

**POLITICAL EDUCATION AS AN INTERVENTION STRATEGY TO CURB THE
PREVAILING TRENDS OF MONEY POLITICS AND VOTE BUYING IN NIGERIA**

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Abstract

In contemporary Nigeria, the pervasive influence of money politics and vote buying has become a defining feature of the country's political landscape. The rampant use of financial inducements to sway electoral outcomes has had a profoundly negative impact on the nation's democratic processes. This paper critically examines the phenomenon of money politics and vote buying in Nigeria, arguing that political education is a vital intervention strategy to address these challenges. Through an in-depth analysis of the Nigerian experience, this paper highlights the complex interplay of historical, cultural, and socio-economic factors that have contributed to the entrenchment of money politics and vote buying. It also explores the critical role of political education in promoting civic awareness, critical thinking, and participatory skills among citizens. The study for the study involves quantitative study will give the paper firsthand information on the activities of the citizens during election. The findings of the paper revealed that citizen are not well equip about the effect of money buying and its consequence, also, it also gives opportunity for politician that are not credible for the elective position which could be harmful to the political administration. This paper concludes that such a program can promote a more inclusive and participatory democracy in Nigeria, where citizens' voices are valued and their votes are free from undue influence. The paper recommended that empowering citizens with the knowledge and skills necessary to engage in informed and active citizenship, a well-structured and implemented political education programme can help mitigate the corrosive effects of money politics and vote buying.

Key Words: Political Education, Intervention Strategy, Money Politics, Vote Buying

Introduction

In Nigeria's democratic process, elections play a crucial role as citizens' exercise their right to vote, thereby participating in the democratization process. However, a significant challenge has emerged in the form of money politics and vote buying, which has become a dominant feature of the country's political landscape. This phenomenon has been a source of concern for many Nigerians who are committed to the ideals of democracy. Scholars and political theorists have extensively studied and documented the impact of money politics and vote buying on Nigeria's democratic process (Chandra, (2024). The relationship between money and politics has been shown to have far-reaching implications for democratic virtues. Since the first military intervention in Nigeria's history, which marked the end of the First Republic, the seeds of political corruption were sown, and over time, they have matured into the monetized politics we see today.

A review of Nigeria's electoral history, from 1959 to the present, reveals a pattern of irregularities that have undermined the hopes and expectations of the people. These irregularities include allegations of corruption, vote rigging, lack of transparency, and vote buying, among others. The prevalence of these issues has raised concerns about the integrity of the electoral process and the health of Nigeria's democracy (Zack Williams, 2004). The voting process in Nigerian politics has become alarmingly commoditized with money freely changing hands before and during elections. This phenomenon has become a major obstacle to the country's progress. It's striking to note that Nigeria's problems don't stem from a lack of relevant constitutions, but rather from a lack of civic attitudes necessary to sustain a democratic system.

The politicians themselves are often the culprits, refusing to play by the rules and instead resorting to financial inducements to sway voters. At campaign rallies, it's common for politicians to distribute money, food, and other gifts to Nigerians. On the other hand, the electorate has become apathetic due to the negative impact of Nigeria's democratic model, characterized by election rigging, bribery, and corruption (Zack Williams, 2004). As a result, voters have become transactional, expecting immediate benefits from politicians in exchange for their cooperation. The electorate's mindset is often driven by the uncertainty of tomorrow, leading them to prioritize short-term gains over long-term benefits. The reckless use of money to buy votes and consciences has become a pressing concern, undermining the integrity of the electoral process and the democratic system as a whole.

