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Vote-Selling: Infrastructure and Public Services

Nat Adojutelegan
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Walden University

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Nat Adojutelegan

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2018

Abstract

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Public Policy and Public Administration

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Abstract

Vote-selling in Nigeria pervades and permeates the electoral space, where it has become the primary instrument of electoral fraud. Previous research has indicated a strong correlation between vote-buying and underinvestment and poor delivery of public services. There remains, however, a significant gap in the current literature regarding the nature of the relationship between vote-selling and the delivery of public services. The purpose of this study was to uncover voters' behaviors by investigating their common and lived experiences with respect to the provision of infrastructure, delivery of public services, and voting during elections. Using Bandura's theory of reciprocal determinism, the research explored the connection between environment and vote-selling. Data were collected through semistructured interviews with 10 individuals who participated in the most recent elections in Akoko North West Local Government, Ondo State, Nigeria. The data were analyzed using Moustakas's transcendental phenomenological process. Key findings suggest a reciprocal relationship between vote-selling, and infrastructure and public services. The study findings also revealed that vote-sellers' feel justified because vote-selling is perceived as a product of disappointment, lack of trust and voters' apathy, willingness to accept their own share of "national cake," and poverty. These findings are consistent with Bandura's proposition that people create the society and equally react to environmental factors. This study contributes to the existing literature and may enhance social change initiatives by improving the understanding of the connection between the provision of infrastructure and the delivery of public services and vote-selling.

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my father, Josiah Olaiya Durojaiye Adojutelegan (deceased), an exemplary father who imbued in me the values of honesty, probity, hard work and perseverance. Also, it is dedicated to the impoverished Nigerian voters who are victims of bad governance and fraudulent electoral manipulations.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

The phenomenon of vote-selling is currently the most apparent and predominant electoral strategy that political parties and their candidates employ to prosecute elections in Nigeria. The vote-selling phenomenon pervades Nigerian elections (Onapajo, Francis, & Okeke-Uzodike, 2015). No single factor determines vote-buying. Researchers have found that it “is a function of a mix of socioeconomic, cultural and institutional factors” (Hicken, 2007, p. 58).

Vote-selling is an open form of bribery that substantially corrupts the Nigerian electoral system (Uchenna-Emezue, 2015). In the same vein, corruption impacts the electoral system. Fundamentally, there is a close nexus between political corruption and infrastructure (Ogbuagu, Ubi, & Effiom, 2014). Unbridled political corruption among Nigerian public office holders leads to inadequate provision of roads, water, healthcare, electricity, and other infrastructure (Ajisebiyawo, 2016).

Through this phenomenological study, I sought to uncover voters’ behaviors by investigating common and lived experiences of voters who had resided in the Akoko North West Local Government for at least the last 5 years and had participated in the most recent elections. The most recent elections were those that the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) conducted in Akoko North West Local Government, Ondo State, Nigeria, between 2012 and 2016, which were the 2012 governorship election; 2015 House of Assembly, House of Representatives, Senate, and presidential elections; and 2016 governorship election.

In this chapter, I explain the background of the study by summarizing relevant research literature, describing the gap that the study is intended to address, and pointing out that the connection between vote-selling and the provision of infrastructure has not previously been explored. I conclude that none of the existing literature has explored vote-selling from voters' perspectives in relation to the provision of infrastructure. This study views the phenomenon of vote-selling through the theoretical lens of reciprocal determinism. Further, this phenomenological study focuses on common experiences of voters that shaped their behaviors during elections.

Background

All elections in Nigeria have historically been characterized by electoral irregularities (Danjibo & Oladeji, 2007). It is noteworthy that the 1961 regional elections; 1964 general election; 1965 Western House of Assembly election; and 1979, 1983, 1979, 1999, 2003, and 2007 general elections were characterized by electoral malpractice (Awopeju, 2011). It is evident that candidates and political parties adopt various means or strategies to rig elections in Nigeria (Ajayi, 2006). They corrupt the electoral process with vote-buying (Echegaray, 2015). Incumbent governments obtain public funds while in power to maximize vote-buying during elections (Devadoss & Luckstead, 2016). They illegally convert public funds for personal gain at the expense of the provision of adequate infrastructure (Ajisebiyawo, 2016).

Existing research shows that a mix of poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, old age, early-stage democratization, and a winner-take-all electoral system has contributed to vote-buying (Danjibo & Oladeji, 2007; Kennedy, 2010; Onapajo et al., 2015; Owen,

2013). Available research equally shows that vote-buying, among other factors, brings about poor public service delivery (Omotosho, 2014) and adversely affects good governance (Kramon, 2013). Hicken, Leider, Ravanilla, and Yang (2014) argued that vote-buying leads to inefficiencies in the public sector and low infrastructural quality (Tanzi & Davoodi, 1997). Vote-buying is a product of political corruption that brings about inefficient public service delivery, poor public services, and inadequate infrastructure (Gillanders, 2014; Hanusch & Keefer, 2013; Lucky, 2013).

Khemani (2015) found that there is a connection between vote-buying and poor delivery of public services. Although Bardhan, Mitra, Mookherjee, and Nath (2015) concluded that good public services ordinarily increase voter support, it is noteworthy that existing literature has not examined the connection between public services and vote-selling. Moreover, none of the available research has explored the vote-selling phenomenon from voters' perspectives.

The study provided a better understanding of, and highlighted the connection between, the provision of infrastructure and public services and vote-selling. The study may help those in developing democracies to understand the nexus and interrelationship between vote-selling and infrastructure with a view to placing more importance or emphasis on improving infrastructure and public services.

Problem Statement

Political parties use various illegal means to ensure electoral success in Nigeria (Oromareghake, 2013). Vote-buying and vote-selling are especially prominent in the Nigerian electoral space (Lucky, 2013). They are the bane of authentic electoral

outcomes in Nigeria. Vote-selling is subtle and intrinsically linked to the electoral successes of political parties at all levels of the electoral process. Jensen and Justesen (2014) and Kramon (2013) contended that vote-buying is widespread in many emerging democracies. Scholars use various definitions for vote-buying and vote-selling. Lack of uniformity in definitions of these phenomena among scholars has led to definitional ambiguity with respect to vote-buying, vote-selling, and clientelism (Nichter, 2014). It is arguable that pre-election promises and vote-buying are on the same pedestal in regard to the adverse effects they have on the electoral and democratic process. Lippert-Rasmussen (2011) pointed out that some researchers take the view that vote-buying is antithetical to good democratic governance, whereas others opine that vote-buying is similar to election promises, which are good for democracy. He asserted that vote-buying and election promises equally “distort democratic deliberation” and “violate the norm of political equality” (Lippert-Rasmussen, 2011, p. 144).

Further, there is no consensus on the factors that precipitate vote-selling. Some researchers have opined that vote-buying is a product of poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, old age, early-stage democratization, and/or a winner-take-all electoral system (Danjibo & Oladeji, 2007; Kennedy, 2010; Onapajo et al., 2015; Owen, 2013). However, the connection between vote-selling and infrastructure has not been explored adequately. Poor delivery of health services allows politicians to buy votes, and voters “may behaviourally prefer immediate monetary benefits to other types of public services” (Khemani, 2015, p. 92). Additionally, Lucky (2013) argued that voters have become cynical vote-sellers in Nigeria. However, Khemani (2015) concluded that there is a

connection between vote-buying and poor delivery of public services. Bardhan et al. (2015) took the view that good public services ordinarily increase voter support. Accordingly, “the equilibrium consequences for public policy performance when governments gain (or lose) office in elections with widespread vote-buying has received relatively little attention” (Khemani, 2015, p. 85).

Nevertheless, none of the existing literature has explored the phenomenon of vote-selling from voters’ perspectives with particular reference to meaning ascribed to the connection between the provision of infrastructure and delivery of public services on one hand and vote-selling on the other.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to uncover voters’ behaviors by investigating their common and lived experiences with respect to the provision of infrastructure, the delivery of public services, and voting during elections in Akoko North West Local Government, Ondo State, Nigeria. The aim of the study was to explore the connection between the provision of infrastructure and delivery of public services and vote-selling.

The research garnered information from a purposeful sample of individuals who understood and could illuminate issues concerning infrastructure, public services, and vote-selling. The focus was on the recollections of individuals of their experiences involving the provision of infrastructure, public services, and vote-selling in Akoko North West Local Government, Ondo State, Nigeria, which were gathered through in-depth interviews. In-depth interviews with the purposeful sample of individuals provided

a greater understanding of the connection between the provision of infrastructure and public services and vote-selling.

Research Question

The central question in this study was the following: How do individuals who participated in the most recent elections describe their lived experiences of vote-selling in relation to the provision of infrastructure and public services in Akoko North West Local Government?

Nature of the Study

This study was designed as a qualitative transcendental phenomenological study. I sought to explore the “common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon” (Creswell, 2013, p. 87). There was a need to capture and describe the lived experiences of individuals about the phenomenon—that is, how they perceived, remembered, and described the phenomenon—to explore common meanings ascribed to the vote-selling phenomenon (Patton, 2015). Phenomenological research describes common experiences of several individuals regarding a phenomenon through the collection of data or information through multiple interviews (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2015). The phenomenological approach was best suited for the study because it allowed voters who participated in the most recent elections to express—in their own words, based on their common and lived experiences—their understanding of vote-selling, the state of the provision of infrastructure, and the delivery of public services. This approach enabled the study to throw light on the common experiences of voters that shaped their behaviors during elections.

I confined myself to researching individuals who had experienced vote-selling and the state of infrastructure and public services because the review of the literature identified a close nexus between vote-buying and public services. I selected individuals who had participated in the most recent elections and had been approached for vote-selling. They were able to share their personal experiences regarding vote-selling, the state of the infrastructure, and the delivery of public services.

I employed a purposeful sampling to perform deliberate selection of individuals who had resided continuously in the community for at least 5 years, had been exposed to the phenomenon of vote-selling, and had participated in the most recent elections. Patton (2015) pointed out that a maximum-variation (heterogeneity) sampling strategy captures common themes from narratives of individuals from different backgrounds. Patton identified criterion sampling, group sampling, and time-location selection strategies as three purposeful sampling strategies. I used these three purposeful sampling strategies to select the interviewees. Criterion sampling enabled me to identify registered voters who meet the inclusion criteria, the group sampling strategy enabled the selection of participants with different profiles, and the time-location strategy enabled the selection of persons who had resided in the community continuously for at least 5 years.

I used an inductive strategy to conduct interviews with individuals who had extensive knowledge about the phenomenon of vote-selling and the state of infrastructure in the community with a view toward eliciting information about and in-depth descriptions of the vote-selling phenomenon and the state of infrastructure and public services. I prepared an interview protocol (located in Appendix A) for guidance, and I

used it before, during, and after the interviews. I used semistructured, open-ended questions to prompt the interviewees to remember and describe their experiences and how they impacted their voting behavior.

I recorded and transcribed the interviews. I carefully and thoroughly read the transcriptions. I used the four main steps of Moustakas's (1994) transcendental phenomenological data analysis process—(a) epoche, (b) transcendental phenomenological reduction, (c) imaginative variation, and (d) synthesis of meanings—to analyze the interview data. The detailed methodology of the study is provided in Chapter 3.

Theoretical Framework

In this study, I examined the phenomenon of vote-selling through the theoretical lens of Bandura's theory of reciprocal determinism. The central theme of the theory is that there is a connection between environment and behavior, whereby the environment influences human behavior (Bandura, 1974). The theory helps readers to understand the connection between environmental factors—infrastructure, public services, and elected public office holders—and personal experiences of voters.

Bandura (1974) accepted that external consequences are not the sole or independent determinant of human behavior. He posited that the intervening influence of cognition changes human behavior (Bandura, 1974). He explained that people play a dialectic role in being actively involved in the creation of society and reacting to environmental stimulants (Bandura, 1978).

Bandura (1974) took the view that external consequences are most effective in affecting human behavior when they conjoin with personal experiences. Bandura (1977) argued that “behavior partly creates the environment, and the resultant environment, in turn, influences the behavior” (p. 40).

From this perspective, all human accomplishments result from “reciprocal interaction of external circumstances with a host of personal determinants including endowed potentialities, acquired competences, reflective thought, and a high level of self-initiative” (Bandura, 1974, p. 867). Reciprocal determinism explains how the environment produces effects. The theory of reciprocal determinism was suited for this study because it presupposes that environmental factors drive voters’ behavior.

Definition of Terms

Infrastructure: Road networks, transport networks, schools, hospitals, social housing, and government buildings (Khoteeva & Khoteeva, 2017).

Public services: Services “in the field of transport, energy, water, telecommunications, and health” (Babatunde, Perera, Zhou, & Udeaja, 2015, p. 669).

Vote-buyers: Individuals—mainly party agents and candidates for public offices—who offer and make cash payments to voters to purchase their votes (Owen, 2013).

Vote-sellers: Individuals who show a willingness to sell votes or receive cash from vote-buyers or intermediaries in exchange for their votes (Vincent & Wantchekon, 2008).

Vote-buying: A process whereby individuals or political parties pay cash to voters to purchase their votes (Owen, 2013).

Vote-selling: A process whereby voters receive cash from vote-buyers or intermediaries in exchange for their votes (Vincent & Wantchekon, 2008).

Assumptions

It was assumed that the nonfulfillment of electoral promises, inadequate provision of infrastructure, and poor delivery of public services as a result of corruption might shape voters' behaviors. Bandura (1977) contended that "behavior partly creates the environment, and the resultant environment, in turn, influences the behavior" (p. 40). It was assumed that vote-selling is prevalent and that voters are knowledgeable about vote-selling (Lucky, 2013). Further, it was assumed that voters would freely talk about vote-selling because it is pervasive. It was assumed that the interview participants would provide credible information about their lived experiences of the phenomenon of vote-selling because of their participation in the most recent elections and exposure to vote-selling. It was equally assumed that the interview participants would provide rich information about the provision of infrastructure and public services because they had resided continuously in the local government for at least 5 years. Moreover, it was assumed that the theory of reciprocal determinism would be most appropriate for this study because it will help to highlight the interaction or connection between the provision of infrastructure and delivery of public services and vote-selling.

Limitations

Limitations identify the weaknesses inherent in a study that may impact the research findings. This phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of individuals who participated in the most recent election in Akoko North West Local Government. The study was confined to Akoko North West Local Government, Ondo State, Nigeria. The findings of the study were restricted to the locality. The confinement of the study to the particular locality might make it difficult to transfer or generalize the research findings to other locations. The study did not address the ramifications of these limitations, which may impact the extent of the transferability or generalizability of the study results.

The study was conducted without any reference to documentary evidence or any other evidence to corroborate or verify the statements of the interview participants. Moreover, although the interviewees were asked some follow-up questions in response to the open-ended questions, they were not cross-examined to ascertain the veracity of their answers.

The research findings lack quantitative analysis and are limited to interpretation.

Scope and Delimitations

A review of the literature identified a connection between vote-buying and delivery of public services (Khemani, 2015). The connection between vote-selling and public services has not been explored from the voters' perspectives, and most of the literature has focused on vote-buying rather than vote-selling. I confined the selection of the interview participants to individuals who had experienced the vote-selling

phenomenon in Akoko North West Local Government, Ondo State, Nigeria. I used a purposeful sampling method to select the interview participants who could provide detailed and in-depth information regarding the phenomenon of vote-selling, the state of infrastructure, and the delivery of public services from the voters' perspective.

The delimitation of participants to selected individuals who gained knowledge of the vote-selling phenomenon through their participation in the most recent elections and exposure to vote-selling enabled the isolation of the research findings from existing studies dealing with vote-buying. This study was conducted in Akoko North West Local Government, Ondo State, Nigeria. Given that the study and findings are restricted to the designated locality, it may be difficult to transfer or generalize the findings to other locations.

Significance of the Study

The study makes an original contribution and fills a gap in the literature by addressing the nexus between the provision of infrastructure and the delivery of public services and the phenomenon of vote-selling.

The study may contribute to positive social change by highlighting and providing a greater understanding of the connection between the provision of infrastructure and delivery of public services and vote-selling. The study may enable political parties in Nigeria or other developing democracies to understand the overarching connection between the provision of infrastructure and delivery of public services and voters' behaviors. It may therefore help Nigerian political parties, or political parties in

developing democracies, to place more weight and importance on the delivery of pre-election pronouncements and public policy performance.

Summary

Through this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study, I sought to fill a gap in the literature by investigating the connection between the provision of infrastructure and the delivery of public services and the phenomenon of vote-selling. The study is divided into five sections. In Chapter 1, I provided an introduction to the vote-selling phenomenon and argued that it has become prevalent in Nigerian politics.

