strongly disagreed with the statement. Another 64 (22.9%) disagreed with the statement. Seventy-eight (78) representing 27.9% of the respondents agreed to the statement and 74 (26.4%) strongly agreed with the statement. This means that more of the respondents see themselves to be affiliated to a political party. This is similar to CDD's findings in 2016 as they approximated 64% of the general electorates to be affiliated to a political party.

From Item 2 of Table 4, respondents were asked to respond to the statement *I am not aware political parties give out incentives or gifts to attract votes.* Out of the total of 280 respondents, 113 (40.4%) strongly disagreed with the statement while 95 (33.9%) disagreed. Forty-three (43), thus 15.4% agreed with the statement whereas 29 (10.4%) strongly agreed with the statement. Egya Panyin (name withheld) when asked whether he is aware that parties give out incentives or gifts to attract votes remarked that *"but this is not a secret?"* Egya Yaw, another participant said that "*They are sharing moneys at rallies and in the communities. Who does not know?"* Many of those interviewed also confirmed that they are aware political parties give out incentives to attract the votes of the electorates. This shows that more of the respondents are aware that political parties give out incentives or gifts to buy votes.

From Item 3 of Table 4, respondents were given the statement "*One should expect the party s/he supports to give him/her some gift before s/he votes for them.* One hundred and fifty-nine (159) which makes 56.8% of the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement and 63 (22.5%) of them disagreed with the statement. Thirty-three representing 11.8% of the respondents agreed with the statement whereas 25 (8.9%) strongly agreed with the statement. From the table more of the respondents were of the view that one should not expect the party s/he supports to give him/her some incentive or gift before s/he votes for them. One of the party officials that were interviewed revealed that during the sharing of the incentives, they direct the items to the party supporters first before any other since they are sure that their own supporters would vote for them.

One of the participants commented that *"Our party is in power. They have made enough money and that they should cushion us before we go and vote for them."* This also means that some party supporters expect to be given a kind of incentives by their own party and failure to do this may negatively affect the chances of the party as some party members are likely not to turn out or they may spoil the ballot when they are not given incentives to go and vote. This finding confirms Bratton's (2008) assertion that "vote buying enhances partisan loyalty." in his paper "Vote buying and violence in Nigerian election campaigns." Bob-Milliar (2012) also reports that in Ghana there is still evidence that private material incentives tend to provide the glue that links party members and cadres to the party establishment. Nichter (2008) also asserts that it is believed that parties offer particularistic benefits to core supporters during elections to sustain electoral coalitions. It is also suggested that parties distribute rewards to voting supporters to prevent the erosion of partisan loyalties" over time. Gans-Morse, Mazzuca and Nichter (2014) are of the view that unless operatives provide particularistic benefits, supporters may become swing or opposition voters during the next election.

Item 4 of Table 4 sought respondents' views on *one should vote for a certain party / candidate because of a gift they offered him/her.* One hundred and fifty-four (154) thus, (55.0%) out of the total respondents strongly disagreed with the statement while 85 (30.4%) disagreed with the statement. About 25 (8.9%) agreed with the statement and 16 (5.7%) strongly agreed with the statement. This means that more of the respondents would not vote for a political party because they were offered incentives or gifts. In other words, a gift from a political party or a candidate would not affect the votes of majority of the respondents.

From Item 5 of Table 4, respondents were expected to respond to the statement *an incentive or gift from a political party should influence one's vote.*135 (48.2%) strongly disagreed with the statement. About 68 (24.3%) disagreed, 38 (13.6%) agreed with the statement whereas 39 (13.9%) strongly agreed with the statement. This shares some similarity with Kramon (2013) assertion that, an estimated between 20 and 25 percent of Kenyans have had their votes influenced by incentives. Eunice (name withheld) commented that not anything would buy her vote. *"If I am going to vote for someone because s/he is offering me an incentive or gift then that should be valuable."* Probing further, she identified employment or money above 1000 Ghana cedis as what would push her to sell her vote. Kweku (name withheld) also suggested that if any candidate would offer him a job, he is more ready to sell his vote to that person. "*What I need now is a job. If Nana Addo or JM gives me job I would vote for him.*"