Conceptual Framework

Concept of Democracy

Democracy is a pivotal concept in this study, serving as the foundation for our analysis and arguments. However, defining democracy is a complex task due to its multifaceted nature and the diverse perspectives surrounding it. According to Osterberg-kaufmann,et.al (2026), democracy is a contested concept, meaning its definition varies based on individual interpretations and contexts. Despite the ambiguity, scholars have attempted to capture the essence of democracy. At its core, democracy is a form of government where citizens have a stake in the system through political participation and trust (Rodriguez-Saavedra, et. al 2026). It's about empowering people to control decision-making processes (Zack-Williams, 2001). Democracy involves several key elements, including individual freedom, equality among citizens, justice in government-citizen relations, and citizen participation in selecting leaders (Nnoli, 2003; Omotola, 2006). It's also about giving individuals the opportunity to participate in decision-making on issues affecting their lives (Yadav 2024). This participation is a fundamental aspect of democracy, includes rights such as freedom from want and ignorance, equality, justice, fairness, respect for the rule of law, and the promotion and defense of human rights (Aliagan, 2006).

In essence, democracy can be seen as a system of government where power is vested in the people, either directly or through elected representatives (Swift, 2003). It's a system that strives for ideal social justice and equality for all citizens (Miklosi 2025). Democracy involves collective decision-making, where everyone affected by a decision has a say in its making, and ensures that the rights of all individuals are respected, regardless of their background or status. Given the importance of democracy, it is crucial for citizens to be actively engaged in the democratic process, particularly in selecting leaders and providing input on public policies and attitudes. According to Przeworski (2024), democracy can be defined as a method or institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions, where individuals acquire power to decide through a competitive struggle for the people's vote. This definition highlights the significance of citizen participation and competition in shaping democratic outcomes. By involving citizens in the decision-making process, democracy can ensure that power is vested in the people and that their voices are heard.

The concept of democracy implies that power is held by the people, but exercised through representation. In modern times, democracy has come to mean representative democracy, where citizens elect representatives to make decisions on their behalf. This system is built on a competitive electoral process, making elections an integral part of democracy. According to Przeworski (2024) democracy is a system of government where people exercise power either directly or through representatives they elect. A democratic state is characterized by institutions that express and uphold the popular will of its citizens. The term "democracy" has become widely used, with even authoritarian regimes claiming to be democratic (Bello, 2003). At its core, democracy is a system where citizens have an equal and effective input in collective decision-making (Yadav 2024). This can be understood as "rule by the people," where power is held collectively and administered by elected representatives (National Youth Service Corps, 2000; Sambo, 2006). Different scholars have offered varying perspectives on democracy. For instance, Chandra (2024), views democracy as the rule of multiple minorities. While there is no universally accepted definition of democracy, one common thread is the involvement of citizens in the governance of their societies. In modern democratic practices, citizens participate in shaping the political, socio-economic, and cultural affairs of their countries (Sambo, 2006).

Political Participation

Political participation is a fundamental component of democracy, enabling citizens to engage in the decision-making processes that affect their lives. In a democratic system, individuals are given equal opportunities to develop their capacities, regardless of gender. Ideally, democracy allows for individual participation in decisions that impact one's life.

According to Anifowose (2003), political participation encompasses various voluntary activities, including holding public and party offices, running for office, attending election campaigns, voting, and staying informed about politics. These activities enable citizens to contribute to the democratic process and shape the direction of their communities and societies. By participating in politics, individuals can exercise their rights, express their opinions, and hold leaders accountable. According to Ariawan., Soemartono, Effendy, & Sukmana, (2025), political participation is a process that enables individuals to play a role in the political life of their society. Through this participation, individuals have the opportunity to contribute to determining the common goals of their society and deciding the best ways to achieve them. This perspective highlights the significance of citizen engagement in shaping the direction and development of their communities. By participating in the political process, individuals can influence the decisions that affect their lives and the lives of those around them.

Election

A crucial element of modern representative government is the electoral process. Free and fair elections have become inextricably linked to the development and growth of democratic governance, serving as a key indicator of its presence. Elections are fundamentally a people's process, rooted in the principles of citizen participation and the right to influence government through voting and mandate. This connection is underscored by Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which enshrines the right of citizens to participate in government and public affairs through democratic means Miklosi, Z. (2025). By exercising their right to vote and engage in the electoral process, citizens can shape the direction of their countries and hold leaders accountable.