The available research reveals that corruption has existed historically in the electoral process. Although it is difficult to identify a single cause of vote-selling in the literature, it appears that there is a connection between the delivery of public services and vote-buying. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to uncover voters' behaviors by investigating their common and lived experiences with respect to the provision of infrastructure, delivery of public services, and vote-selling during elections in Akoko North West Local Government, Ondo State, Nigeria. The research question for this study was the following: "How do individuals who participated in the most recent elections describe their lived experiences of vote-selling in relation to the provision of infrastructure and public services in Akoko North West Local Government?" I used the theory of reciprocal determinism as a theoretical lens to examine the phenomenon of vote-selling.

In Chapter 2, I provide an extensive review of the literature on vote-buying and vote-selling. I explain the conceptual definitional ambiguity with respect to vote-buying,

the attributes of vote-buying, and the relationships between vote-buying, election promises, and fraud. I provide a detailed review of the factors that enable and influence vote-selling, discuss the consequential effects of vote-selling, and address how the menace associated with the phenomenon might be reduced or eliminated. The chapter ends with an examination of the gap in the literature.

In Chapter 3, I describe the methodology used in this research and provide a vivid description of Moustakas's (1994) phenomenology paradigm. I explain how the phenomenological approach enabled the individuals participating in the research to return to their experiences and provide relevant information that could be used to gain insight into the phenomenon of vote-selling. I describe how Moustakas's transcendental phenomenological data analysis process was used to analyze the data. I present a detailed analysis of the research findings in Chapter 4.

In Chapter 5, I discuss the research findings, draw conclusions, make recommendations, and address the implications of the study for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to uncover voters' behaviors by investigating their common and lived experiences with respect to the provision of infrastructure, the delivery of public services, and voting during elections in Akoko North West Local Government, Ondo State, Nigeria. There is no consensus on the factors that cause vote-selling. Available research indicates that the vote-selling phenomenon has been caused by several factors, including, poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, old age, early-stage democratization, and a winner-take-all electoral system (Danjibo & Oladeji, 2007; Kennedy, 2010; Onapajo, Francis & Okeke-Uzodike, 2015; Owen, 2013). The connection between vote-selling and infrastructure has not been explored adequately. It is important to understand the reasons that voters sell their votes despite the fact that vote-selling leads to poor representation and bad governance, with resultant effects on the wellbeing of the populace (Lucky, 2013; Hanusch & Keefer, 2013). The aim of the study was to explore the connection between the provision of infrastructure and voters' behaviors. The central research question was the following: "How do individuals who participated in the most recent elections describe their lived experiences of vote-selling in relation to the provision of infrastructure and public services in Akoko North West Local Government?"

There has been extensive work on the electoral concept of vote-buying, the factors that enable vote-buying, and the consequent effects of vote-buying (Bratton,

2008; Finan & Schechter, 2012; Hicken, 2007; Jensen & Justesen, 2014; Kennedy, 2010; Khemanni, 2015; Kramon, 2013; Nichter, 2014; Vicente, 2014).

In the first section of the chapter, I commence the literature review with a discussion of the impact of elections on the economies of new democracies and good governance. In the second section, I enumerate the search engines used and the strategies employed to conduct the literature review. In the third section, I explain that the study used the theoretical lens of reciprocal determinism to explore the phenomenon of vote-selling. In the following section, I offer an overview of the concept of vote-buying and discuss its definitional ambiguities, its attributes, and the relationships between vote-buying, election promises, and fraud. In the fifth section, I examine the factors that restrict or enable vote-buying, such as the use of a secret ballot, the level of democratization, political competition, vote-switching, urbanization, trust, reciprocity, incumbency, social ties, support base, credibility, corruption, electoral rules, and voting methods. In the sixth section, I discuss the main causes of vote-selling—poverty, age, income level, and education—and the abstract cost of vote-buying. In the seventh section, I examine the consequential effects of vote-selling. In the following sections, I highlight the election strategies used by political parties in Nigeria, focus on election as a democratic vehicle, and describe the impacts of corruption on infrastructure. In the eleventh section, I briefly address the factors that may reduce or eliminate vote-buying and vote-selling. In the final section, I provide a summary of the chapter.

Literature Search Strategy

I used various search engines to find sources for the review of the literature, including Google Books, Google Scholar, and the databases of Walden University—in particular, Thoreau Multi-Database Search, EBSCO, Political Science Complete, Sage Premier, ProQuest Central, and Academic Search Complete. I focused my literature review on peer-reviewed articles, journals, dissertations, and scholarly books. The literature search strategy involved the use of terms and keywords, which included but were not limited to *vote-buying*, *vote-selling*, *buying votes*, *selling votes*, *clientelism*, *election rigging*, *election malpractices*, *voting behavior*, and *Nigeria elections*.

I broke down the dissertation topic—“Vote-Selling: Infrastructure and Public Services”—into the following search terms and keywords: *vote-selling*, *vote-selling and infrastructure*, and *vote-selling and public services*. I subsequently brainstormed alternative search terms and keywords that were related to my dissertation topic and added the following keywords and terms: *vote-buying*, *clientelism*, *election rigging*, *election malpractices*, *voting behavior*, and *Nigeria elections*.

I accessed Google Scholar using the following keywords: *vote-buying*, *vote-selling*, and *Nigeria elections*. A review of related articles and articles cited within articles that I found through my initial searches enabled me to find additional up-to-date articles.

Thoreau’s multidatabase search provided many of the articles that I used in the study. The advanced search mechanism was most useful. It enabled me to use Boolean operators to conduct the following searches: *vote-selling* OR *vote-buying* OR *clientelism*,

vote-buying AND infrastructure, vote-buying AND public services, Nigeria elections AND election rigging AND election malpractices, and voting behavior.

I found the Walden online library particularly helpful. The Walden online library's article-by-topic tools through the Policy and Administration Database helped me to identify the following databases: Political Science Complete, Sage Premier, Academic Search Complete, and ProQuest Central. It enabled me to find articles that I could not locate through other search strategies and provided me with many of the articles for the literature review.

Theoretical Foundation

In this study, I sought to examine the connection between the provision of infrastructure and public services and the phenomenon of vote-selling through the theoretical lens of reciprocal determinism. This theory helps readers to understand the interrelationship between environmental instrumentalities, elected political office holders, and voters' personal experiences and circumstances.

Bandura (1974) reported that there was a growing concern among members of the public regarding the predominance of manipulation and control in the field of psychology. He expressed that the members of the general public viewed behavioral theory as "conditioning" (Bandura, 1974). Bandura (1974) noted that *conditioning* refers to learning by way of paired experiences and does not explain the occurrence of changes (Bandura, 1974).

Finan and Schechter (2012) linked vote-selling with pleasure and argued that "voters who are offered money or material goods in exchange for their votes reciprocate

because they experience pleasure in increasing the material payoffs of the politician who has helped them” (p. 1). Gingerich and Medina (2013) took the view that local elites control the voting behavior of a subset of voters. The level of influence that local elites have on voting behavior may result in the conception that local elites’ influence on voters amounts to the conditioning of the behavior of the electorate. Balwin (2013) argued that local chiefs influence the voting behavior of the electorate because of their relationship with political office holders. Balwin’s (2013) and Gingerich and Medina’s (2013) contention that there is a unidirectional influence or control of voting behavior gives credence to Bandura’s (1974) proposition that external consequences are not the sole or independent determinant of human behavior and that people create society and equally react to environmental factors.

Bandura (1974) criticized the mechanistic perspectives of behavioral theory and asserted that the intervening influence of cognition changes human behavior. He argued that people do not merely react to stimulation from the environment; they play an active role in the creation of their society and daily circumstances (Bandura, 1978). In the scheme of the electoral process and with regard to behavioral outcomes, external consequences are influential, but they do not independently determine human behavior (Bandura, 1974).

Bandura (1974) proposed that people operate through cognition arising from observation of consequences and their personal experiences. He concluded that external consequences are most effective and influential on human behavior when they conjoin with personal experience (Bandura, 1974). According to Bandura (1974), humans mostly

design their actions to take account of future benefits and prevent future adversities. He contended that humans are endowed with the capability to create their environments and rebut them (Bandura, 1974, 1978).

Bandura (1974) argued that the accomplishments of people are not brought about solely by the environment but “result from reciprocal interaction of external circumstances with a host of personal determinants including endowed potentialities, acquired competences, reflective thought, and a high level of self-initiative” (p. 867). He pointed out that there is intertwining between the environment and behavior, in that the latter creates the former in part while the former influences the latter reciprocally (Bandura, 1974). Bandura (1978) explained that personal and environmental factors do not function autonomously but are corroborative determinants. He posited that human conceptions, behaviors, and environments determine one another (Bandura, 1978).

The review of the literature reveals that political corruption leads to the provision of low infrastructural quality (Tanzi & Davoodi, 1997) and that there is a close nexus between the level of corruption and provision of infrastructure (Castro, Guccio, & Rizzo, 2014).

Additionally, existing literature confirms that environmental and personal factors such as institutions, electoral systems, and cultural and socio-economic factors have been causes of vote-selling (Hicken, 2007; Hicken, Leider, Ravanilla, & Yang, 2015; Jensen & Justensen, 2014; Onapajo et al., 2015). These scholars, therefore, support the conclusion of Bandura (1978) that “by creating structural mechanisms for reciprocal influence, such

as organizational systems of checks and balances, legal systems, and due process and elective procedures, people can bring their influence to bear on each other” (p. 357).

Definitional Ambiguity of Vote Buying

Researchers use various definitions for vote-buying and vote-selling. Lack of uniformity in the definition of vote-buying among scholars has led to definitional ambiguity (Nichter, 2014). Nichter (2014) noted that there is conceptual ambiguity in how scholars define and study vote-buying as a social science phenomenon.

Gonzalez Ocantos, Jonge, and Nickerson (2014) defined vote-buying as “the exchange of private goods for votes during electoral campaigns” (p. 197). Lahoucq (2007) argued that vote-buying involves trading valuable goods for votes on the day of elections. Owen (2013) stated that vote-buying is “a process consisting of an offer made to purchase the vote of an individual of voting age, who accepts the offer, receives compensation, shows up at the polling station, and then votes as paid” (p. 250). Mares and Young (2016) contended that vote-buying is a category within positive inducement which involves “offers of rewards such as money, goods, or favors” (p. 270). According to Kennedy (2010), vote-buying is “a simple economic exchange” (p. 620).

Lucky (2013) described vote-buying as the use of cash as an inducement on behalf of candidates to persuade voters to vote by the terms of the vote-buyer. Nichter (2014) concluded that most “researchers concur that the contingent distribution of cash for political support during campaigns constitutes clientelist vote buying” (p. 319). However, Vincent and Wantchekon (2009) considered the vote-selling perspective and

succinctly defined a vote seller “as an individual who at least gives the impression to a vote buyer or an intermediary that he or she is willing to sell a vote” (p. 250).

One of the reasons for the complexity of vote-buying as a phenomenon is the perception of researchers about its attributes. Wang and Kurzman (2007) contended that vote-buying attributes include transactional contingent exchange, occurrence during an election, and the use of cash. Kennedy (2010) identified cash, immediate material rewards, and promises of future state benefits as the attributes of vote-buying. Nichter (2014) noted that vote-buying possesses the following attributes: contingent exchange; occurrence during an election; payment of cash; distribution of goods and services, distribution of food and alcohol; offer of employment; promises of future benefits and public programs; and the reward for turnout. It is therefore important for researchers to explicitly define vote-buying or vote-selling and specifically identify attributes to include in these definitions in any research regarding the phenomenon (Nichter, 2014).

Apart from definitional ambiguity, there is no consensus on whether vote-buying is condemnable as fraud or excusable as election promises (Hanusch, Keefer, & Vlaicu, 2016; Lippert-Rasmussen, 2011; Mares & Young, 2016; Wong, 2016). Lippert-Rasmussen (2011) stated that there is intense controversy concerning whether certain actions should be seen as vote-buying or as election promises. He noted that some researchers had found that vote-buying is similar to election promises and that election promises benefit democracy, whereas other researchers had found vote-buying to “distort democratic deliberation” (Lippert-Rasmussen, 2011, p. 144). Hanusch et al. (2016) noted that there is a high degree of variation from one country to another with respect to the use

of vote-buying and election promises as electoral strategies, concluding that vote-buying takes preference over election promises in countries where political parties have lower credibility and there is higher accountability in the electoral process.

Mares and Young (2016) compared vote-buying and fraud and found that there is a significant difference between these events. They concluded that fraud involves circumventing voters' electoral preferences, whereas vote-buying involves influencing voters' preferences (Mares & Young, 2016). Wong (2017) nevertheless argued that despite the negativity ascribed to vote-buying, it may enable redistribution of resources.

Vote-Buying: Influential Factors

The introduction of the secret ballot caused a reduction in vote-buying in elections to the British parliament in the 19th century when candidates changed their electoral strategy from vote-buying to turnout-buying (Kam, 2016). The use of secret ballots reduces vote-buying because it makes it difficult for candidates seeking political office or their representatives to observe or monitor votes (Finan & Schechter, 2012). Another limitation that vote-buying suffers is that the secrecy of voting as a result of secret ballot makes it impossible for the vote-buyer to enforce the transaction (Collier & Vicente, 2012).

Secret ballot, therefore, precludes vote-buyers from enforcing the transaction between themselves and vote-sellers (Vicente, 2014). Hicken et al. (2015) explained that secret electronic voting had more or less eliminated vote-buying because it made it impossible for voter-buyers to monitor vote-sellers in the vote transaction. Secret ballot

has nevertheless triggered a reduction in electoral bribery in the form of vote-buying (Heckleman, 1998).

In essence, it is doubtful whether vote-buying as an electoral strategy remains efficacious, given that political parties and party candidates find it difficult to monitor the performance of their representatives after disbursements of funds and voters' sincerity when they are in polling booths (Larreguy, Marshall, & Querubin, 2014).

It may, however, be argued that the use of secret ballots has not led to a reduction in vote-buying (Khemani, 2015). Jensen and Justesen (2014) argued that secret ballots allow voters to renege on their promises or assurances to vote for a political party or candidate on the one hand, but because of the difficulties of monitoring voters at the polling booth, political parties or party agents have invented various strategies to monitor how they vote to counteract the sanctity or inviolability of secret ballots on the other hand.

Notwithstanding voters' anonymity and the accompanying bottleneck to quid pro quo electoral strategy provided by secret ballot, representatives of political parties and party candidates use their positions within the social network to identify how voters vote, thereby countering the effectiveness of secret ballots (Schneider, 2014). Further, electoral results for small groups have shown that brokers or agents for political parties and party candidates have found it easy to monitor small groups to sustain compliance with vote-buying outcomes (Rueda, 2015).

Additionally, despite the fact that secret ballots enable voters to vote according to their conscience and vote preference, brokers or representatives of political parties have

always thrived by using vote-buying as an electoral strategy (Gingerich & Medina, 2013). Thus, a secret ballot is not necessarily an efficient mechanism for reducing vote-buying because even if brokers are able to monitor how voters vote, voters may sell their votes irrespective of how vote-buyers expect them to vote (Heckelman, 1998). Monitoring how voters vote is only effective where the social network enables agents to monitor voters or where voters are identifiable in small groups (Gingerich & Medina, 2013; Heckelman, 1998).

On the one hand, secret ballot as opposed to an open ballot system causes an increase in vote-buying because it enables a sizeable number of voters to vote in keeping with the expectations of vote-buyers, and on the other hand, secret ballot may lead to a reduction in funds expended on vote-buying (Morgan & Vardy, 2012). Morgan and Vardy (2012) concluded that the impacts of a secret ballot on vote-buying are paradoxical. In any event, vote-buying thrives irrespective of secrecy because voters feel morally obliged to adhere to their part of the vote transaction (Collier & Vincente, 2012).

Time and context of a particular democracy shape democracies (Adeney & Taggart, 2015). Therefore, time and context invariably determine the prevalent electoral strategies in new democracies. Shin (2015) described patronage politics which includes vote-buying as a key electoral strategy in developing countries. It is, nevertheless, arguable that vote-buying is a product of the political practices, and the prevalent electoral rules and laws of a country (Onapajo et al., 2015).

Essentially, advancement in the level of democratization in newly democratic states enables and fortifies vote-buying as an electoral strategy because other electoral

strategies or manipulation such as intimidation becomes more expensive and less cost-effective with democratic development (Van Ham & Lindberg, 2015; Kitschelt & Kselman, 2013). Vote-buying increases as new democracies progress from low to medium levels of democratic development. At the early stage of democratic development, competition, representativeness and the introduction of limited political rights increase the popularity and enhance the legitimacy of authoritarian regimes (Sun, 2014). Thus, in autocracies with pseudo new democratic tendencies, regimes engage in vote-buying or turnout buying to showcase their democratic character or legitimize their governments in the face of potential agitation for democratic governance at a rudimentary level of democracy (González-Ocantos, Kiewiet de Jonge, & Nickerson, 2015).