From Table 4 and the interview, more than half of the respondents are of the view that an incentive from a party would influence their votes. This also means that an incentive from a political party or a candidate would have an influence on the decisions of some voters as Morrison (2008) concludes that Ghanaian voters reward local public goods provision when deciding how to vote. This conforms to Schaffer's (2002) assertion that voters may consider a vote buying incentive as something that comes with strings but does not generate explicit obligation to reciprocate at the ballot box.

Item 6 of Table 4 respondents were to respond to the question *even if I get an incentive from a party, I would still vote with my conscience.* About 44 (15.7%) of the respondents strongly disagreed whereas 39 (13.9%) disagreed with the statement. Seventy-one (71) making 25.4% of the respondents agreed with the statement whereas 45 (45%) strongly agreed. From this Table, it means more of the respondents would vote their conscience even if they are given incentives. During the interview, one of the respondents stated that *"the money the politicians use to purchase the items or incentives are the tax payers' money. I would take it when it is given to me but I would vote for the candidate I feel to vote for."*

Item 7 of Table 4 reflects respondents' view on the statement *voting for a party should depend on issues than incentives or gifts.* Thirty-nine (39) making 13.9% of the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement while 54 (19.3%) disagreed and 57 (20.4%) agreed. A majority of 130 (46.4%) strongly agreed with the statement. This means that more of the respondents (voters) would base their decisions on issues than incentives.

Item 8 of Table 4 which is - *a swing voter should vote for the party that offers one gift(s)* indicates that out of the 280 respondents, 157 (56.1%) strongly disagreed, 94 (33.6) disagreed, 16 (5.7%) agreed and 13 (4.6%) strongly agreed with the statement. This means that majority of swing voters are likely not to vote for a party after being given an incentive.

Item 9 of Table 4, elicited responses from the statement *If I am paid to vote for a certain party/candidate I would do just that.* With this statement, 145 (51.8%) of the respondents strongly disagreed while 96 (34.3) disagreed. Again,26 (9.3%) agreed and 13 (4.6%) strongly agreed with the statement. It can be inferred that more of the respondents are ready to accept incentives from parties without voting for them. This may be one of the reasons why an incentive intended by an operative as binding payment may be understood by a voter as a non-binding gift.

From item 10 of Table 4, respondents were to respond to the statement *I will vote for the party I support but would accept an incentive from any party.* Out of the total 280 respondents, 62 (22.1%) strongly disagreed with the statement whereas 55 (19.6%) disagreed. Again, 82 (29.3%) agreed while 81 (28.9%) strongly agreed with the statement. This could be interpreted that more of the respondents would accept an incentive from a political party but would vote for the party they support.

Item 11 of Table 4, which is – *I am ready to vote for any party that would buy my vote* reveals that 163 (58.2%) of the total respondents strongly disagreed with the statement, 64 (22.9%) indicated that they disagree with the statement. While 36 (12.9%) indicated their agreement to the statement, 17 (6.1%) strongly agreed with the statement. This means that less of the respondents are ready to sell their votes for money or materialistic goods. This also means that a portion of the voting population is ready to sell their votes to political parties or their candidates. Madam Ellen (name withheld) hinted that "*I cannot exchange my vote for the meager items they offer."* So she is never ready and willing to exchange her vote for an incentive. Fiifi (name withheld) also said that he is ready to vote for the party that would buy his vote but that would depend on what they offer in exchange for the vote. In other words, Fiifi was ready to exchange his vote for an incentive.