An election can be defined as a process agreed upon by a group of people to select one or a few individuals from a larger pool to occupy positions of authority. This process is governed by rules and regulations designed to ensure fairness and justice for all participants. Elections are a hallmark of democratic governance, conferring legitimacy on those who hold power Przeworski, (2024). In Nigeria, however, the nature of elections has been marred by troubling trends. Specifically, two phenomena have dominated the electoral landscape: money politics and election rigging. In past elections, financial influence has often taken precedence over political ideology, shaping the actions of political parties and the behaviour of many politicians. This has undermined the integrity of the electoral process and the legitimacy of those who assume power.

The Role of Money in Politics

The role of money in politics is complex, with both legitimate and illegitimate uses. On one hand, money is necessary for managing party activities, such as campaigns, elections, and advertising. It is also needed to compensate party agents and support candidates. However, the improper use of money in politics, such as bribing voters and electoral officers, undermines the integrity of the electoral process. Furthermore, some politicians use money to sponsor candidates with the expectation of exploiting them if they win Bauhr, (2025). This practice highlights the problem of money politics, where the influence of wealth can compromise the democratic process. The illegal use of money in politics often depends on the discretion of powerful individuals who seek to buy votes and manipulate the system for their own gain.

Vote buying can be understood as a transactional exchange where candidates "buy" votes from citizens or electorates, much like a commercial transaction. In this context, vote buying is akin to a contract or auction, where voters sell their votes to the highest bidder. Political parties and candidates offer material benefits to voters in exchange for their support at the ballot box, operating on the principle of market exchange Ugobueze, (2024). However, it's essential to recognize that these commercial aspirations may encounter objective and subjective barriers. While candidates may aim to purchase political support, their efforts can be hindered by various factors, including the complexities of voter behavior and the dynamics of the electoral process. By understanding vote buying in this way, we can better analyze its implications for democratic governance and the integrity of elections.

Vote buying and vote selling can be seen as a transactional exchange where individuals sell their voting freedom to those who buy it, with the expectation that the buyers will recoup their investment once they gain power. From the perspective of ordinary people, elections become an opportunity for temporary financial gain, where candidates fulfill their obligations to support voters in times of need (Bauhr 2025). This perspective highlights the complex dynamics at play in electoral processes, where economic incentives can influence voting decisions and undermine the

integrity of democratic systems. The influence of money and vote buying in Nigerian politics has become a dominant factor in the election of officials to positions of authority. This has led to a situation where financial considerations often take precedence over other factors, compromising the integrity of the electoral process. As a result, elections are frequently marred by irregularities, undermining their freeness and fairness. The centrality of money in the political process has raised concerns about the quality of leadership and the representation of citizens' interests.

Rigging

The concept of rigging is multifaceted and can be understood in various ways. According to the BBC English Dictionary (2021), rigging refers to the act of dishonestly manipulating an election to achieve a desired outcome. Kurfi (2003), views rigging as a means of making elections unfair, identifying methods such as bribery, intimidation, and fraud. Other forms of rigging include gerrymandering, ballot box stuffing, and vote buying.

The success of rigging often relies heavily on the use of money, which can compromise the integrity of the electoral process. However, the fundamental principle of democracy is to institutionalize "government of the people." When electoral fraud occurs, it can lead to chaos and undermine the legitimacy of the democratic process.

In Nigeria's case, the pervasive use of money in politics and the nature of electoral politics have raised concerns about the credibility of the democratization process. If elections are not free and fair, the entire democratic exercise becomes meaningless, highlighting the need for reforms to ensure the integrity of the electoral process.