Kennedy (2010) asserted that although vote-buying is considered intrinsically undemocratic, it thrives in new democracies with a higher level of democracy where elections are free and fair to a reasonable extent. Carreras and İrepoğlu (2013) explained another paradox regarding vote-buying, stating that the perception of unfairness in elections by voters leads to a decrease in participation whereas the distribution of material gifts as an electoral strategy such as vote-buying correspondingly brings about an increase in electoral participation.

Carreras and İrepoğlu's (2013) contention was supported by Takeuchi's (2013) findings that an increase in the level of political competition leads to a corresponding increase in vote-buying. Hicken et al. (2014) stated that vote-buying becomes more intense when elections are highly competitive to the extent that vote-sellers go into further rounds of vote-buying if the opposition offered to buy votes for an amount that

was lower than they had previously offered the voters. It is, therefore, noteworthy that vote-buying increases when elections are closely contested (Jensen & Justesen, 2014). Moreover, vote-buying is prevalent where elections are highly competitive (Harvey, 2016).

Vote-buying equally functions as a springboard for vote-switching. Voters switch their preferences from their originally preferred candidates or political parties to alternative vote-buyers when they are offered more money (Hicken et al., 2015). Political parties and candidates use vote-buying to switch votes in weaker geographical areas (Hicken et al., 2015). It is, however, instructive that despite the fact that vote-buying enables vote-switching it has an inverted impact by leading to a decrease in vote-switching when it reduces (Hicken et al., 2014).

Urbanization has a high degree of influence on what vote-buyers take into account in determining to use vote-buying as an electoral strategy to influence the vote markets (Hicken, 2007). The process of urbanization has a concomitant impact on the prevailing electoral strategies of political parties, in particular, the urbanization process results in the switch from open ballot to secret ballot as a result of the effects of, urbanization, rising education standards and increasing income of the electorate in urban communities (Aidt & Jensen, 2016). Accordingly, urbanization is one of the main factors that brought about reform in the electoral practice that led to the introduction of the secret ballot (Aidt & Jensen, 2016).

Cinar (2016) argued that the electoral strategies that political parties use in the urban areas differ from the one they use in local areas. Cinar (2016) contended that the

mode of clientelism in the local areas, centers on respect for traditional authority (Weberianism) and the cultural bond and norms based on deference and loyalty, whereas the mode of clientelism in urban areas rests on competitive orientation (Dawnsianism). Thus, weberianism and dawnsianism define the electoral strategies that political parties use in the rural and urban areas.

Vote-buying and other forms of electoral malpractices affect democratic institutions adversely and erode trust in democracies (Chang & Chu, 2006). They impact on democratic accountability (Barreda, 2014). Democracies with a high electoral integrity have strengthened democratic institutions and better infrastructural development (Norris, Frank & i Coma, 2014). Even in authoritarian regimes, the perception of free and fair elections has a significant positive impact on the electorate's trust in the governments (Sun, 2014). Nevertheless, given that secret ballots make it difficult for vote-buyers to monitor how voters' votes, it is arguable that the effectiveness of vote-buying is determined by trust, and reciprocity (Hicken et al., 2015).

Intrinsic reciprocity is a principal factor that sustains vote-buying because voters experience pleasure in the success of political favorites and reciprocate by voting for them when they receive money for votes from them (Finan & Schechter, 2012). Chong (2016) and Fossati (2016) found that reciprocity is one of the main driving forces in clientelism in new democracies because it plays a pivotal role in influencing voters to sell their votes in exchange for political support. Intrinsic reciprocity propels vote-buying notwithstanding other factors that might make it less feasible (Finan & Schechter, 2012). It has been found that vote-sellers exhibit a propensity to reciprocate the supposedly good

gesture by vote-buyers by voting for the preferred candidate of the vote-buyers that patronize them (Pan & Xiao 2014).

Lawson and Greene (2014) contended that reciprocity has an overreaching impact on voters' behavior because it makes vote-sellers feel obliged to abide by the dictates of the vote-buyers, and it is the feeling of obligation to vote-buyers that propels their inclination to vote as paid, even if the voting system is secret ballots. However, economic development and welfare programs can undercut the influence of reciprocity on vote-selling. Swamy (2016) argued that government intervention in the welfare of the electorate by implementing social protection policies can weaken the operation of clientelism with respect to voters that have the propensity to sell their votes taken account of all the enabling factors.

Further, incumbency plays an influential and determining role in vote-buying. Research on the phenomenon showed that incumbents are more likely to engage in vote-buying as opposed to the opposition (Van Ham & Lindberg, 2015). Incumbents engage more in vote-buying because they are exposed to real resources and are in a position to spend more funds on vote-buying compared to the opposition that does not have similar access to real resources (Collier & Vicente, 2012). Consequently, an unbalanced exposure to funds or financial resources between political parties invariably induces incumbency advantage (Hanusch et al., 2016). Apart from incumbency, the political strongholds of political parties equally influence the potency and efficiency of vote-buying. Rosas, Johnston, and Hawkins (2014) argued that local politicians buy votes in constituencies where they are less popular and distribute public goods in areas where they

enjoy considerable support. Conversely, Vicente (2014) argued that vote-buying occurs when there is an increase in political competition, and it consequently limits the advantages of incumbency during elections. It is arguable that in circumstances where there is political competition, vote-buying may have an adverse impact on the electoral success of an incumbent government and reduce its incumbency advantage (Devadoss & Luckstead, 2016).

According to Gingerich and Medina (2013), one of the strategies that agents or representatives of political parties employ is to target social groups to make vote-buying effective. Politicians rely on social ties and target particular ethnic community strongholds with vote-buying to mobilize own strongholds and weaken opposition strongholds (Gutiérrez-Romero, 2014). Cruz (2013) asserted that vote-buyers use social ties as the basis for targeting voters because of the advantages it offers them. First, social ties enable vote-buyers to target specific individuals or groups that will be amenable to vote-buying. Second, social ties enable representatives or agents of political parties to monitor how individuals vote because their close social connection makes it easy to uncover how individuals voted (Cruz, 2013). Hicken (2007) held that cultural norms and pervasiveness of patron-client social networks are some of the major factors that enable vote-buying. However, notwithstanding the influence of social network, it is not uncommon for vote-buyers to have regard to voters' preferences when they engage in vote-buying (Smith & De Mesquita, 2012).

There is a close link between vote-buying and credibility (Hanusch & Keefer, 2013). Hanusch and Keefer (2013) argued that politicians engage in more vote-buying in

areas where their credibility is in question or low. Hanusch et al. (2016) maintained that vote-buying is more prevalent in democracies where politicians apparently had failed to make credible commitments and where political and democratic accountability is getting higher. Keefer and Vlaicu (2008) found that the costs of improving the credibility of politicians result in an increase in vote-buying and lower investment in infrastructure and public services. Aside from the link between vote-buying and credibility, vote-buying is equally connected to electoral credibility in that its use as an electoral strategy by political parties in Nigeria impacts negatively on electoral credibility (Alfa & Marangos 2016).

Politicians use vote-buying as an electoral strategy to build support base (Hicken, 2011; Smith & De Mesquita, 2012). They use interest associations as conduits for vote-buying and the interest associations, in turn, negotiate their relationship with the political parties in the intervening election periods (Holland & Palmer-Rubin, 2015).

Onapajo et al. (2015) argued that voting methods impact on the feasibility of vote-buying during elections. Vote-selling is, therefore, a product of the prevailing method of voting. Mares and Young (2016) noted that electoral rules such as secret ballot, electoral laws, and the system of government determined the extent, or affect the prevalence of vote-buying. The entrenchment of sound electoral rules makes the manipulation of the electoral system more difficult, but it also provides a more enabling environment for vote-selling (Van Ham & Lindberg, 2015).

In Nigeria and other developing democracies where vote-buying is prevalent, the phenomenon corrupts the electoral process (Echegaray, 2015). Devadoss and Luckstead

(2016) explained that vote-buyers engage in corrupt practices by obtaining funds at the start of the election cycle to maximize vote-buying during elections. Corruption and the expectation of the voters that politicians were willing to spend money to buy votes consequently fuel vote-buying (Alfa & Marangos, 2016). In particular, voters expect that politicians are willing to buy their votes, and acquiesce because of the perception that selling their votes provides them with an opportunity to partake in the sharing of the “national cake” (Onapajo et al., 2015).

Pande (2011) pointed out that it is practically impossible to shape voters’ behavior positively in a corrupt electoral system that provides limited information about the performance of elected public office holder.

Vote-Selling

There is no specific factor that causes or influences voters to sell their votes (Hicken, 2007). The nature of the electoral systems, the electoral process, and voting rules dictate the occurrence of vote-buying and vote-selling (Mares & Young, 2016; Onapajo et al., 2015; Pande; 2011). Vote-buying “is a function of a mix of socioeconomic, cultural and institutional factors” (Hicken, 2007, p. 58). Vote-buyers largely target voters based on their microeconomic conditions (Jensen & Justesen, 2014). Also, they target individuals and their political behavior (Weitz-Shapiro, 2012). Fundamentally, the vote-buying strategy focuses on the socio-economic factors by targeting vulnerable persons (Çarkoğlu & Aytaç, 2015).

Khemani (2015) posited that poor voters placed more value on immediate benefits such as monetary benefits as opposed to long-term public services. Hicken (2007) argued

that the gross neglect of the poor was the main reason poor voters sell their votes. The poor who were aware of the huge resources at the disposal of the politicians believed that it is beneficial for them to sell their votes to obtain their share of the state's resources (Onapajo et al., 2015). It is instructive that vote-buyers target poor voters because they do not enjoy the benefits of public services such as health services, clean water, good roads and other infrastructure that may be subject to election promises during elections (Jensen & Justesen, 2014). Shin (2015) took the view that demand and supply mechanisms dictate vote-selling and, that a greater demand for individualistic goods, as opposed to good policies leads to an increase in vote-selling.

Owen (2013) asserted that poverty had a significant impact on the decision of the poor to sell their votes. It is not unusual for poorer voters, therefore, to perceive vote-buying as part and parcel of politics or electoral strategy (Gonzalez-Ocantos, De Jonge, Meléndez, Osorio, & Nickerson, 2012). Most importantly, poverty had led to the perception that vote-buying is a legitimate electoral strategy by political parties during elections (Jensen & Justesen, 2014).

Owen (2013) suggested that age of the voters may affect their decision to accept offers to buy their votes because of their vulnerability. Hicken (2007) identified the income level of voters as having a significant effect on the decision to sell votes. Khemani (2015) stated that uneducated voters prefer immediate monetary benefits because they do not know how good governance can translate to good public services. As opposed to uneducated voters, educated voters recognize the value of the abstract societal costs attributed to vote-buying (Borang, Cornell, Grimes, & Schuster, 2014). It is,

however, right to say that education influences the vote-sellers' perception of vote transactions (Hicken, 2007). In any event, illiteracy as one of the socio-economic factors that fueled vote-buying (Danjibo & Oladeji, 2007; Onapajo et al., 2015). It is hard to recognize the effects or costs of vote-selling because of its long-term impact. It might take a couple of electoral cycles for its negative effects to become apparent. Thus, the abstract nature of the cost of vote-buying to the society makes it acceptable to individuals that sell their votes (Borang et al., 2014).

Consequences of Vote-Selling

The negative consequences of vote-selling are not apparent because they attack the heart of democratic governance and unnoticeably erode its essence (Lucky, 2013). Jenson and Justesen (2014) noted that the consequential impact of vote-selling has been to cast doubt on the value of the practice of democracy because of its paradoxical disposition. On the one hand, democratic election enables voters to choose freely the candidates that they want to govern or rule over their affairs, while it equally allowed the use of vote-buying as an electoral strategy that influences the outcome of elections thereby corroding the essential character of democratic governance (Jenson & Justesen, 2014).

Vote-buying impacts policy outcomes from the source because policies emanate from an adverse selection of unsuitable politicians with lower qualities who are the products of vote-buying (Leight et al., 2015). Vote-buying has been found to diminish and corrode democratic essence of elections and governmental accountability (Gonzalez Ocantos et al., 2014).

Khemani (2015) noted that political economists have argued that elite capture caused underinvestment in public services that are beneficial to the poor. Vicente (2014) stated that worse public policies and public services were a consequence of vote-buying. Jensen and Justesen (2014) argued that vote-buying results in the reduction of supply of public goods. Gomez and Hansford (2012) maintained that vote-buying amounts to silencing the voice of the voters, and that it is destructive mainly because it adversely impacts on public services.

Hicken et al., (2014) associated vote-buying with inefficiencies in the public sector. Vote-buying as an electoral strategy leads to governmental and economic inefficiencies (Jensen and Justesen, 2014). Vicente (2013) noted that vote-buying occurs where there is high political competition, and it invariably results to poor public welfare. Hanusch and Keefer (2013) observed that when vote-buying decreases public welfare increases.

Vote-buying erodes public trust in political institutions because it exposes the institutions' inability to regulate the electoral system (Hicken et al., 2014). Carreras and Irepoglu (2013) explained that vote-buying is linked intrinsically with voters' perception of the trustworthiness of elections to the extent that when they raise questions about the election, they do not expect political institutions to deliver citizens' demands for good public services (Carreras & Irepoglu, 2013).

Vicente (2014) stated that vote-buying hinders policy accountability because of the manner policy makers were elected. Vote-buying corrodes the accountability that should derive from democratic elections (Jensen and Justesen, 2014). Leight et al. (2015)

pointed out that vote-buying may hinder electoral accountability by the failure of voters to hold incumbent politicians accountable by trading their votes for money during elections.

Election Strategies in Nigeria

Nigerian elections have been controversial and fraught with election violence, fraud and massive rigging (Awopeju, 2011; Danjibo & Oladeji, 2007; Onapajo, 2014; Oni, Chidozie & Agbade, 2013). All the political parties tend to use various means to checkmate one another (Ajayi, 2006). It is difficult to extricate electoral fraud or manipulation from the history of elections in Nigeria. According to Awopeju (2011), election rigging dates back to the pre-independence when Nigeria was a British colony, in particular, the 1959 election and got worse when it became an independent country in 1960. Danjibo and Oladeji (2007) claimed that electoral irregularities characterized all the elections that have been conducted in Nigeria. Awopeju (2011) noted that the 1961 regional elections, 1964 general election, 1965 Western House of Assembly, 1979, 1983, 1979, 1999, 2003 and 2007 general elections were flawed and characterized by various forms of electoral malpractices. Murana, Salaha, and Ibrahim (2014) pointed out that the different forms of election malpractices include but not limited to election rigging, ballot boxes' snatching and stuffing, political intimidation, electoral violence including political thuggery and assassination.

Kwasau (2013) enumerated the strategies political parties use to rig elections in Nigeria which include: bribing electoral officials, the police, and other enforcement officials to collude in the acts of rigging; diverting ballot papers to private residence for

thump-printing and falsification of electoral papers; multiple voting; using under-aged children as voters; distribution of voting cards to unregistered voters to vote on election days; bribing agents of other political parties to collude with the political party offering the bribe to falsify election results; and distributing food and other goods to induce voters to vote for a particular party.

Vote-selling, one of the rigging methods is pervasive in Nigeria where about 20% of voters normally sell their votes, and sizeable numbers of voters are exposed to vote-buying (Bratton, 2008; Gans-Morse, Mazzuca, & Nichter, 2014). Vote-buying became an electoral strategy in Nigeria after independence and reached a crescendo during the 1993 primary and presidential elections (Lucky, 2013). It is no more limited to general elections but has extended to primary elections (Olarinmoye, 2008). In recent elections, vote-selling has become the most prominent electoral strategy amongst political parties in Nigeria because of voters' perception that election provides them with opportunities partake in the sharing of the "national cake" (Onapajo et al., 2015). The voters' perception was fashioned by the apparent and speedy transformation of elected political office holders after assumption of office to very wealthy individuals (Onapajo et al., 2015). Invariably, voters hold skeptical view of the integrity of elections in Nigeria, pay little or no regard to election promises and are willing trade their votes "to the highest bidder" (Lucky, 2013). It is, therefore, instructive that voters do not consider vote-selling unethical (Onapajo et al., 2015).