Item 12 of Table 4, elicited views on whether *one should abstain from voting in an election after being paid to do so*. The responses were as follows: respondents of 129 (46.1%) strongly disagreed and77 (27.5%) disagreed. While 49 (17.5%) agreed,25 (8.9%) strongly agreed with the statement. This means that more of the respondents would not abstain from voting when given incentives to do so. Maame Yaa (name withheld) had this to say *"I must exercise my franchise. Why should I abstain from voting because of 50 Ghana they would give me?'* Julie (name withheld) also had this to say *"Aaaaah!! they should take their things. I would not abstain from voting."* This means that voters are not ready to abstain from exercising their franchise in an election due to a gift or an incentive they would be given. So, an incentive would not influence their participation in an election.

From Item 12 of Table 4, respondents were to respond to the statement *I would vote for a party I am opposed to because I was offered an incentive to do so.* More than half of the respondents 154 (55.0 %) responded that they strongly disagree with the statement and 87 (31.1%) disagreed with the statement. While 28 (10.0%) agreed, 11 (3.9%) strongly disagreed with the statement. From the interviews, only two people responded that they would vote for the party they are opposed to but even that they added a caveat that that would depend on the quantum of money they would be given. These indicate that more than half of the respondents are not willing to vote for parties they are opposed to when they are given incentives. In other words, an incentive would not influence a voter to vote for a party s/he is opposed to.

Item 13 of Table 4, which elicited responses on the statement - *If a party pays me so that I do not turn out and vote I would do just that* indicates that 160 (57.1%) indicated that they would not abstain from voting when they are paid to do that and 69 (24.6%) indicated that they disagreed with the statement. While 35 (12.5%) indicated that they agree with the statement, 16 representing 5.7%of the respondents strongly disagreed. More than half of the respondents strongly disagreed with this statement that if a party pays a person so that the one abstains from voting, one should do just that. This is what Nitcher indicated in his 2008 model as a "negative turnout buying. This strategy is used by opposition parties to demobilize active opponent to abstain from voting. Although few of the respondents are ready to fulfill this, according to Nitcher, this strategy in a way can yield some result.

Generally, this section on the issue of whether there is a relationship between vote buying incentives and voter's decisions, highly fits into the Political Clientelism Model, Lemarchand (1972) considered as an analytical concept which look at relationship between political actors. Clientelism involves distributive policies which in itself imposes transaction costs on political actors (Magaloni, Diaz-Cayeros & Estevez, 2003). Conclusively, clientelism presents politics in a hierarchical order in which a patron is expected to provide for a client identified benefits in return for political support. This, Hopkin puts it, "clientelism is a form of personal, dyadic exchange usually characterised by a sense of obligation, and often also by an unequal balance of power between those involved" (Hopkin, 2006. p.2). In the theoretical perspective of Clientelism there is a duty of care on the patron and a reciprocal obligation of loyalty by the client. This is based on the acknowledged pattern of unequal relationship within the political space. As a result, the patron is perceived to have control over resources the clients need. Therefore, clientelist exchange is linked to political behaviour where client believe the patron has capacity to monitor their behaviour and reward or punish as the patron decide (Weitz-Shapiro, 2012).

Relationship Between Incomes and Voters Decisions

This Research Hypothesis - There is no significant difference between income and vote buying incentives was also tested in this section. This is illustrated in Table 5.

Table 5. Chi-Square Test of Relationship Between Incomes and Voters Decisions

ITEMS	Chi-square test: Levels of income			
	Value	Df	asym. sig. (2-sided)	No of valid cases
1. Even if I get an incentive from a party, I would still vote with my conscience	27.911[a]	15	0.22	280
2. Voting for a party should depend on issues than gifts/incentives.	47.814[a]	15	0.000	280

Source: Field work, 2019

Item 1 of Table 5 which reads *Even if I get an incentive from a party, I would still vote with my conscience,* finds the relationship between income and the voting choices of voters. It shows a Chi-Square of 27.911 with *p*-value equals to 0.022. This shows that a significant difference exists between income (economic status) of voters and their voting decisions after being offered incentives. The null hypothesis was therefore not accepted.