Political Literacy

Political literacy should serve as a tool for social control, promoting societal progress and advancement. According to Adeniran (2000), education in a democracy should not only cultivate enlightenment and critical thinking but also instill an understanding of democratic ideals in citizens. Ekaette (2000) emphasizes the importance of political consciousness and education in ensuring that elections and voting are truly democratic instruments. He stresses that a conscious and enlightened citizenry is the central theme of democracy, highlighting the need for citizens to be informed and engaged in the democratic process. By fostering political literacy, citizens can make informed decisions and participate meaningfully in shaping their societies.

Political Education and Political Conscientisation in Nigeria

Political education encompasses more than just party indoctrination or campaign rhetoric. According to Abiona (1995), it is a deliberate effort to impart political ideas, history, knowledge, and opinions about government to citizens through formal or informal education. Ekaette (2000), defines political education as a conscious attempt to teach political ideas, including civic knowledge, attitudes, and feelings about one's country and government. This perspective is supported by Huijsmans et.al (2026), who argues that political education is not a byproduct of social interaction or modernity but rather a purposeful endeavor to educate citizens. Adelekan (2010), further explained that political education enables individuals to understand their civic responsibilities, making them functional members of society. Through political education, citizens can acquire the knowledge and critical thinking skills necessary to participate effectively in the democratic process.

According to Isitoah and Eregha (2000), political education is a deliberate effort to raise awareness and consciousness among citizens about their constitutional rights, duties, powers, and authority, as well as the governing process of the state. Alscher, Ludewig,, & McElvany, (2022) adds that political education goes beyond merely socializing "virtuous citizens." Instead, it aims to empower students with informed, rational, and nuanced perspectives on the world. By fostering

critical thinking and civic awareness, political education enables citizens to engage more effectively in the democratic process and make informed decisions. According to Alscher, P., Ludewig, U., & McElvany, N. (2022), political education extends beyond teaching formal structures of national institutions and socializing students to develop into "virtuous citizens." Instead, it should equip individuals with intellectual skills and attitudes to acquire knowledge of governance processes and respond aptly to societal dynamics. Scholars like Stone (1974) and Toney (1977), emphasize that political education is a children-oriented program that should be introduced in schools. In Nigeria, the government recognizes the significance of literacy in individual and national development, leading to efforts in mass literacy education across different government levels. The Directorate for Social Mobilization (MAMSER), now the National Orientation Agency (NOA), was established to address this. MAMSER's key programs included:

- Mass Mobilization: Focusing on self-reliance, social justice, and economic development
 - Political Education: Educating citizens about democracy, governance, and civic responsibilities
 - Mass Education: Promoting widespread education and awareness
- Gana (1987) outlines the objectives of political education, which include:
- Democracy and National Development: Educating Nigerians on the importance of democracy for national development
 - Awareness about Apathy and Violence: Informing citizens about the dangers of apathy and political violence
 - Promoting Popular Organizations: Encouraging the formation of organizations that ensure democracy and social justice
 - Consciousness Raising: Making citizens aware that poverty stems from exploitation, domination, and lack of democracy

By achieving these objectives, political education can empower Nigerians to participate effectively in the democratic process, ultimately contributing to national development and progress (Disciplines, 2025). Despite MAMSER's efforts, the problem of political literacy persists, and social ills that literacy education aimed to eradicate remain prevalent (Alscher, Ludewig, & McElvany, (2022). Isitoah and Eregha (2000), note that MAMSER's goal of creating a new national political culture was not pursued with sufficient vigor. They also criticize the colonial and post-colonial education system, which included subjects like civic education, government, and history, but failed to produce a conscious and engaged citizenry capable of meaningful participation in nation-building.

Ugobueze (2024), emphasized that in a country plagued by poverty, hunger, ignorance, and political apathy, these issues can only be addressed by empowering people with the necessary tools. Literacy, in this context, goes beyond mere acquisition of basic skills and involves equipping citizens with critical thinking and awareness to drive positive change. By providing people with the "weapons" of literacy and critical thinking, they can work towards eliminating these social problems and building a more engaged and participatory society. This concept of conscientization elevates political literacy from a narrow perspective to a transformative force. Paulo Freire's method of conscientization is particularly relevant in this context, as it views literacy as a liberating force that enables individuals to critically engage with their surroundings and drive meaningful change. By adopting this approach, political literacy can become a powerful tool for empowerment and social transformation.