Owen (2013) defined vote-buying "as a process consisting of an offer made to purchase the vote of an individual of voting age, who accepts the offer, receives

compensation, shows up at the polling station, and then votes as paid.” In the vote-buying process, money is at the “center stage” (Lucky, 2013). The Nigerian vote-buying process begins with the creation of budgets for separate funds that they refer to as “logistics” for the purpose of vote-buying by political parties (Onapajo et al., 2015). The political parties in Nigeria engage in the following vote-buying strategies in the process of executing their election budgets for vote-buying:

1. Door-to-Door campaigning by local representatives or agents of candidates for political offices and political parties. The Nigerian “door-to-door” campaign is unique in its operation because it involves the distribution of cash to registered voters with the expectation that the electorate who receive cash will reciprocate by voting for the preferred candidates or political parties of the vote-sellers on the election day;
2. Mobilization for Voters’ Cards Registration. Political parties and political leaders in the local communities pay cash to individuals of voting age during voters’ registration exercises to register to vote in future elections, and
3. “See and Buy” vote-buying strategy. The strategy involves the monitoring of actual votes of vote-sellers at the polling booths by individuals representing political parties or the contestants who position themselves strategically in locations where they could confirm how the voters voted (Onapajo et al., 2015).

Election as a Democratic Vehicle

An election is a developmental vehicle in new democracies that drives the nations' economies and advance their economic policies insofar as they are free and fair (Chauvet & Collier, 2009). Collier and Vicente (2014) argued that elections in Africa are peculiar because they do not, in general, impact positively on the economies except where oppositions won, and incumbent governments lost elections. In Nigeria, elections have not transformed the political space or advanced its economy because of questionable electoral integrity resulting from clientelism, vote-buying and other electoral malpractices that have brought about poor political leadership and poor public service delivery (Omosho, 2014). The pervasiveness of vote-buying in the new and emerging democracies resultantly has only had negative effects on good governance and accountability (Kramon, 2013).

In the last few decades, there has been a renaissance of clientelism whereby voters decide on whether or not to vote for particular candidates or political parties on the basis of immediate or future payoffs as opposed to their political conviction or election promises made by candidates (Cornell & Grimes, 2015). It is noteworthy that election strategies develop in stages. Electoral history of most democracies shows that clientelism normally metamorphoses to vote-buying (Pellicer et al., 2014). Carreras and Irepoglu (2013) argued that another election strategy that leads to vote-buying in new democracies is outright vote-rigging.

Kennedy (2010) argued that democratic development takes place in stages, and that vote-buying occurred in the early stages of democracy and provided an interesting

example of vote-buying at play at the early stages of democracy in the United States of America:

On Election Day, July 24, it is a warm summer morning, and rural voters come to the polling site ready to vote. Before eligible voters cast their ballots, however, they are treated to an endless flow of beer and wine compliments of a wealthy candidate. Indeed, this candidate is a newcomer to the political stage, and he is spending a large sum of money to challenge the incumbent (i.e., the gift of beer and wine to influence voters). Of course, the affluent candidate is pouring the wine himself. His representative pours the beverages and reminds voters who is providing the drink. The new candidate beats the incumbent and receives the most votes in a competitive, “free and fair” election. The actual date of this election is July 24, 1758, for a seat in the Virginia House of Burgesses, and the rich candidate is American’s first president, George Washington (Abbott, 1993). (p. 617)

Jensen and Justesen (2014) pointed out that it is not unusual for new democracies to experience vote-buying at the early stages of their democracy but that the phenomenon usually fades away with economic development. It is arguable, having regards to the democratic experience of the United States of America and Great Britain where vote-buying took place in the early stages of their democratization, that vote-buying does not necessarily subvert democracy (Kennedy, 2010).

Kennedy (2010) asserted that vote-buying in another sense is an important indicator of democratic development because it takes place in democracies where there is

a reasonable degree of free and fair elections. Hicken et al. (2014) acknowledged that vote-buying and vote-selling are prevalent in most developing countries. Jensen and Justesen (2014) described vote-buying in developing democracies as “an integral feature of electoral politics” (p. 220). It has, therefore, been concretized and standardized as an electoral strategy by political parties in most African developing democracies (Collier & Vicente, 2014; Cruz, Keefer & Labonne, 2015, Jensen & Justesen, 2014; Kramon, 2013; Onapajo et al., 2015).

The prevalence of vote-buying in developing democracies and its hindrance on democratization has adverse effects on governance and public service delivery (Bustikova & Corduneanu-Huci, 2011). To this extent, Collier and Vicente (2012) described vote-buying and other illegitimate electoral strategies in developing democracies as a “new degenerate form of democracy” (p. 118).

Many researchers were of the view that vote-buying is antithetical to democratic development, and hamper the advancement of democratization in new democracies (Kennedy, 2010). Lippert-Rasmussen (2011) concluded that vote buying “distort democratic deliberation” (p. 144). Carreras and Irepoglu (2013) found that vote-buying contradicts the principle of electoral fairness and hampers democratic development. The phenomenon favors the incumbent candidates for public offices that have access to government resources, against opposition candidates that do not have access to the same resources, therefore, creating unequal resources on the electoral playing field (Carreras & Irepoglu, 2013). Leight et al. (2015) maintained that vote-buying subverts democracy and

hinders democratic accountability because it defeats the intent and purpose of regular controls associated with cyclical elections.

In any event, vote buyers marshaled enormous financial and organizational resources to vote-buying for it to be efficacious, and they used the strategy as a last resort in circumstances where other electoral strategies of manipulation would be ineffective (Van Ham & Lindberg, 2015).

Corruption and Infrastructure

Corruption is prevalent in Nigerian politics, and it is common knowledge that politicians illegally convert public funds for personal gains and discard their responsibility to provide roads, healthcare, electricity, good education and other necessary infrastructure (Ajisebiyawo, 2016). Political corruption emanates from the perpetration of electoral fraud by political parties and candidates seeking to hold public offices. Consequently, the electoral fraud inhibits the electoral process (Kurer, 2002). It affects public administration adversely and distorts the democratic process (Hicken et al., 2015).

Rose-Ackerman (2001) argued that corruption has its root in the organization of the electoral process, the organization of the legislative process, and influence of wealthy groups. The three factors “affect politicians’ willingness to accept illegal payoffs, voters’ toleration of such payoffs, and the willingness to pay off wealthy groups” (Rose-Ackerman, 2002, p.35). These factors play a determinative role to the incidence of corruption for the following reasons:

1. The willingness of wealthy individuals or groups to seek award of large-scale contracts from the government and the willingness of the elected public office holders to receive illegal payoffs or bribes from wealthy groups.
2. The willingness of the elected public office holders to satisfy the interests of the wealthy groups by manipulating the legislative process and outcomes for the wealthy interests.
3. The readiness of voters to tolerate the illegal collaboration between the elected public office holders and wealthy groups impact on the electoral process by way of vote-buying and other rigging strategies. (Rose-Ackerman, 2001)

Keig, Brouthers, and Marshall (2015) asserted that there is formal corruption environment (FCE) and informal corruption environment (ICE) components in an operating environment. According to them, FCE involves large-scale corruption that is embedded in the institutional structure while ICE involves small-scale corrupt activities by individuals in their everyday lives (Keig et al., 2015). The governing political parties have access to enormous resources that they use to facilitate vote-buying during elections (Collier & Vicente, 2012). They use the enormous government resources to create the FCE and engage in large-scale corruption by placing more emphasis on projects that have less social or economic value to the electorate (Rose-Ackerman, 2001).

The elected public officer holders in the developing democracies do not make credible commitments regarding the provision of adequate infrastructure as a result of lack of transparency and accountability or political corruption in general (Hanusch et al., 2016). These bad public policies and the resultant inadequate infrastructure are traceable

to vote-buying that consequently brings about lack of policy accountability (Vicente, 2014). Vote-buying does not only bring about reduced or lack of accountability, but it also enables political corruption that causes inefficient public administration (Hicken et al., 2015).

Kennedy (2010) contended that there are different stages of democratic development. At the lowest level of democratic development, there is a correlation between political corruption and the level of democracy (Assiotis & Sylwester, 2014). It is at the early stage of democracy that vote-buying occurs (Kennedy, 2010). It is, nevertheless, arguable that political corruption and vote-buying hinders the process of democratization, inhibits good governance and affects the provision or allocation of infrastructure and the delivery of public service (Bustikova & Corduneanu-Huci, 2011). The lack of good governance leads to political corruption while good governance has been found to result in a significant reduction in corruption (Yusuf, Malarvizhi, Mazumder, & Su, 2014). It is rather unfortunate that global corruption enables corruption in developing democracies and consequently, contributes to electoral corruption and bad governance in developing democracies (Makinde, 2013).

Lippert-Rasmussen (2011) found that political corruption and vote-buying, in particular, distorts the democratic process. Consequently, electoral fraud and vote-buying invariably inhibit the democratic process because democracy, political corruption and electoral corruption are antithetical to democratic development (Kurer, 2002). Given that corruption distorts the democratic process in developing democracies, it is arguable that it hinders economic growth because of the effects of corruption on the allocation of

resources (Jain, 2015). Assiotis and Sylwester (2014) contended that corruption is directly linked to the level of democracy and economic growth. It is, however, inversely related to economic development and growth (Shuaib, Ekeria, & Ogedengbe, 2015). Accordingly, Assiotis and Sylwester (2014) found that the correlation between corruption and economic growth is negative. Dridi (2013) however, found that the adverse consequences of corruption on economic growth reflect on human capital and political instability. The general conclusion is that political corruption is an essential deterrent to economic growth and development (Jain, 2015).

It follows that in developing democracies, elected public office holders tend to provide narrowly-focused goods and services rather than broad-based public services because of corruption induced public policies (Rose-Ackerman, 2001). Corruption fuels their tendency to make policy decisions that place more value on high-value and large-scale construction projects and less value on social beneficial and growth-enhancing projects (Jain, 2015). Political corruption, thus, dictates public spending in new democracies. It makes elected public office holders to divert public spending to less productive projects instead of growth-enhancing projects (Ogunlana, Bakare, & Omobitan (2016). Odo (2015) argued that corruption induced public spending undermines capital development. He explained that political corruption obscures financial information regarding public spending to prevent the electorate from understanding the allocation of financial resources (Odo, 2015).

Corruption has adverse effects on socio-economic policies and government projects and deters the execution of developmental projects (Odo, 2015). Mainly, elected

public office holders prioritize projects in which they derive personal gains as opposed to infrastructure that have socio-economic benefits (Jain, 2001). They favor projects that will enable them to enrich themselves personally rather projects that have social benefits (Rose-Ackerman, 2002). Jain (2001) explained that corruption influences the allocation of public funds and the choice of projects that the elected public office holders choose to execute, and that they place considerations for their personal gains above the socio-economic value of the projects.

Political corruption, in particular, electoral fraud has negative effects on policy-making and the allocation of capital projects or infrastructure (Odo, 2015). Electoral fraud has its root in the post-election activities of the elected public office holders (Devadoss & Luckstead, 2016). It is prevalent at the start of an election cycle because political parties need wealthy interests to finance elections and wealthy persons target government and policy outcomes for their business interests (Rose-Ackerman, 2002). Hence, elected public office holders engage in corrupt practices at the early stages of the election cycles to fund future elections and maximize vote-buying (Devadoss & Luckstead, 2016).

Another destructive effect of political corruption is its tendency to undermine public trust (Odo, 2015). Fundamentally, the lack of public trust enables corruption to permeate the electoral system and governmental activities (Odo, 2015). Thus, political corruption invariably leads to poor infrastructure (Gillanders, 2014).

Ogbuagu and Effiom (2014) found that there is a close nexus between political corruption and inadequate provision or decadence of infrastructure. They opined that lack

of accountability and transparency invariably lead to the inadequate provision of infrastructure (Ogbuagu, & Effiom, 2014). Thus, the lack of accountability and transparency are causally linked to political corruption and leads to the provision of low infrastructural quality (Tanzi & Davoodi, 1997). Tanzi and Davoodi's (1997) assertion supports Castro, Guccio and Rizzo's (2014) finding that there is a close connection between the level of corruption and the provision of efficient and quality infrastructure. There is, therefore, a close connection between political corruption and inadequate provision of infrastructure on the one hand, and political corruption and low quality of infrastructure on the other hand (Castro et al., 2014; Ogbuagu & Effiom, 2014). In any event, corruption leads to inefficient public service delivery and provision of inadequate infrastructure (Gillanders, 2014).

The findings by Castro et al., (2014), Gillanders (2014), Ogbuagu and Effiom (2014), and Tanzi and Davoodi (1997) give credence to the theory of reciprocal determinism by asserting the interactions between environmental and personal factors. The above studies show that political corruption, lack of accountability and transparency lead to the provision of inadequate infrastructure. However, the studies did not explore whether the state of infrastructure could lead to political corruption. This phenomenological study seeks to explore the connection between the state of infrastructure and vote-selling, by providing textual descriptions of the circumstances that influenced voters' behavior during the election.

Eliminating Vote-Selling

Vote-buying and vote-selling are products of electoral systems, the electoral process, and voting rules (Mares & Young; 2016; Onapajo et al., 2015; Pande; 2011). Developing democracies would be well advised to reform their electoral system and voting rules to reduce or eliminate vote-buying and vote-selling, and facilitate good governance, economic growth, and prosperity. However, politicians that subscribe to vote-buying objects to electoral reform that will limit or destruct their electoral strategy (Cruz & Keefer, 2015).

Economic development can have a positive effect on an electoral practice that will consequently lead to the eradication of poverty with the resultant effect of reducing or eliminating vote-selling (Jensen and Justesen, 2014). Further, educating voters on the adverse consequences of vote-buying may reduce voters' propensity to sell votes (Vicente & Wantchekon, 2009).

Summary and Conclusions

Owen (2013) suggested that scholars need to explore the vote-buying process from the vote-sellers' perspectives. This study sought to uncover voters' behaviors by investigating common and lived experiences of voters in Akoko North Federal Constituency through the voters' perspectives and explore the connection between the provision infrastructure and vote-selling during the elections.

Khemani (2015) maintained that although there have been findings linking the principle of elite capture with underinvestment in developing democracies, and proposed that there is the need to examine other factors, in particular, "the equilibrium

consequences for public policy performance when governments gain or (or lose) office in elections with widespread vote buying” (p.85).

Cruz et al. (2015) considered the effect of voter information with regard to the provision of public services on vote-buying. They concluded that voter information led to an increase in vote buying and suggested that there is a need for future research to find out whether candidates would have reacted to voter information by providing more public services rather than increasing vote-buying, if the voters had been provided with the information earlier in the election cycle (Cruz et al., 2015). Bardhan et al., (2015) took the view that public services that provide recurring benefits would ordinarily translate to an increase in voter support. They did not consider whether public services that provide recurring benefits have any impact on vote-selling.

Khemani (2015) noted that it is important to examine specifically how vote-buying adversely affects political incentives to invest on pro-poor public services. Khemani (2015) observed that there is evidence showing that when politicians purchase votes, they trade the votes off against the provision and delivery of public services. Khemani (2015) concluded that there is a strong correlation between vote-buying and underinvestment and poor delivery of public services. Onapajo et al. (2015) maintained that there is a strong connection between the political economy of a state and vote-buying. The overarching perspective or submission of the available research is that a link exists between vote buying and public service delivery.

Bustikova and Corduneanu-Huci (2011) noted that voters do not engage in vote-selling where it is apparent that elected political office holders are delivering public

services. They were of the view that in new democracies, political parties are usually slow in delivering good public services and the lack of public services fuels vote-buying (Bustikova & Corduneanu-Huci, 2011). Baldwin (2013) took the view that voters' behavior is predicated on the expectation that local chiefs will exert their influence on the political office holders to provide them with public services. Weghorst and Lindberg (2013) contended that clientelism reduces when voters have the perception that politicians can produce good public services.

Gilbert and Allen (2014) found a connection between good governance and democratic practice and concluded that the missing link in the Nigerian democratic experience is good governance. Despite the agreement by researchers that there is a connection between the provision of public services and vote-buying or clientelism, none of the literature examined the connection between infrastructure and public service delivery, and vote-selling.

In the next chapter, I provide a detailed methodology employed in the study. In the first section, I present an overview of the research design and rationale for the design. In the second section, I address the role of the researcher in the research process. In the following sections, I discuss the sampling frame, sampling description, sampling strategy, and explain the data collection protocol. In the fifth section, I describe the Moustakas's (1994) transcendental phenomenological approach to data analysis and the main steps the study will use to analyze the data. I address the issues of trustworthiness and ethical considerations in the subsequent sections. In the final section, I provide a summary and conclusion of the research methodology.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to uncover voters' behaviors by investigating their common and lived experiences with respect to the provision of infrastructure, delivery of public services, and voting during elections in Akoko North West Local Government, Ondo State, Nigeria. Khamani (2015) used a quantitative method to provide “the first direct evidence in the literature of a robust correlation between vote buying and low investments in broad, untargeted public services which are particularly valuable for the poor” (p. 90). None of the existing literature explored the connection between public service delivery and vote-selling or used the qualitative method to explore the lived experiences of voters who experienced the vote-selling phenomenon (Cruz et al., 2015; Khemani, 2015; Onapajo et al., 2015). This study, however, used the qualitative method with a phenomenological approach to explore what voters experienced about vote-selling, and what circumstances influenced individuals' experiences of vote-selling (Moustaka, 1994).