Item 2 of Table 5 which reads *Voting for a party should depend on issues than gifts/incentives,* finds the relationship between income and the voting choices of voters. It shows a Chi-Square of 47.814 with *p*-value equals to 0.000. This also shows that a significant difference exists between income (economic status) of voters and their voting behaviour after being offered incentives. The null hypothesis was therefore not accepted.

It highly concluded that, mostly depending on gift to vote has been an issue with the poor population. Deducing from the General Incentive Model, Desposato (2007, p. 104) declares 'poor voters, on average, should have higher utility for immediate private goods than for delayed public goods." Moreover, unless a voter has an alternative source of income and simply did not need the incentive, it is unlikely that poor voters will therefore be able to resist vote-buying incentives (Magaloni, Diaz-Cayeros & Estevez, 2007). This clearly indicates that, vote-buying can be a greater motivation to the poor to vote than the enticement of public goods, as the poor are oftentimes forgotten about in the distribution of public goods.

Voters' Knowledge of the Laws on Vote Buying

This section sought to explore voters' knowledge on vote buying laws in Ghana. This section was guided by this research question-*How conversant are voters with vote buying laws in Ghana?* The research question sought to ascertain whether voters were aware of what the Ghanaian constitution says about vote buying. Outcomes from questionnaires were triangulated with interview outcomes. The questionnaire outcome is depicted in Table 6 below:

Table 6: Knowledge of the Laws on Vote Buying.

S/N	ITEM	SD (%)	D (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	TOTAL
1	It is lawful to receive an offer from a party or candidate on condition of voting for them.	137 (48.9)	84 (30.0)	43 (15.4)	16 (5.7)	280 (100)
2	It is lawful for a party to ask a voter to vote for a party with a gift.	145 (51.8)	96 (34.3)	26 (9.3)	13 (4.6)	280 (100)
3	I am aware giving or receiving incentives from a party to vote for their candidate is an offence punishable by law.	53 (18.9)	80 (28.6)	75 (26.8)	72 (25.7)	280 (100)
4	A vote is a personal property and the law allows one to exchange it for a gift from a party.	132 (47.1)	86 (30.7)	37 (13.2)	25 (8.9)	280 (100)
5	It is not wrong to show my ballot to the one who paid for my vote after casting my vote.	134 (47.9)	70 (25.0)	51 (18.2)	25 (8.9)	280 (100)
6	The law allows a voter to reveal his/her ballot to the one who paid for his/her vote.	139 (49.6)	89 (31.8)	25 (8.9)	27 (9.6)	280 (100)
7	Revealing my ballot after voting is acceptable by the constitution.	139 (49.6)	82 (29.3)	47 (16.8)	12 (4.3)	280 (100)
8	I am ready to report any party or candidate that offers me an incentive to the police.	52 (18.6)	60 (21.4)	73 (26.1)	95 (33.9)	280 (100)

Source: Field work, 2019

From Item 1 of Table 6 which is-*It is lawful to receive an offer from a party or candidate on condition of voting for them.* One hundred and thirty-seven of the respondents (137) representing 48.9% strongly disagreed with the statement while 84 (30%) disagreed. Another 43 (15.4%) agreed

and 43 (15.4%) agreed while 16 (5.7%) strongly agreed with the statement. From the interviews conducted, the following were gathered:

Alice (name withheld) indicated that *"we have heard on radio that it is against the law to accept an offer from a party or its officer or representative on condition of voting for them in an election. But we cannot reject it because it is our own monies they use."* Mena Nyameyie (name withheld) also stated that *"we are aware that accepting a gift/ an incentive from a party on condition of voting for them is prohibited by the law."* This indicates that she is aware that there are laws against receiving an incentive to vote for a party or its candidate.

From the above, it can therefore be stated that majority of the respondents see it to be unlawful to be offered an incentive to vote for a political party or its candidate. This means that many of the respondents are aware that it is unlawful for a voter to receive an offer from a party or its candidate on condition of voting for them.