The concept of conscientization is a transformative method that fosters awareness and empowers individuals to change their reality. According to Lawal, Abdullahi, Adoke, &

Amadikwa (2025). conscientization is a process of growing awareness that aims to understand and transform reality. By linking literacy to the learners' existential situations, conscientization enables them to take steps towards addressing the challenges they face. This approach to literacy education, as Alscher, Ludewig, & McElvany, (2022) notes, seeks to empower learners to understand their world and their position within it, and to take action to change adverse social, economic, and political conditions. The use of conscientization highlights the importance of involving learners and their experiences in the learning process, moving beyond mere reading and writing skills. Instead, literacy education becomes a process of critically examining and addressing the root causes of societal problems, promoting meaningful transformation and empowerment.

Literacy educators in Nigeria can benefit from the connection between political literacy and conscientization, as articulated by. This article aims to contribute meaningful insights to enhance efforts in promoting political awareness through education in Nigeria. By doing so, learners will not only become aware of their rights and freedoms but also understand the limits and responsibilities that come with exercising them Ugobueze, (2024). Crucially, they will learn to rationalize the need for occasional constraints on these rights and freedoms, and appreciate the corresponding duties and responsibilities that accompany them Alscher, Ludewig,, & McElvany, (2022).. By adopting this approach, literacy education can empower learners to engage more effectively in the democratic process and contribute to the development of their communities. Drawing on Paulo Freire's method of conscientization, this paper concludes that integrating political education with consciousness arousal in school curricula is crucial for Nigeria's development. As Ajiboye (2003), aptly notes, a society's progress is largely driven by its educated, informed, and enlightened citizens, rather than its illiterate members. By prioritizing political education and critical consciousness, Nigeria can empower its citizens to participate meaningfully in the democratic process and contribute to the country's growth and development.

Effective and functional citizenship is a vital need in today's rapidly changing world. As societal problems evolve, solutions that were once effective may no longer be applicable. Therefore, it is essential to teach new skills that enable individuals to navigate life's challenges, particularly in the realm of human relations, where citizens' rights, responsibilities, and relationships are concerned. Schools play a critical role in this endeavor, serving as incubators for critical thinking and problem-solving, rather than merely transmitting social heritage Ugobueze, (2024). By fostering these skills, schools can empower citizens to adapt and thrive in an ever-changing world. Critical thinking is a vital form of functional intelligence that enables citizens to analyze complex issues and develop effective solutions. To critically examine the political, social, and economic landscape of their time, citizens require the ability to think critically. This skill is best nurtured in a democratic environment that encourages inquiry, debate, and dissent, rather than demanding blind obedience to authority, as is often the case under authoritarian or military rule. In a democracy, critical thinking can flourish, empowering citizens to engage meaningfully in the democratic process and drive positive change.

To build a just and equitable society, citizens must develop a nuanced understanding of governance. According to Salami (2007), this requires citizens to critically evaluate government policies and methods, analyzing their effectiveness and suggesting alternatives. To cultivate these skills, children need access to high-quality education that fosters critical thinking and intellectual curiosity. As John Dewey (1944), notes, the school environment plays a vital role in shaping the moral and mental disposition of pupils. By deliberately designing educational experiences, schools can help eliminate undesirable elements of society and promote positive values and behaviors. By doing so, schools can empower future citizens to drive meaningful change and build

a better society. With Nigeria's adoption of democratic governance, it is imperative that the country's educational institutions adapt to this new reality. Educational institutions should strive to produce citizens who are equipped to think critically and make informed decisions, rather than being susceptible to external manipulation. By doing so, Nigeria can develop a generation of patriotic citizens who will prioritise the nation's interests and uphold its values, rather than betraying the nation's cause (Fafunwa, 1974). This requires a renewed focus on education that promotes critical thinking, national consciousness, and civic responsibility.