Creswell (2013) pointed out that researchers employ qualitative inquiry to explore social and human phenomena. The qualitative paradigm enables researchers to explore concepts and phenomena that are difficult to understand or that require better understanding (Hoang-Kim et al., 2014). Qualitative research helps researchers to study nonphysical phenomena such as “people's motivations, perceptions, behaviors, or lifestyle” (Hoang-Kim et al., 2014). Further, the qualitative method helps researchers to turn the search lights on systemic issues to find potential solutions (Patton, 2015).

Researchers, therefore, use qualitative methods to explore, illuminate, and interpret concepts and phenomena by focusing on natural settings and individuals (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2015).

Researchers use qualitative inquiry to have in-depth understanding of phenomena in natural settings. Marshall (1996) explained that qualitative studies provide “illumination and understanding of complex psychological issues and are most useful for answering humanistic ‘why?’ and ‘how?’ questions” (p. 522). Neuman (2014) submitted that “in general, qualitative research is suitable for studies designed to expand our knowledge of the substrata of complex phenomena” (p. 71).

In this chapter, I provide an overview of the transcendental phenomenological paradigm. I explain how Moustakas’s (1994) phenomenological method of inquiry applies to the study and provide the rationale for chosen the approach. I clarify my role as the researcher in the study, describe the sampling strategies, and outline the rationale for the chosen sample size. Additionally, I explain the interviewing procedures and provide a detailed explanation of how the data will be analyzed.

Research Design and Rationale

This study employed the transcendental phenomenological approach to return the voters participating in the research to their experiences and elicit relevant information from them to gain insight into the phenomenon of vote-selling and its connection with infrastructure and public services. The research question for this study was the following: “How do individuals who participated in the most recent elections describe their lived experiences of vote-selling in relation to the provision of infrastructure and public

services in Akoko North West Local Government?” Patton (2015) contended that researchers use the phenomenological approach to identify the essence of human experience about a phenomenon based on how individuals who experienced it describe their experiences. A phenomenological study uses the lived experiences of several individuals concerning a phenomenon as described by them to identify a common meaning for the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). Accordingly, Moustakas (1994) asserted that “phenomenology is committed to descriptions of experiences” (p. 58).

Researchers in phenomenological studies have to derive their evidence from direct reports by individuals who have experienced the phenomenon under study (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas (1994) explained that “in accordance with phenomenological principles, scientific investigation is valid when the knowledge sought is arrived at through descriptions that make possible an understanding of the meanings and essences of experience” (p. 84). The focus of this phenomenological study was the experiences of individuals about vote-selling and the description of their experiences of the phenomenon.

The study explored common meanings ascribed to vote-selling by capturing and describing the lived experiences of individuals about the phenomenon (Patton, 2015). Moustakas (1994) stated that “phenomenology is committed to descriptions of experiences” (p. 58). The phenomenological approach was best suited for the research question of this study, which involved explicating the meanings and common experiences of individuals in relation to the phenomenon of vote-selling.

Moustakas (1994) argued that the investigation in a phenomenological study focuses on carefully formulated research questions. The research questions in turn guide the investigation. He concluded that “every method relates back to the question, is developed solely to illuminate the question, and provide a portrayal of the phenomenon that is vital, rich, and layered in its textures and descriptions” (p. 59). The research question for this study using phenomenology as a method of inquiry was the following: “How do individuals who participated in the most recent elections describe their lived experiences of vote-selling in relation to the provision of infrastructure and public services in Akoko North West Local Government?”

According to Moustakas’s (1994), empirical phenomenological inquiry takes individuals back to their experiences to develop detailed descriptions of these experiences, thereby portraying or deriving essences or structures of the experiences. It follows that the phenomenological approach helps researchers gain insight into phenomena and develop fresh understandings of lived experiences of phenomena through first-hand accounts by persons who have experienced them (Wilson, 2016).

The purpose of the phenomenological approach is to discover the meaning and essence of an experience for individuals by conducting interviews in which participants provide detailed descriptions of their experiences to derive the essence of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). The qualitative approach to research that was best suited to capturing the essence of the phenomenon of vote-selling by eliciting rich information from individuals who had experienced the phenomenon was the phenomenological approach.

Moustakas (1994) pointed out that researchers conducting phenomenological studies need to ask two general questions: What have individuals experienced regarding the phenomenon? How have individuals experienced the phenomenon, or what circumstances have influenced their experience? He described the two main questions as involving the textual and structural components of experience (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas (1994) explained that researchers should determine “the textual components of experience, the ‘what’ of the appearing phenomenon” (p. 78), and the structural components of the experience, which entail “conscious acts of thinking and judging, imaging, and recollecting, in order to arrive at the core structural meanings” (p. 79).

The overarching research question for this study and the interview questions were formulated in line with Moustakas’s transcendental phenomenological approach to elicit textual descriptions from the voters and the structural components of what influenced their behavior during the election. Accordingly, the focus of the investigation during data collection was the central research question (Moustakas, 1994).

Appropriateness of the Design

I considered other main approaches (narrative, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study) to employing the qualitative method but found the phenomenological approach best suited for this study. Narrative research involves the collection of “stories from individuals (and documents, and group conversations) about individuals’ lived and told experiences” (Creswell, 2013, p. 84). Narrative research would not have been suitable for the study because it is limited to collecting stories, in contrast to a phenomenological approach, which enabled me to explore the vote-selling phenomenon.

When using the grounded theory approach, researchers seek to develop or generate a theory to explain “a process, an action or interaction shaped by the views of a large number of participants” (Creswell, 2013, p. 92). Grounded theory uses a deductive inquiry process. Patton (2015) contended that grounded theory emphasizes theory construction or theorizing based on research findings. I was unable to use grounded theory because I did not seek to generate a causal theory from views of individuals who had experienced vote-selling. I considered ethnography but found it unsuitable because it is limited to the study of a culture-sharing group or a subset of a group in order to describe and interpret the group’s shared values, behaviors, and beliefs (Creswell, 2013). A case study involves observing and collecting data regarding a real-life activity or process from an individual, a group, an organization, a decision-making process, or a project (Creswell, 2013). Case study was not appropriate because I sought to explore what the individuals had experienced in relation to the vote-selling phenomenon and the circumstances that influenced the individuals’ experiences.

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher in a phenomenological study is fundamental and critical to the overall outcome of the research or the research findings. Moustakas (1994) asserted that there is overlap between viewing something from a personal perspective and viewing something as a whole. He claimed, however, that researchers can place the focus of the research in a bracket and set aside everything “so that the entire research process is rooted solely on the topic and question” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 97).

I have been actively involved in Nigerian politics for the last 6 years and participated in the most recent elections in Ondo State, Nigeria. My participation in politics and my personal experience might have influenced my assumption that the nonfulfillment of electoral promises, inadequate provision of infrastructure, and poor delivery of public services as a result of corruption might shape voters' behaviors. I isolated my own personal experiences and perceptions to focus the study solely on the research question.

I set aside all extraneous considerations and preconceptions during the interviewing process to purify the information that I received from the participants. I ensured that I perceived and understood the participants' descriptions of the phenomenon and all of the information they provided during the interview. Additionally, I used probing and follow-up questions in addition to the open-ended questions. The probing and follow-up questions enabled me to delve deeper into the participants' personal experiences and allowed them to provide in-depth information regarding the phenomenon under study.

Sampling Frame and Sampling Description

Sampling involves the researcher choosing individuals as informants (Wilson, 2016). It is paramount to identify the unit of analysis before commencing case selection or making decisions regarding sample size (Patton, 2015). Additionally, in order to determine the appropriate sample size, the researcher needs to take account of the research question, research purpose, sample size that will positively impact the credibility of the study, and time and available resources (Patton, 2015).

The population studied was Akoko North West Local Government. This local government has 168 polling units, 10 wards, and 64,735 eligible voters (“Independent National Electoral Commission,” 2015; “Ondo Elections,” 2016). It was estimated that a sample of 10 to 15 individual participants would be appropriate to answer the research question sufficiently and creditably (Creswell, 2013). In qualitative research, an appropriate sample size enables a researcher to fulfill research objectives sufficiently and creditably (Marshall, 1996), elicit information leading to insights, and identify themes and categories for cross-case theme analysis (Creswell, 2013). The purpose of using a small sample is to allow the researcher to describe sufficiently and in detail what the phenomenon means for individuals who experienced it (Creswell, 2013).

I selected one individual from each of the 10 wards in the local government to gain in-depth knowledge of the lived experiences of voters in Akoko North West Local Government, Ondo State, Nigeria. Participants were expected to have resided continuously in Akoko North West Local Government for at least 5 years and be able to share their personal experiences about vote-selling as well as about the state of the infrastructure and delivery of public services in the local government. They were expected to have participated in past elections for the local government and to have been exposed to vote-selling. It is noteworthy that vote-selling is prevalent in Nigeria. Most voters have been exposed to vote-selling, and a sizable number are cynical vote-sellers (Lucky, 2013).

Sampling Strategy

The sampling method adopted for this study was purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling is the deliberate selection of information-rich individuals who have in-depth knowledge about the phenomenon under study and will be able to provide illuminating information that will enable researchers to reach credible conclusions or make credible findings (Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2013). Patton (2015) asserted that the aim of purposeful sampling is the identification and selection of information-rich individuals to undertake in-depth research. Purposeful sampling therefore involves the active selection of the most appropriate sample that will answer the research question (Marshall, 1996).

Purposeful sampling helps researchers to ensure that the selection of the sample aligns with the research question, research purpose, and data (Patton, 2015). I used purposeful sampling to select individuals who had been approached for vote-selling and had participated in the most recent elections. Purposeful sampling was most suitable for this phenomenological study because the participants had experienced the phenomenon and they were willing to describe their experiences in an interview (Moustakas, 1994).

The following purposeful sampling selection strategies were employed to deliberately select individuals who had experienced the phenomenon to provide illuminating information.

Group Selection

The *group selection strategy* involves discretionary selection of individual participants from major subgroups of a population (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). The maximum variation (heterogeneity) sampling strategy is used to capture themes that

are common to diverse situations or people (Patton, 2015). I used the maximum variation (heterogeneity) sampling strategy to undertake discretionary selection of the sample, giving regard to the following factors: gender, age, level of education, and employment status. The strategy enabled the selection of participants with different profiles. The strategy brought forth common themes from individuals with diverse backgrounds. The credibility of the findings was enhanced because the data emerged from a heterogeneous sample (Patton, 2015).

Time-Location

The *time-location sample strategy* was used to locate and select individuals who had first-hand experience of vote-selling because they had participated in the most recent elections in Akoko North West Local Government, Ondo State, Nigeria, and had been approached for vote-selling.

Criterion Sampling

The criterion sampling strategy was used to select potential participants who satisfied the following inclusion criteria: (a) individuals who participated in the most recent elections—that is, registered voters who voted in the 2012, 2015, and 2016 elections; (b) individuals who had been exposed to vote-selling; and (c) individuals who had continuously resided in Akoko North West Local Government, Ondo State, Nigeria for at least the last 5 years.

Participant Selection

I sought to identify individuals who could shed light on the interview questions and the vote-selling phenomenon. I used purposeful sampling to select individuals who

had knowledge about vote-selling because they had participated in the most recent elections, had been approached for vote-selling, and had continuously resided in Akoko North West Local Government, Ondo State, Nigeria, for the last 5 years.

I used lists from the Independent National Electoral Commission, Nigeria (INEC) indicating registered voters for the 2012, 2015, and 2016 elections to identify individuals who met the inclusion criteria and to select three individuals from each ward in Akoko North West Local Government.

Available research shows that vote-selling is a product of social, economic cultural and institutional factors (Hicken, 2007). It follows that the level of education of the interview participants may have a significant impact on their perception and how they describe their lived experiences. Also, age, gender, and income level may affect their perception of the vote-selling phenomenon. Therefore, I paid attention to some essential characteristics and used the maximum variation (heterogeneity) sampling strategy to select the potential participants from the following groups – gender, age, level of education, and employment status because various factors such as poverty, unemployment, age, low level of education and income may affect the perception of voters on the vote-selling phenomenon.

The sampling selection strategies enabled me to select potential participants with the required essential characteristics. I initially selected three individuals from each of the 10 wards in the local government for the interview. Subsequently, I deliberately selected one out of three individuals from each ward as participants by using criterion sampling, group sampling, and time-location selection strategies. The size of the sample enabled me

to answer the research objectives sufficiently and creditably. The individuals who were not selected at this stage remained as alternate participants to replace any participant who may drop out of the study in the event of any unforeseen circumstances. I contacted potential participants by telephone numbers and visit them at their homes. I introduced myself to them. I asked them whether they were willing to participate in the study and asked them the following demographic information: age, gender, employment status, and level of education.

I handed the letter of invitation and informed consent form to them. The invitation letter include the following information: request to participate in the study, purpose of the study, researcher's details, criteria for participation, voluntary nature of the participation, right to withdraw at any time from the interview, duration of the interview, venue of the interview, confidentiality statement, digital voice-recorder to record the interview, verification of recorded responses to questions by the interviewees, benefit of the study to participants, compensation, storage of data and request to sign consent form. Again, I made a verbal explanation of the purpose of the study so that they fully understand the purpose and nature of the interview. I explained that the interviews would only take place if they agreed verbally to proceed and sign the consent form. I verified that all the participants satisfied the criterion of having participated in the most recent elections by checking their voters' cards. I asked whether they have resided continuously in the local government for at least 5 years. Vote-selling is prevalent in Nigeria (Lucky, 2013). I asked the potential participants whether they have been exposed to vote-selling and informed them that I would not proceed with any individual that has not been exposed to

vote-selling. I re-visited them after seven days of handing them the invitation letter and informed consent form to confirm their willingness to participate in the study and collected the signed informed consent form.

I arranged a mutually convenient serene venue, such as town halls, community centers, and their private residence, for the interviews. Also, I arranged the date and time of interview. I gave the interview questions to the participants in advance. I prepared notebooks, digital voice-recorder, and batteries in readiness for the interview. I conducted a face-to-face interview.

I verified that the individual participants had resided in Akoko North Local Government, had participated in the most recent elections, and had been exposed to vote-selling before the interview commenced. I sought permission from the participants to record the interviews. I masked the participants' names and personal details by assigning them with codes, P1 to P15. I took detailed notes and use a digital recorder to record the interviews. The face-to-face interviews were extensive and detailed.

Data Collection

I used interviewing as the data collection tool and relied on information from individuals who possess an in-depth knowledge about the vote-selling phenomenon in this transcendental phenomenological study. Interviewing involves a meeting of two persons whereby the interviewer uses questions to elicit information from the interviewee (Janesick, 2011). In research studies, interviewing involves the collection of information that the researcher conceives to be relevant to the study from the interviewee (Patton, 2015). I sought to elicit information from the interviewees using the interview protocol

(Appendix A) as a guide. Moustakas (1994) asserted that “the phenomenological interview involves an informal, interactive process and utilizes open-ended comments and questions” (p. 114). Interviewing is, therefore, the most appropriate method of data collection for this phenomenological study because it enabled me to gather information about vote-selling by way of informal and interactive interviews. Also, the interviews enabled the participants to reveal or disclose their personal experiences with respect to the provision of infrastructure, delivery of public services, and vote-selling during elections.

The overarching research question was open-ended, and the interview questions were semistructured open-ended questions. Semistructured, open-ended questions help researchers to use the same predetermined sequence to ask the interviewees the same set of open-ended questions (Patton, 2015). The interviewees were asked probing questions from issues arising from their responses as the interview evolved. The open-ended questions gave the interviewees liberty to share their stories without any inhibition from the interviewer. Essentially, the open-ended questions helped the participants to feel unrestrained to tell their stories. The semistructured questions enable researchers to direct and guide the participants during the interview (Chan, Yuen-ling, & Wai-tong, 2013). It enabled the researcher to concentrate on important issues regarding the phenomenon.

Patton (2015) explained that researchers use probes to lead the interviewees to expatiate on their responses to the interview questions. He classified probing questions under three main headings, detailed-oriented probes, elaboration probes and clarification probes. Patton (2015) suggested that the probes that can elicit the details of some activity

or experience are who, where, what, when, and how. The probing questions were prepared with the object of gaining detailed supplemental information from issues arising from the responses of the interviewees to the open-ended questions.