Item 2 of Table 6 which is - *It is lawful for a party to ask a voter to vote for a party with an incentive* suggests that many of the respondents are aware that it is unlawful for a party to ask a voter to vote for them with an incentive or gift. This is stemmed from the fact that 145 (51.8%) strongly disagreed with the statement while 96 (34.3%) disagreed. Another 26 (9.3%) agreed with the statement and 13 (4.6%) strongly agreed with the statement.

The interviews also support this as more than half indicated that they know that asking a voter to vote for a certain candidate with a gift/ an incentive is frowned upon by the laws of the country. This means that voters are now conversant with the laws on vote buying.

Item 3 of Table 6 which is – *I am aware giving or receiving incentives from a party to vote for their candidate is an offence punishable by law*. The table indicates that as 53 (18.9%) strongly disagreed with the statement, 80 (28.6%) disagreed and 75 (26.8) agreed while 72 (25.7%) strongly agreed with the statement. This means more than half of the respondents are aware that giving or receiving an incentive from a party to vote for their candidate is an offence punishable by law. However, a significant number of the respondents are also not aware that giving or receiving an incentive from a party to vote for their candidate is an offence punishable by law. This seems to support the Centre for Democratic Development (CDD) and Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO) survey reports prior to Ghana's 2016 presidential and parliamentary elections that some Ghanaians do not know that vote buying is an offense and punishable by law. When asked whether he knew that he could be punished by a court for taking an offer to vote for a person Emma (name withheld) said, *"if I reject it someone else would accept it. After all it's our own money they use for these things."*

Item 4 of Table 6 which is - *A vote is a personal property and the law allows one to exchange it for a gift from a party* suggests that many of the respondents do not agree that their votes are their personal property and so can be exchanged for a gift or an incentive from a political party. This is deduced from the table as 132 (47.1%) responded that they strongly disagreed with the statement

and 86 (30.7%) disagreed with the statement. Another 37(13.2%) agreed with the statement while 25 (8.9%) strongly disagreed with the statement.

Item 5 of Table 6 which is - *it is not wrong to show their ballots to the one who paid for their votes after casting their votes* suggests that 134 (47.9%) of the respondents strongly disagreed, 70 (25.0%) disagreed and 51 (18.2%) agreed while 25 (8.9%) strongly agreed with the statement. This means that the respondents are very much aware that it is wrong to show one's ballot to the one who paid to be voted for.

From Item 6 of Table 6, which is - *The law allows a voter to reveal his/her ballot to the one who paid for his/her vote.* It can be seen that about half of the respondents 139 (49.6%) strongly disagreed and 39 (31.8%) disagreed with the statement. While 25 (8.9%) agreed with the statement, 27 (9.6%) strongly agreed with the statement that they are aware that the law does allow a voter to reveal his/ her ballot to the one who paid for his/her vote.

A number of the participants when interviewed revealed that they are conversant with this electoral law as Kofi (name withheld) had this to say. *"I think it is wrong to take a shot of my ballot and show it to someone."* This indicates that participants are conversant with this law although a portion is not hence, the need for more education on electoral issues and for that matter on vote buying.

Item 7 of Table 6 indicates that 139 (49.6%) responded that they strongly disagreed with the statement and 82 (29.3%) disagreed. While 47 (16.8%) agreed with the statement, 12 (4.3%) strongly agreed with the statement. This can be interpreted that many of the respondents are aware that revealing their ballots after voting is unacceptable by the constitution. The constitution of Ghana and electoral laws strongly speak against this act. Morton and Ou (2013) in their paper "The Secret Ballot and Ethical Voting", noted that secret ballots are used in many voting situations in order to ensure privacy and anonymity. They add that in large elections they are seen as a way to shield democracy against corruption and vote-buying, giving citizens protection from intimidation and coercion so that they can make free choices.