The significance of political education cannot be overstated. According to Ugobueze (2024), political education is a crucial instrument for achieving political stability in any nation. He emphasizes that democracy flourishes when citizens are politically educated, and a government that prioritizes political education garners the support of its people. In Nigeria's current democratic dispensation, it is clear that political education is the bedrock of a functioning democracy. Citizens can only defend their rights if they are aware of them, and political education is essential for instilling this awareness. By acquiring political education, citizens can understand not only their rights but also their duties, enabling them to participate meaningfully in the democratic process. For democracy to take root and flourish, the government must create a conducive environment. Nigerian youths should not only learn about democratic virtues and ideals but also internalize essential democratic ethics. They require political orientation and opportunities to practice democratic principles. As Adekunle (2001, p. 24) aptly puts it, "government is a political society in which everyone finds himself," emphasizing the need for inclusive participation and engagement. By fostering a culture of democratic values and practices, Nigeria can empower its citizens, particularly the youth, to contribute to the country's democratic growth and development. Based on the analysis, this paper identifies the following objectives and tasks for political education in Nigeria:

- Fostering Political Sensitivity: Developing Nigerian youth's awareness and engagement in political affairs.
- Producing Informed Citizens: Equipping citizens with the knowledge and skills to contribute meaningfully to national development.
- Promoting Political Literacy: Creating a politically literate population that understands the intricacies of governance.
- Understanding Government Structure: Providing in-depth knowledge of the system of government, including the federal, state, and local levels.
- Developing Participation Skills: Equipping Nigerians with the intellectual and social skills to actively participate in community politics.
- Raising Consciousness: Empowering individuals to understand their rights, duties, and obligations within a democratic framework.

By achieving these objectives, political education can play a vital role in shaping informed, engaged, and responsible citizens who can contribute to Nigeria's development and democratic growth.

Conclusion

This paper has investigated the crucial role of political education in tackling the widespread problem of money politics and vote buying in Nigeria. Through a thorough review of existing literature and research, it is clear that political education can be a potent tool for promoting democratic values, principles, and practices. By empowering citizens with knowledge and critical thinking skills, political education can help mitigate the influence of money in politics and foster a more informed and engaged citizenry. To combat the entrenched problems of money politics and

vote buying in Nigeria, political education is crucial. By educating citizens about their rights, responsibilities, and the electoral process, political education can promote informed decision-making and civic engagement (Freire, 1987). As Nigeria navigates its democratic path, it requires citizens who are not only knowledgeable but also strong in character to address the challenges inherited from years of military rule. Investing in political education can yield substantial benefits, including a more informed and active citizenry, reduced corruption, and improved governance (Adekunle, 2001). By prioritizing political education, Nigeria can build a brighter future for its citizens and consolidate its democratic gains.

Recommendations

From this perspective, democracy requires active participation from all members of society in governing the nation, particularly through the process of selecting leaders. This participatory approach ensures that citizens have a voice in shaping their country's future and holding leaders accountable (Dewey, 1944). By engaging in the democratic process, citizens can exercise their rights and responsibilities, ultimately contributing to the well-being and development of their nation.

Youths play a vital role in promoting and consolidating democracy in our country, particularly in driving development. To achieve this, Nigeria needs the right type of youths who possess strong character and credibility to lead the country forward, addressing the lingering challenges of military rule. Governments must prioritize educating citizens on societal values and institutions to garner their support. Political literacy is a crucial tool for social control, promoting social progress and perpetuating society. In a democracy, education should not only cultivate enlightenment and critical thinking but also instill an understanding of democratic ideals, especially among Nigerian youths. By doing so, education can empower youths to become active, informed, and responsible citizens who can contribute to Nigeria's growth and development.

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