The follow-up questions include: Please elaborate on that issue. Please give more detail on that. What was your involvement? Tell me about it? What influenced your decision? What do you mean? What are your reasons? How did that affect you? Follow-up questions were asked after the interviewees' respond to the open-ended questions by probing deep into their responses to the questions. The protocol that contains the details regarding the conduct of the interview, which is located at Appendix A will be used as a guide.

Interviewing Procedure

According to Patton (2015), emphasis on inductive strategies distinguishes much of qualitative research as opposed to other strategies that emanate from logical a priori assumptions. Phenomenological studies and much of qualitative methods utilize inductive strategies in data collection. I used inductive strategy to conduct interviews with the participants to elicit information that would give meaning to the vote-selling phenomenon. It follows that the purpose of interviewing in this phenomenological study was to penetrate the interviewees' perspectives to make them describe their experiences more explicitly. The interview questions were meaningful to enable the participants to share their stories about the vote-selling phenomenon (Patton, 2015).

Moustakas (1994) described the state of epoche as the condition of the state of mind where the researcher sets aside his prejudgments, biases and preconceptions, and

ideas about things or phenomena. He stated that “epoche includes entering a pure internal place, as an open self, ready to embrace life in what it totally offers” (p. 86). I was aware of my biases and consciously attempted to set aside my personal experience, past association, understandings, prejudgments, biases, and preconceptions at the start of the interview.

Having undergone the epoche stage, I then bracketed the focus of the study to ensure that I concentrate on the interview questions within the ambit of the research question and research purpose. Moustakas (1994) asserted that “the focus of the research is placed in brackets, everything else is set aside to root the entire research process on the topic and question” (p. 97). I centrally focused the open-ended and follow-up questions on the vote-selling phenomenon, and the experiences of the interviewees. Creswell (2013) pointed out that researchers undertaking phenomenological studies ought to acknowledge and bracket their experiences in the course of their studies. I, therefore, acknowledged my experience and knowledge about the local politics by putting them aside and bracketed them during the interview and throughout the course of this study.

Interviewing in phenomenological studies involves various steps (Creswell, 2013). Thus, it is pertinent for researchers using a phenomenological approach to design and use an interview guide or interview protocol. Patton (2015) explained that an interview guide consists of a list of questions and issues that the researcher will explore and use in the course of the interview. An interview protocol (located in Appendix A) was prepared to guide the researcher before, during and after the interview. The interview protocol enabled the researcher to prepare in the best manner to use the limited time

allocated for the interview (45 minutes); ensure that there is a degree of similarities in the lines of inquiry; focus on predetermined issues relating to the phenomenon under study; and use it as a checklist during the interview (Patton, 2015).

The interview protocol consists of the following: name of the interviewer, name of the interviewee, place of the interview, time and date of the interview, duration of the interview, the purpose of the study, open-ended and follow-up questions, and concluding statements.

By placing the focus of the research study in a bracket, I prepared the interview questions in a manner to ensure that interviewees understood that vote-selling is the central phenomenon. The aim of the interview protocol was to enable me to ask the interviewees similar questions in the same sequence with variation in the form of probing or follow-up questions. I used semistructured open-ended questions as tools to invite the interviewees to think seriously about their experiences, and how it impacted on their life (Rudestam & Newton, 2007). Maxwell (2013) contended that researchers need to be able to anticipate how the interviewees will comprehend the interview questions and their likely responses. I anticipated how the interviewees would understand and respond to questions on the vote-selling phenomenon. The open-ended interview questions were similar, and they followed the same sequence, but there were slight variations in the follow-up questions.

I sought permission from the participants to record the interviews. It was intended to replace any participant that declined to be electronically recorded, with another participant that will be willing to be recorded because it was important to have a verbatim

record their statements. I took detailed notes and record the interviews. The anticipated duration of the interview was 45 minutes. I reviewed the interview notes and subsequently transcribed the recorded interviews myself. I provided copies of the transcriptions to the participants for verification and compare the transcriptions with the recorded audio interviews for correctness.

Data Analysis

The study sought to uncover voters' behaviors by investigating their common and lived experiences with respect to the provision of infrastructure and delivery of public services, and voting during elections in Akoko North West Local Government, Ondo State, Nigeria. According to Patton (2015), research design reflects research purpose and research question frames data analysis. The central question in this study is: How do individuals who participated in the most recent elections describe their lived experiences of vote-selling in relation to the provision of infrastructure and public services in Akoko North West Local Government? Researchers use analysis in qualitative studies to make sense of the data collected and transform the data into findings, by sifting through relevant information, reducing voluminous information, noting patterns, identifying themes and consolidating the data to arrive at the essence of the data (Patton, 2015).

Researchers in phenomenological studies utilize, inductive reasoning by seeking patterns from data to generate new explanations from specific data and, thematic analysis to reduce data and make sense from it (Patton, 2015). Gibbs and Taylor (2005) explained that "coding is the process of combing the data for themes, ideas, and categories and then marking similar passages of text with a code label so that they can easily be retrieved at a

later stage for further comparison and analysis” (para. 1). It is imperative to identify categories or themes by creatively recognizing meaningful and significant statements from the data (Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, 2014).

I used Moustakas’s (1994) transcendental phenomenological data analysis process in this phenomenological study to analyze the data collected from the participants and made meaning of the vote-selling phenomenon from the data.

Epoche

Moustakas (1994) stated that the first step of the transcendental phenomenological data analysis process is the epoche stage. At this stage, researchers undertake a personal inward search to identify their personal bias and prejudice to eliminate them from interference with the research (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014). Accordingly, I consciously attempt to set aside my prejudgments, biases and preconceptions, and ideas about the vote-selling phenomenon. Moustakas (1994) pointed out that “in the epoche, the everyday understandings, understandings, judgments, and knowings are set aside, from the vantage point of a pure or transcendental ego” (p. 33). He explained that the “epoche includes entering a pure internal place, as an open self, ready to embrace life in what it totally offers” (p. 86). Fundamentally, researchers must ensure that they do not determine any conception or hold any position about the phenomenon in advance (Moustakas, 1994, p. 87). I consciously strived to eliminate my personal bias and prejudice by giving regard to my past political experience and knowledge that might influence my understanding of the information I received from the participants and the common meaning expressed by them.

Transcendental Phenomenological Reduction

The second step of Moustakas's transcendental phenomenological process is the transcendental phenomenological reduction stage. Moustakas (1994) referred to this stage as transcendental, because the researcher has to move "beyond the everyday to the pure ego in which everything is perceived freshly, as if for the first time" (p. 34). According to Schmitt (as cited in Moustakas, 1994), the process "is called 'phenomenological' because it transforms the world into mere phenomena. It is called 'reduction' because it leads us back (Lat. Reducere) to the source of the meaning and existence of the experienced world" (p. 34). I reflected on the phenomenon with the view of making clear the meaning of the vote-selling phenomenon.

At the transcendental phenomenological reduction step, Moustakas (1994) identified four stages: bracketing, horizontalizing, clustering the horizon into themes, and organizing the horizons and themes into a coherent textual description of the phenomenon.

The first stage of transcendental phenomenological reduction is bracketing. Moustakas (1994) asserted that at this stage, "the focus of the research is placed in brackets, everything else is set aside so that the entire research process is rooted solely on the topic and question" (p. 97). I bracketed out extraneous considerations and preconceptions to purify the data from the participants before the commencement of data analysis.

Moustakas (1994) referred to the second stage of transcendental phenomenological reduction as horizontalizing. Researchers commence data analysis by

reading the interview notes thoroughly and listening to the audiotapes of the interviews (Maxwell, 2013). Reading the interview notes enables researchers to develop provisional ideas, make initial comments and identify the emerging themes, patterns or categories. The initial reading allows researchers to make comments, while the subsequent readings enable the commencement of the formal coding process (Patton, 2015).

Moustakas (1994) argued that horizontalizing involves treating every statement as having equal value and the sifting of significant statements from irrelevant statements to achieve the “Horizon (the meanings and invariant constituents of the phenomenon)” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 97). Creswell (2013) explained that the coding process involves the classification of passages of text into codes and categories. He pointed out that in phenomenological studies, researchers code the common experiences of individuals by developing codes, forming themes from the codes and organizing the themes into categories to understand the meaning of the data or phenomenon under study (Creswell, 2013). I began the coding process at this stage by treating every statement with equal value and sifting the interviews of the participants to develop codes.

The third stage of transcendental phenomenological reduction is clustering the horizon into themes. Moustakas (1994) contended that researchers have to horizontalize the data by listing the meaning or meaning units and cluster the horizontalized statements into common categories or themes. Undertaking data analysis at this stage is an inductive process that enables researchers to develop themes or categories from the codes (Gibbs & Taylor, 2005). I put together the significant statements and clustered them into main categories.

The fourth stage of transcendental phenomenological reduction concerns organizing the horizons and themes into a coherent textual description. According to Moustakas (1994), “the challenge of description is to determine the textual components of experience, the ‘what’ of the appearing phenomenon” (p. 78). Essentially, I used the categorization of the themes to describe the participants’ experience of the vote-selling phenomenon.

Imaginative Variation

The third step of Moustakas’s transcendental phenomenological process is imaginative variation. Moustakas (1994) explained that the “structural description involves conscious acts of thinking and judging, imagining and recollecting, to arrive at core structural meanings” (p. 79). Moustakas (1994) pointed out that:

The aim is to arrive at structural descriptions of an experience, the underlying and precipitating factors that account for what is being experienced; in other words, the “how” that speaks to conditions that illuminate the “what” of experience. How did the experience of the phenomenon come to be what it is? (p. 98)

In line with Moustakas’s (1994) transcendental phenomenological process, I undertook a deep reflection of the interviews to describe the essential structures using the textual description that would have been derived from the phenomenological reduction

Synthesis of the Meanings

The fourth step of the transcendental phenomenological process is the synthesis of the meanings and essences. Moustakas (1994) asserted that the synthesis of the textual description and structural description “represents the essences at a particular time and

place from the vantage point of an individual researcher following an exhaustive imaginative and reflective study of the phenomenon” (p. 100). Following Moustakas’s (1994) transcendental phenomenological process, I brought the structural and textual essences together to integrate the meanings and essences of the vote-selling phenomenon.

The Main Steps in the Data Analysis

I employed the four main steps of Moustakas’s (1994) transcendental phenomenological data analysis process - Epoche, Transcendental Phenomenological Reduction, Imaginative Variation and Synthesis of the Meanings – to analyse the data in this study.

First, I ensured that I set aside my prejudgments, biases, and preconceptions about vote-selling, the state of infrastructure and public services in Akoko North West Local Government. Secondly, I read the transcripts of all the participants carefully and reviewed them thoroughly taking account of their perceptions and descriptions of their lived experiences about vote-selling, the state of infrastructure and public services in Akoko North West Local Government. At this stage, I bracketed out all extraneous considerations. I sifted through the transcripts one by one and selected the significant statements having regard to the participants’ descriptions of their lived experiences and perceptions about vote-selling, the state of infrastructure and public services in Akoko North West Local Government. Subsequently, I made a list of the significant statements. I then categorized the significant statements by clustering them into themes and sub-themes. The themes consisted of significant statements that were common to all or most of the participants, and the sub-themes were significant statements by some of the

participants. The themes and sub-themes were expressed as words, phrases or short sentences. I had regard to the significant statements and the themes to make textual descriptions of the participants' experiences. Thirdly, I reviewed the transcripts again and undertook a deep reflection of the interviews with a view to reaffirming the understanding of the participants' descriptions of their lived experiences and perceptions as reflected in the transcripts. I then undertook structural descriptions of the factors that precipitated the participants' experiences. Fourthly, I synthesized the textual descriptions and the structural descriptions of the participants' lived experiences about vote-selling, the state of infrastructure, and public services in Akoko North West Local Government. I undertook the synthesis of the textual descriptions, and the structural descriptions of the participants' lived experiences by describing each theme as a heading and sub-themes as sub-headings under a theme.

There was a disconfirming case during data analysis. I, nevertheless, provided clarifications for the discrepant case.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Evidence of quality in a qualitative study refers to evidence that the research findings are credible, trustworthy and accurate (Creswell, 2013). The aim of the study was to ensure that the research findings are credible, transferable, dependable and confirmable to make the findings acceptable to the scholarly community and the public at large. Various strategies were employed to ensure that the findings are valid, that is well-founded and sound (Creswell, 2013).

Credibility

Moustakas (1994) emphasized that in the course of interviews in phenomenological studies, there is a high probability of misconceptions because of the conversational and open-ended nature of the interviews. Therefore, I listened attentively to the interviewees during the interviews, asked probing questions to clarify probable misconceptions arising from the questions and responses and clarified all misconceptions arising from the interviews from time to time to ensure that the findings are credible.

A member checking process was undertaken by obtaining the correct transcriptions of the interviews, spending extensive time with the interviewees and requiring them to confirm the transcriptions of the interviews to prevent distortion of their description of their experiences. In phenomenological studies, interviewees should “review and confirm or alter the research data to correspond to her or his perception of their experience” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 110). The interviewees were presented with the analysis of the interviews - the analytic codes, and categories or themes, and conclusions.

The interviewees were afforded an opportunity to confirm the authenticity of the transcriptions of the interviews. The interviewees were given an opportunity to confirm that the conclusions reflect their common experiences of the vote-selling phenomenon. They were, therefore, able to examine and confirm their description of their common experiences (Moustakas, 1994).

Transferability

The study ensured that its findings are transferable. The fundamental goal of this research design was to enable the researcher to make credible findings and enable the

transferability of the study. Fundamentally, detailed description of the interviewees' essential characteristics and the entire research design were given to enable other researchers to apply the study in other contexts.

Dependability

Triangulation involves collecting and analyzing multiple perspectives (Patton, 2015). The participants' description of their personal experiences were cross-checked and corroborated by asking probing questions during the interview, cross-checking the transcriptions, arranging follow-up interviews for clarification and realistically evaluating emerging themes during analysis from multiple perspectives. Also, the dependability of the findings was enhanced by using a digital voice-recorder.

Confirmability

I employed the reflexivity strategy to ensure that the findings are confirmable. According to Creswell (2013) reflexivity allows researchers to re-examine and clarify their biases through deep reflections. I was conscious of my social and political background, and how they might impact on the interpretation of the data and approach to the research (Creswell, 2013). I ensured that I did not influence the interviewees' perceptions by bracketing out all extraneous considerations.

Ethics

The interviewees were provided with consent forms and asked to sign them. The consent forms were prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The consent form contain the following information: the purpose of the study, liberty of the interviewee to discontinue their involvement in the interview

whenever they wish, agreement of a mutually convenient setting, duration of the interview, privacy of the interviewees, storage of data, publication of the findings, verification of the transcribed materials and, assurance that their responses will remain confidential. Personal experiences of the researcher concerning vote-selling were not shared with the interviewees because it might preclude bracketing that is fundamental to the construction of meanings and essences of the phenomenon in a phenomenological study (Creswell, 2013).

Researchers need to maintain ethical standards at all stages of the research process- through data collection, data analysis, data reporting up to publication (Creswell, 2013). High ethical standards were maintained at all stages of the study. More importantly, the purpose of the study was explained at the outset of the interview and it was confirmed that the privacy and confidentiality of the interviewees would be maintained. The interviewees were informed that they were free to terminate their involvement in the study anytime without explanation.

The loss of privacy was a potential risk associated with the study because of the risk of accidental loss of personal data and potential embarrassment if accidental disclosure of personal information occurred during the interview. The records of the names and personal details of the interviewees were not kept to preclude inadvertent disclosure of the interviewees' identities (O'Sullivan, Rassel, & Berner, 2008). Also, the names and other details of the interviewees were masked to prevent the disclosure of their personal information or identities.

There is a view that qualitative research findings were mostly a product of the researchers' predispositions and preconceptions (Patton, 2015). I therefore set aside all extraneous considerations, predispositions, and preconceptions through bracketing at all stages of the study to avoid researcher's bias.

The physical records would be stored in a locked file cabinet, while the electronic records would be stored on a removable disk and kept in a secured file cabinet for at least 5 years. The digital voice-recording of the interviews were erased after transcriptions. I informed the participants that their names and contact information would be kept separately from the interview records and destroyed on completion of this study. Further, I informed the participants that the transcriptions will be encrypted and protected by passwords. The researcher would be the only person that will have exclusive access to the password and the data.

Summary and Conclusion

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to uncover voters' behaviors by investigating their common and lived experiences concerning the provision of infrastructure, delivery of public services, and voting during elections in Akoko North West Local Government, Ondo State, Nigeria. The approach of the study was to discover voters' perceptions of the connection between the provision of infrastructure and delivery of public services, and vote-selling by interviewing them to provide a detailed description of their experiences with a view of deriving the essences of their experiences (Moustakas, 1994).