Item 8 of Table 6 took a look at respondents' readiness to report a party, its agent or candidate that offers incentives to buy votes to the police indicated that 52 (18.6%) strongly disagreed with the statement whereas 60 (21.4%) disagreed with the statement. While 73 (26.1%) agreed with the statement, 95(33.9%) strongly agreed with the statement. In this wise, more of the respondents are ready to report vote buying to the police. Yet, there is a huge number of people who are not ready to report any kind of vote buying to the police. When asked why they are not ready to report incidents of vote buying to the police, these are what some of the respondents had to say:

Respondent 1: I will not waste my time because in Ghana laws do not work and so even if it is reported it would not yield any positive result. Respondent 2: The offence is being committed by both party in power and the opposition. We all know the law does not work against the party in power. This indicates that the electorates have apathy in the electoral system.

Notionally, elections are key to participatory democracy and being abreast of the laws of voting is equally paramount in our democratic dispensation. This is because "electoral systems evolve out of electoral rules that have become embedded in a political culture" (Taagepera 2002, p 249). Electoral rules are thus, an 'outer-layer' of an electoral system which absorbs the stakeholder manipulations for their self-interest. The electoral system sets out the structure and procedures for the conduct of public elections (Aiyede, 2007). This makes it paramount that the relationship between voters, candidates, the political parties and the electoral management body are regulated. Conclusively, the conduct of public elections is defined by the electoral system and thus, electorates confidence should be assured by the actors involved.

CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Economic status or the income level of electorates has no effects on decisions about the person to vote for. There is a relationship between vote buying incentives and voters' decisions. This makes incentives effective in winning votes.

There are provisions in Ghanaian laws to criminalize vote buying but the laws are not being enforced. Most Ghanaians are aware that political parties give out incentives to attract the votes of voters. Voters are aware that the constitution of Ghana is against the practice of vote buying. There is an awareness among the electorates of the buying or selling one's vote is punishable by law. Voters are also aware that revealing one's ballot to someone is punishable by law in Ghana.

Implications on Ghana's democracy are enormous. Vote buying is one of the major triggers of corruption by politicians after they get into power, because they want to get return on money invested during election campaigns. This can lead to the abuse of state resources.

The use of incentives to buy votes may have repercussions on Ghana's elections. It can negatively impact the quality (freeness and fairness) of elections. Vote buying can contribute to the wrong political parties being elected to serve the nation. Once voters are paid to cast their votes in a certain way, they become enslaved by their political paymasters as, by default, their rights to challenge their vote buying political paymasters are restricted.

A nation that is user-friendly to vote buying and vote selling, would not be in the best books of the foreign multinational companies seeking to invest in developing countries and vote buying may be a factor that can play against the country being selected for foreign investments. By the use of incentives to buy votes the power of the ordinary Ghanaian is gradually being sold to the rich politicians who may decide who wins an election in Ghana.

That some voters are not conversant with vote buying laws may make them fall victims to vote buying. Political parties may frequently hijack purported developmental programs or projects for the purpose of buying votes.

Vote buying is undemocratic. It is the bane of Ghana's democracy. The imperative is to search for ways to eliminate it from the country's developing democracy. There has been enough legislation to ban vote buying in Ghana. The problem is respective institutions have failed to enforce these legislations. The law enforcement agencies and all stakeholders including the Police, the Judiciary, the Electoral Commission (EC) and others must ensure that culprits are put before courts and punished.

There should also be new resolve to fight corruption among leaders who use all means to make money to engage in vote buying.

Since the findings concluded that there is a relationship between income (economic status) and voters' decisions, governments should make it a point to reduce poverty by enhancing wealth redistribution by creating or providing jobs especially for the rural folks.

More so, there is the need for more voter education and sensitization campaigns or awareness on ignorant citizens about the malpractice of buying votes. Voters, governments, NGOs, electoral bodies, civil societies, and non-state actors should find it an activity to spearhead to strengthen democracy by mounting vigorous campaigns to educate the electorates not to accept financial or material rewards before they vote for a particular candidate or party as this amount to selling one's conscience.

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