The suitability of five of the main approaches (narrative, grounded theory, ethnography, phenomenology and case study) to qualitative research was considered, and the phenomenological approach was found as most appropriate for this study because of the need to obtain information from individuals that have rich information about the vote-selling phenomenon. Particularly, the phenomenological approach was chosen because of the need to derive information-rich data regarding the vote-selling phenomenon from a direct report by the individuals that had the experience (Moustakas, 1994).

The sample contained persons who had participated in past elections in the local government, had been approached for vote-selling and had a common experience of the phenomenon of vote-selling, and the state of infrastructure and public services in Akoko North West Local Government, Ondo State, Nigeria.

Purposeful sampling was used to select information-rich individuals who have the knowledge about vote-selling phenomenon deliberately to provide illuminative information and undertake an in-depth research about the phenomenon (Maxwell, 2013; Patton, 2015). The group sampling, criterion sampling, and time-location selection strategies were employed for sample selection.

The research question, research purpose, the estimated duration of the interview and available resources were taken into account in determining the most appropriate sample size. In selecting the sample, I had regard to the essential factors that will help to answer the research objectives creditably and sufficiently (Marshall, 1996). A sample size of 10 individual participants will be selected as recommended by Creswell (2013) for a phenomenological study.

Interviewing concerns the meeting of two persons (interviewer and interviewee) in which the interviewer asks the interviewee some questions to elicit information on some issues or phenomenon (Janesick, 2011). Moustakas' empirical phenomenological inquiry was used to take the interviewees back to their experience to give an in-depth description of their experiences. Interviews were used as the data collection tool to elicit information from the interviewees who possess an in-depth knowledge about the vote-selling phenomenon. The use of interviewing as the data collection method allowed information about vote-selling to be obtained from individuals who had experienced the phenomenon. The intent of the interview was for the interviewees to reveal their common experiences. Interview protocol was used as a guide before, during and after the interview. Semi-structured, open-ended questions were employed to elicit information from the interviewees during the interviews.

The following Moustakas' (1994) transcendental phenomenological data analytical process was used to analyze the data collected from the interviewees:

1. *Epoche*: This process involved looking inward to identify personal bias and prejudice, and endeavoring to eliminate or subdue them.
2. *Phenomenological Reduction*: All extraneous considerations, preconceptions, and presuppositions were bracketed to bring about data purity before commencing the analysis of the data from the participants.
3. *Imaginative Variation*: Equal values were attached to the data collected during the interviews; the data were organized into meaningful clusters; data that were irrelevant and overlapping were eliminated; invariant themes will be

identified; imaginative variation were performed; and the common experience of the participants were abstracted.

4. Synthesis and Essence: The textual descriptions and structural descriptions of the data were synthesized to integrate the essence of the vote-selling phenomenon (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014).

It was ensured that the study passed the test of reliability, credibility and trustworthiness by clarifying every misconception during the interview, allowing the participants to verify the transcripts of the interview, presenting the results of the data analysis to the interviewees, describing the essential characteristics of the participants and the entire research method in detail to enable transferability by other researchers.

In chapter 4, I present a detailed analysis of the research findings.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to uncover voters' behaviors by investigating their common and lived experiences in respect to the provision of infrastructure, poor delivery of public services, and vote-selling in Akoko North West Local Government, Ondo State, Nigeria. Researchers employ the qualitative paradigm to explore concepts and phenomena that are difficult to understand or that require better understanding (Hoang-Kim et al., 2014). I used a qualitative transcendental phenomenological approach to gain greater understanding of the connection between the inadequate provision of infrastructure, poor delivery of public services, and vote-selling. According to Moustakas (1994), "phenomenology is committed to descriptions of experiences" (p. 58). Researchers therefore use the phenomenological approach to derive evidence for studies through direct reports by individuals who have experienced the phenomenon under study (Moustakas, 1994).

The central research question in this study was the following: "How would individuals who participated in the most recent elections describe their lived experiences of vote-selling in relation to the provision of infrastructure and public services in Akoko North West Local Government?" This study used the phenomenological approach to explore what voters experienced in relation to vote-selling and what circumstances influenced individuals' experiences of vote-selling. For this study, I gathered rich narrative data from interviews with 10 selected participants. The interviews were digitally

recorded and subsequently transcribed. The central research question and interview questions guided the interpretation and analysis of the data arising from the interviews.

In this chapter, I present an analysis of the data collected through interviews following Moustakas's (1994) transcendental phenomenological data analysis methodology, as explained in chapter 3. The chapter consists of nine sections. In the first section, I describe the research settings. In the second section, I describe the demographic features of the participants. In the third section, I explain the data collection process. In the fourth, fifth, and sixth sections, I describe the use of Moustakas's (1994) transcendental phenomenological data analysis (epoche, bracketing, horizontalizing and clustering the horizons or statements into themes, organizing the horizons and themes into a coherent textual description, imaginative variation, and synthesis of meanings). In the next section, I examine the factors that were taken into account and the steps taken to ensure that the research findings were trustworthy. In the eighth section, I explain the nonconfirming comment that was found during the data analysis. In the final section, I provide a brief overview of the methodological procedures employed and a summary of the results.

Research Setting

The research was conducted in Akoko North Local Government, Ondo State, Nigeria. The common experiences of the voters with respect to the provision of infrastructure, the delivery of public services, and their behaviors during the elections conducted by the INEC in Akoko North West Local Government between 2012 and 2016 (i.e., the 2012 Governorship election; 2015 House of Assembly, House of

Representatives, Senate, and Presidential elections; and 2016 Governorship election) constituted the subject of this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study.

According to Moustakas (1994), “evidence from phenomenological research is derived from first-person reports of life experiences” (p. 84). The interviews were conducted face to face and in depth. The interviews were scheduled and conducted at different times and locations that were chosen by the participants. Eight interviews were conducted in town halls, and two were conducted in community centers. The interviews lasted an average of 45 minutes each. An interview protocol (see Appendix A) was employed for guidance and consistency. The participants were engaged in an introductory discussion leading to the disclosure of demographic data—gender, age, level of education, and employment status—at the beginning of the interview. The introductory discussion also helped in establishing rapport with the participants. It enabled them to feel unhindered in talking about their perceptions and experiences. The participants reiterated their willingness to take part in the interviews, and they were informed that they were at liberty to withdraw from the interview at any time. The interviews took place in a conducive environment for each participant, and there were no disruptions or distractions at the time. It was ensured that the electronic recorder was in good condition. I had a duplicate functioning electronic recorder and spare batteries at all times during the interviews.

Demographics

The population under study consisted of voters in Akoko North Local Government, Ondo State, Nigeria. I began to initiate contact with potential participants

after obtaining Walden University's IRB approval to collect data for the study. The process for recruiting participants lasted 1 week. I commenced recruitment by identifying potential participants. The study adopted purposeful sampling as its sampling method. Criterion sampling, group sampling, and time-location selection strategies are three of the various purposeful sampling strategies (Patton, 2015). The group selection strategy enables the discretionary selection of participants using demographic profiles or drawing from major subgroups of the population (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). Maximum variation (heterogeneity) sampling strategy is a form of group sampling strategy that seeks to capture common themes from narratives of individuals from different backgrounds (Patton, 2015). I used criterion sampling, group sampling, and time-location selection strategies to select the interviewees. The sampling method and selection strategies were essential to gather rich data and develop in-depth understanding of the perceptions and experiences of the participants. The maximum variation (heterogeneity) sampling strategy enabled the disclosure and emergence of common themes from participants with different profiles or diverse characteristics (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2015).

The participants' demographic profiles are depicted in Table 1. The ages of the selected participants ranged from 32 to 73 years. There were four female and six male participants. Two were employed, three were self-employed, and five were unemployed. Three did not have any formal education, and seven were educated.

Table 1

Participants' Demographic Information

Assigned code	Age	Employment status	Level of education	Gender
P1	41	Unemployed	Educated	Male
P2	32	Unemployed	Educated	Male
P3	69	Self-employed	No formal education	Male
P4	33	Self-employed	Educated	Female
P5	67	Unemployed	No formal education	Female
P6	73	Unemployed	No formal education	Male
P7	32	Unemployed	Educated	Female
P8	52	Employed	Educated	Male
P9	65	Self-employed	Educated	Male
P10	42	Employed	Educated	Female

Data Collection

I commenced the data collection process by selecting potential participants for the study. The participants were recruited within 1 week of obtaining approval from the Walden University IRB (IRB, no. 08-01-17-0471326) to collect data for the study. I used three purposeful sampling strategies (criterion sampling, group sampling, and time-location selection) to select the participants. To meet inclusion criteria for the study, individuals needed to have (a) participated in the most recent elections (i.e., needed to be

registered voters who voted in the 2012, 2015, and 2016 elections), (b) been exposed to vote-selling, and (c) continuously resided in Akoko North West Local Government, Ondo State, Nigeria, for at least 5 years. Criterion sampling was used to identify registered voters who met the inclusion criteria. The group sampling strategy was used to select participants with different profiles or demographic variables (i.e., age, gender, level of education, and employment status), and the time-location strategy was employed to select persons who had resided continuously in the community for at least 5 years.

Lists of registered voters for the 2012, 2015, and 2016 elections were obtained from Nigeria's INEC and used to identify individuals who met the inclusion criteria. I made copies of the relevant pages of lists of registered voters, which contained voters' phone numbers and addresses. The lists of registered voters were used to identify (a) individuals who had participated in the elections of 2012, 2015, and 2016, and (b) individuals who had continuously resided in Akoko North West Local Government, Ondo State, Nigeria, for at least the last 5 years. Three individuals from each of the 10 wards in Akoko North West Local Government were selected. I assigned unique identification codes (P1–P30) to the selected participants to mask their identities.

I contacted potential participants whom I identified through the list of registered voters by telephone; I visited others who did not have telephones at their residential addresses. I briefly explained the purpose of the study to potential participants. I had informal discussions with potential participants in which I asked them individually whether they were willing and able to participate in a study, in which they would describe their experiences regarding infrastructure, public services, and vote-selling. The

participants confirmed their willingness to participate in the study. They confirmed that they satisfied the inclusion criterion by having participated in the most recent elections. Additionally, they provided the following demographic information: age, gender, employment status, and level of education.

Thirty potential participants were initially identified. However, I deliberately selected one out of three potential participants identified in each ward by using the maximum variation (heterogeneity) sampling strategy to purposefully select individuals from groups defined by gender, age, level of education, and employment status, given that factors such as poverty, unemployment, age, educational level, and income may affect individuals' perceptions of the vote-selling phenomenon. Ten participants were eventually selected for the interview. The individuals who expressed willingness to participate in the study but were not selected from the initial 30 potential participants were informed that they were alternate participants and would be eligible to replace participants who dropped out of the study.

There are no rigid rules or guides pertaining to the appropriateness and adequacy of sample size in qualitative research. Sample size is determined by the research question, purpose of the research, need for credible research findings, and available time and resources (Patton, 2015). In qualitative research, the sample size should not be too large as to dispossess the study of the capability to obtain information-rich data (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). Although the goal was to select 10 to 15 participants, I selected a sample size of 10, which I felt would enable me to answer the research objectives sufficiently and creditably (Creswell, 2013; Marshall, 1996). I decided that data saturation had been

achieved given the depth of the data that I had collected, which I found to be sufficient to answer the research objectives when I could not obtain new information after interviewing the selected 10 participants.

In one of the 10 wards, the selected participant was unable to take part in the interview as arranged as a result of personal circumstances, and an alternate participant had to be contacted to replace her. I telephoned the alternate participant and arranged a mutually convenient time to visit him at his residential address. During my visit to his residential address, he confirmed that he had participated in the most recent elections and presented his voter's card to support this claim. Additionally, the participant confirmed that she has been exposed to vote-selling and stated that he had resided continuously in the Akoko North Local Government for at least 5 years. He was subsequently presented with the invitation letter and informed consent form.

I visited the selected participants at their homes, where I handed the letter of invitation and informed consent form to them. I presented a verbal explanation of the purpose of the study so that they fully understood the purpose and nature of the interview, and I explained that the interviews would only take place if they agreed verbally to proceed and signed the informed consent form. I verified that the participants satisfied the criterion of having participated in the most recent elections by checking their voters' cards, and I asked whether they had been exposed to vote-selling. I visited the selected participants 7 days after handing them the invitation letter and informed consent form to confirm their willingness to participate in the study and collect the signed informed consent letter. Mutually convenient, quiet venues for the interviews were arranged. Eight

of the participants wanted the interview to take place in a town hall, and two preferred their community centers. The participants were given the interview questions in advance.

On various dates before the commencement of the interviews, all of the participants orally confirmed that they were willing to be interviewed for the study and agreed that the interviews could be electronically recorded. They were reassured that their statements and identities would remain confidential and that their real names would be masked with assigned codes. Codes P1 to P10 were assigned to the participants. I confirmed to the participants that the interviews would last for a maximum of 45 minutes. They were told that they could signify an intention to withdraw from the interview at any time and would be able to leave. The interview questions were open-ended and semistructured. They were contained in an interview protocol (see Appendix A). The open-ended and semistructured interviews enabled the participants to talk freely about their perceptions, focus on pertinent issues raised by the interview questions, and illuminate their lived experiences. I asked the participants probing questions related to issues arising from their responses as the interviews evolved.

The interview protocol was used for all participants to ensure that the data collection method was unambiguous and consistent. Notes were taken during the interviews. The participants were informed that they would be contacted again if further clarification was required regarding their responses. Following the interviews, the interview notes were reviewed, and the digital recordings were transferred to removable disks. I transcribed the recorded interviews and compared the transcriptions with the digitally recorded interviews. The transcripts were presented to the participants at their

respective addresses for verification and confirmation that they were a true reflection of their perceptions and lived experiences regarding vote-selling and the state of infrastructure and public services in Akoko North Local Government, Ondo State.

Data Analysis

I used the four main steps of Moustakas's (1994) transcendental phenomenological data analysis process - Epoche, Transcendental Phenomenological Reduction, Imaginative Variation and Synthesis of the Meanings –to analyze the interview data in this study. I discussed the transcendental phenomenological data analysis steps - Epoche, bracketing, horizontalizing and clustering the horizons or statements into themes - in the data analysis section. I discussed the remaining steps - organizing the horizons and themes into a coherent textual description, imaginative variation, and synthesis of the meanings - in the result section.

The data contained the participants' descriptions of the state of infrastructure, voters' needs or expectation, the extent to which the needs or expectations were addressed, their perceptions about election promises, vote-selling and the relationship or connection between vote-selling and provision or improvement of infrastructure and public services.

Epoche

According to Moustakas (1994), “in the epoche, the everyday understandings, understandings, judgments, and knowings are set aside, from the vantage point of a pure or transcendental ego” (p. 33). I consciously set aside my prejudgments, biases, and preconceptions about vote-selling, the state of infrastructure and public services in Akoko

North West Local Government. I eliminated my personal bias by noting my past political experience and knowledge that might influence the comprehension of the information I receive from the participants. I consciously set aside my position about the vote-selling phenomenon in advance (Moustakas, 1994, p. 87).

Transcendental Phenomenological Reduction

I followed four stages: bracketing, horizontalizing, clustering the horizon into themes and organizing the horizons and themes into a coherent textual description of the phenomenon as propounded by Moustakas (1994) for the Transcendental Phenomenological Reduction step.

Bracketing. According to Moustakas (1994) at this stage “the focus of the research is placed in brackets, everything else is set aside so that the entire research process is rooted solely on the topic and question” (p. 97). I bracketed out extraneous considerations and preconceptions to purify the data I wanted to collect from the participants before the commencement of data analysis.

Horizontalizing. The second stage of Moustakas’ (1994) transcendental phenomenological reduction is horizontalizing. I commenced the data analysis at this stage by reading the transcriptions of the interviews of all the participants. I re-read the transcripts several times and went through the statements of each participant line by line. The detailed reading of the transcripts enabled me to have a holistic comprehension of the participants’ experiences and make a provisional mental identification of the significant statements (Maxwell, 2013). I began the coding process at this stage by treating every statement with equal value and sifting the interviews of the participants to develop codes.

Moustakas (1994) pointed out that the process of horizontalizing involves treating every statement as having equal value and the sifting of significant statements from irrelevant statements to achieve the “horizon (the meanings and invariant constituents of the phenomenon)” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 97).

The overarching consideration in sifting through the transcripts to select significant statements was the central research question. The central research question is: How do individuals who participated in the most recent elections describe their lived experiences of vote-selling in relation to the provision of infrastructure and public services in Akoko North West Local Government? I focused on the research question and interview questions to eliminate statements that were not related to the purpose of the study. I had regard to the research question and purpose of the study. I read the transcriptions several times and sifted through the statements one by one to select the significant statements from the descriptions of the lived experiences of the participants about vote-selling, the state of infrastructure and public services in Akoko North West Local Government. I stored the list of significant statements in a Microsoft Word document for ease of analysis.

Clustering the horizon into themes. I used the perceptions expressed and the experiences described by the participants in response to the interview questions and the phenomena under study to categorize each significant statement. I followed this process with each participant by putting together the significant statements made by them and then clustered the significant statements into themes and sub-themes.

Significant Statements/Horizons and Themes

The themes consisted of significant statements that are common to all or most of the participants, and the sub-themes consisted of the significant statements made at least five of the participants. Moustakas (1994) described the procedures as including “horizontalizing the data and regarding every horizon or statement relevant to the topic and question as having equal value” (p. 118). I clustered the significant statements of each participant that are relevant to the central research question and interview questions (that is vote-selling, infrastructure, and public services) into common categories. I listed the significant statements made by each of the participants and common to them under each theme and sub-theme. The themes and sub-themes were expressed as words, phrases or short sentences.

The following were the seven themes and four sub-themes that emerged from the significant statements: (a) inadequate and bad state of infrastructure and public services, and (b) infrastructure and public services; (c) insensitivity to voters’ needs and expectations; (d) non-fulfillment of promises, corruption, and self-enrichment; (e) disappointments, lack of trust and voters apathy and, sub-themes (poverty and the share of public funds); (f) voters engaged in vote-selling and, sub-themes (the openness of vote-selling, and party agents’ vote-buying strategies); and (g) Good governance. The themes and sub-themes that emerged were inter-related, and they were listed in Table 2.

Table 2

Themes and Subthemes That Emerged From Open-Ended, Semistructured Interviews

No.	Themes	Participants
1	Inadequate and bad state of infrastructure and public services	10 of 10
2	Infrastructure and public services	10 of 10
3	Insensitivity to voters' needs and expectations	10 of 10
4	Nonfulfillment of promises, corruption and self-enrichment	10 of 10
5	Voters engaged in vote-selling	10 of 10
	Subthemes	
	The Openness of vote-selling	8 of 10
	Party agents' vote-buying strategies	7 of 10
6	Disappointments, lack of trust, and voters' apathy	10 of 10
	Subthemes	
	Poverty	6 of 10
	The share of public funds	5 of 10
7	Good governance	10 of 10

The seven themes and four subthemes that emerged from the significant statements are as follows:

Inadequate and Bad State of Infrastructure and Public Services

The interview question “What is your opinion about the state of infrastructure and public services in your local government?” was intended to elicit information regarding

what the participants experienced about the state of the of infrastructure and public services in Akoko North West Local Government. The theme derived from this question was “poor infrastructure and inadequate public services.” There was a striking consensus among the participants on the theme. The following significant statements from the transcribed interview notes support the notion that infrastructure and public services in Akoko North West Local Government are inadequate and in a bad state.

P1: The condition of infrastructure is very terrible. It is like we don't have a government... The government has abandoned its responsibilities. There are no good roads. There is no electricity. The hospitals are badly managed and funded. All the infrastructure are bad and dilapidated. Nothing is working. It is so bad that we haven't had electricity and pipe-borne water for so many years. We are suffering.

P2: The state of infrastructure in this local government is very bad. Residents are always complaining about the lack of good public services and infrastructure. There are no good public services from the government in my local government. There are no government programs. We don't have good roads, electricity and employment opportunities. The government has failed to provide an enabling environment for business and employment... Everything is bad and remains the same before and after elections.

P3: The state of infrastructure is nothing to write home about in this local government... Most of the infrastructure in this local government are outdated. Most of the infrastructure in the local government predated

democratic government in Nigeria that is they were constructed before 1999 by the past military regimes... In fact, it is fair to say that public services are not only poor but nonexistent. I cannot point at any functional public services in this local government. The roads are poor, there is no electricity for some years, and we do not have pipe borne water.

P4: The state of infrastructure in this local government is very bad...Most of the existing infrastructure are dilapidated, and the public services are nothing to write home about. All the roads in the local government are very bad. Some of the roads are so bad that vehicles cannot pass through them... We don't have pipe borne water at all. Most of our schools' buildings are falling. The schools' roofs are leaking. We haven't had any electricity for some years in this local government... We don't have government presence.

P5: The infrastructure and public services in this local government are in a very bad condition. The successive governments have failed to give serious attention to the infrastructural development in our area. There are no good roads, no pipe borne water, and our schools are not well maintained. We have a number of abandoned infrastructural projects that governments had disregarded to complete over the years.

P5: Our schools are not being maintained... We now have many private schools. Government schools are no longer good. The students that attend government schools are children whose parents are poor and cannot afford private school's fees. The children of the politicians don't attend government schools, so they

don't care to allocate funds to maintain them... Our hospitals are not maintained at all. Everybody went to private hospitals when they got sick. The government hospitals are not well maintained. Only poor people go to government hospitals. The wealthy individuals and politicians do not go to government hospitals.

P6: The state of infrastructure in Akoko North West local government is pathetic... The politicians have failed to provide us with good roads, electricity and pipe-borne water. They have failed to maintain the public facilities. New governments would abandon old and existing projects.

P7: Our infrastructure are bad in this local government. We don't have electricity, water, good roads. Our schools are not well maintained... The schools' buildings are in bad condition. The schools do not have chairs and tables for students. The classrooms have become too dangerous to accommodate the students. In some schools, teachers do not have chairs and tables they could use to carry out their work. Students are being taught in the open air, under the trees in some primary schools. Accidents which resulted in the loss of lives occurred frequently on our roads because of the bad condition of the roads.

P8: The infrastructure and public services are very bad. We are suffering in this local government... We have very bad roads. Our hospitals are not functioning. The doctors and nurses do not have the necessary equipment. The buildings in our schools are in a very bad state. We do not have electricity supply and pipe-borne water... There is so much corruption.

P9: Infrastructure are nonexistent, and public services are not functioning... The politicians have failed to execute infrastructural projects, and they have also failed to maintained existing services... We don't have electricity, good roads, adequate market stalls, pipe-borne water and good schools.

P10: There's serious deficiency of infrastructure in this local government. The essential public services are not available... All the roads are very bad and almost unusable. We find it difficult to move from one town to the other. We don't have access to good medical care. Many young mothers die during childbirth because of lack of good medical services. Motor accidents with fatalities frequently occur on our roads because the roads are bad... We don't have any single good infrastructure in this local government.

Infrastructure and Public Services

The interview question: "What do people need or expect from elected public office holders?" was aimed at illuminating voters' needs or expectations from elected public office holders. The theme derived from this question was "infrastructure and public services." All the participants expressed similar needs and expectations regarding infrastructure and public services from elected public holders. They all made references to the need to provide and improve infrastructure and public services. The following significant statements from the interview data support the notion that the voters expect elected public office holders to invest in infrastructure and public services.

P1: We expect them to provide us with good public services. We expect them to provide us with public services that will improve our standard of living and

enable us to lead a better life... We want them to communicate our needs to the government and with our needs. We expect them to take care of our welfare.

P2: We need many things in this local government... They promised us employment, eradication of poverty, provision of roads, pipe-borne water and electricity. We want them to fulfill these promises... We expect public office holders to execute projects that will bring about an improvement in our lives.

P3: We expect them to undertake projects that will improve the welfare of the people... Also, we need a sense of belonging... We want the elected public officials to come to this constituency frequently. For example, we voted for politicians to represent us at the House of Assembly, House of Representative and the Senate, but they have not been visiting us to listen to our problems... They received constituency allowances but never embarked on any constituency project... They only come home at the time of elections to seek re-elections.

P4: We need the politicians to address our problems and put things rights... We need them to make policies that will increase the number of people in employment... I can say that a sizable number of people are unemployed. They need to curb corruption and spend the state's resources to provide us with roads, electricity, hospital and other infrastructure and public services.

P5: We expect our politicians to provide us with the enabling environment that will make way for employment for the people, good infrastructure, and public

services... We need good transportation system, pipe-born water, good roads, new schools and so on. We expect them to maintain and repair the old and dilapidated school buildings, roads, and other infrastructure.

P6: We want dividends of democracy... We expect elected public office holders to provide us with good public services. We want good roads, electricity, well- maintained schools and hospitals, good public transportation, and telephone services.

P7: We need good roads, pipe-borne water, and electricity. We need good schools and hospitals. We need good social policies for the elderly, women, and the children. Also, we need an orphanage.

P8: We want the politicians to sort out all the problems relating to bad infrastructure...We want them to provide us with good schools, hospital, roads, electricity and pipe-borne water... They would raise our hopes, but they disappointed us at the end of the day.

P9: We need the infrastructure and public services I mentioned earlier that we do not have... Our hardship and suffering will be ameliorated if they could make them available... We need good roads, pipe-borne water, electricity and other public services that will enhance employment opportunities.

P10: We need good infrastructure that will bring about an enabling environment for employment opportunities.

Insensitivity to Voters' Needs and Expectations

The interview question: "Have elected public office holders addressed these needs or expectations while in office?" was aimed at eliciting the voters' needs and expectations. The theme derived from this question was "insensitivity to voters' needs and expectations." There is a unity of opinions by all the participants that the elected public office holders failed to address their needs. The following significant statements from the interview data support the notion that the elected public office holders are insensitive to voters' needs and expectations.

P1: No, they have not been addressing our needs. This is because it is the government's responsibility to provide us with good infrastructure... I believe that it is the government's primary duties to provide us with public services. Rather the reverse is the case... The politicians enrich themselves with public funds and flaunt their wealth as soon as they get elected instead of using the funds to provide us with good roads, pipe-borne water, and electricity.

P2: No, the public office holders never addressed our needs. For example, our senators and house of representative members obtained constituency allowances, but they always failed to execute any project but diverted the funds to themselves.

P2 explained,

Constituency allowances are funds provided by the federal

government to senators and house or representative members to execute projects in their constituencies with a view to providing physical and social development in their constituencies.

P3: No, not at all. They do not care about our needs. They do not regard us as human beings. They regard us as spanners to be used and dumped. They regard their positions as a means of enriching themselves and their family.

P4: No, they have failed woefully to address our needs... They care for themselves. They are very corrupt. They divert public funds to themselves. They will award contracts for infrastructural projects and will not execute them. Sometimes, they will cajole us by commissioning uncompleted or badly executed projects. They will allocate substantial funds to execute projects in the budgets, and at the end of the year they will not carry out work on the projects.

P5: They will tell us about their plans and that they intended to address our needs, especially during the election campaign. But they always failed to address our needs... There are so much dishonesty and corruption by the politicians. Nigerian politics is dependent on wealthy individuals. Politicians perceive politics as an investment. When they get elected, they think about profiting from their positions which they considered as investments rather than addressing our developmental needs.

P6: Public office holders have not addressed our needs in this local government. The politicians use their positions to enrich themselves. Most of them believe

in using their offices for personal gains than using their offices to create public wealth or make policies that will improve our lives... They diverted public funds to themselves through various corrupt means to the detriments of the voters.

P7: The politicians are not ready to do anything. They are not even ready to listen to our demands and needs. They disappeared from their constituencies after the election and only return during elections... I have been involved in community activities for some time. Recently, I raised some concerns with the Local Government Chairman. He simply responded that there was no budget to cover the issue and did not say how the matter could be dealt with in the future... It is very frustrating. Our elected representatives do not care for us... Also, on another occasion, we went to the state capital, Akure with some disabled persons. The state governor's representatives did not attend to us and did not give us any other appointment to return.

P8: The public office holders never addressed our expectations and needs. They do not do anything. They can be deceptive at times... They would commence preliminary works on infrastructural projects shortly before the elections so that voters will assume that they were about to address their needs. They would then stop and abandoned the work after they have been re-elected to their positions. They would also do a facelift on some infrastructure before elections to deceive the electorate... We can't trust politicians.

P9: No, they have not addressed our needs. That's why the state of infrastructure is very bad. They don't care about us. They only care about themselves. They don't care whether we have electricity insofar as they have big generators in their homes. They don't care whether we have water because they have boreholes in their compound.

P10: The elected public office holders have not dealt with our problems and concerns... They are selfish... They know our problems, but they are interested in their pockets rather than public welfare.

Nonfulfillment of Promises, Corruption, and Self-Enrichment

The interview question: "What do you think about the election promises by elected public office holders to provide or improve infrastructure and public services?" was aimed at understanding the participants' perception of election promises by the elected public office holders. Non-fulfillment of promises, corruption, and self-enrichment was the theme that emerged from the interview data. All the participants claimed that the elected public office holders failed to fulfill election promises they made when they were seeking political offices. The following significant statements from the interview data support the notion that the elected public office holders are corrupt, enrich themselves and do not fulfill their election promises.

P1: The elected public office holders usually make promises when they were campaigning, but those promises never translated to actual deeds... We hear their promises, but we don't see their actions... They would always promise

to provide or improve services and infrastructure, but there has not been any transformation in our wellbeing... We continue to lack basic public services.

P2: The politicians would come to us during elections as if they would do the right thing if elected but forgot about us and the promises they made to us after they got elected... They are only interested in their purses. They are very selfish and wicked... Most of them are evil incarnate.

P3: The politicians are in in the habit of making false promises that they probably knew they would not fulfill. They never fulfilled their pre-election promises. They will even promise to build bridges where there are no rivers (laugh)... The politicians do not live up to expectations... They do not have regards for the voters. The problem is that we have leadership problems... Embezzlement by politicians is the order of the day. The politicians are supposed to provide services that will improve our well-beings are corrupt... All they do in government is to enrich themselves.

P4: My experience is that, during the electioneering campaign, the politicians will make a lot of promises which they never fulfilled... Rather than executing projects, they promised us during the campaigns that they would execute; they would embezzle the funds meant to provide infrastructure... They use their positions in government to gather wealth. They use their positions to buy houses for themselves and their family members within and outside the country. They buy top of the range cars.

- P5: The politicians only make promises during elections. They made lofty promises. There were always promises galore during elections. But they forgot about their promises after they have been elected into offices... They are very corrupt... They concentrate on using their offices to enrich themselves after the election instead of performing their duties in the interest of the voters or fulfilling the pre-election promises that they made.
- P6: It is one thing to promise, it is one thing to fulfill. The politicians always made promises but always failed to fulfill their promises. That is one of the reasons why they had to bribe voters with cash when they sought re-election. If they fulfilled their promises, voters would appreciate their performance, and they would not have to bribe us during elections.
- P7: When the politicians were campaigning, they promised heaven and earth. They would promise to construct roads, provide pipe-borne water, build schools, and so on and so forth. However, they always failed to fulfill the promises they made during elections as soon as they get to power... The politicians are self-centered and very selfish. They are only interested in themselves.
- P8: Most politicians are liars... I don't know, but I think there is some spirit that possesses them as soon as they get elected to public offices. They would appear to be honest and sincere when they were seeking votes before the election... They change as soon as they get elected. For example, a lady wanted to contest for an elective position some time ago. She came to meet

with us in the town hall. She told us her intentions and what she would do if she got elected. We did not see her again after the election having been elected. She did not fulfill any of the promises she made.

P9: The politicians made so many promises to get elected... They will promise to rehabilitate bad roads, renovate schools, provide pipe-borne water and so on... It is not like they don't make promises, but the reality is that all the promises, are empty promises. They normally don't fulfill their pre-election promises.

P10: The elected public office holders usually made promises when they were campaigning, but those promises never translated to actual deeds... We hear their promises, but we don't see their actions... They would always make promises to provide or improve services and infrastructure, but there has not been any transformation in our wellbeing. We continue to lack basic public services.

Voters Engaged in Vote-Selling

The interview questions: "Do voters engage in vote-selling in your local government? If yes, have you or do you know anyone who had been approached for vote-selling, or accepted cash for votes?" and "What do you think about the election promises by elected public office holders to provide or improve infrastructure and public services?" were aimed at eliciting information about the participants' experiences concerning vote-selling. A major thread that ran through their responses was that vote-selling was prevalent and many voters were paid for their votes. The theme derived from the interview data was that "voters engaged in vote-selling." Additionally, two sub-

themes derived from the questions. The sub-themes derived were, “openness of vote-selling and witness of cash collection” and “party agents’ vote-buying strategies.”

- P1: Voters engage in vote-selling...yes, of course. I took money for voting for the candidate I voted. Also, all my friends collected money to vote for the candidates they cast their votes for in the last election.
- P2: “Voters did accept votes for cash. They collected money... Nobody hides it... They made it clear they were willing to collect the money. They collected various amount of money.” He further stated that “it was apparent we accepted cash during the last elections.”
- P3: “I received cash for votes, and many other voters received cash for votes...” He added that “many voters engaged in vote-selling in the just concluded gubernatorial election in Ondo State... We were given cash for votes in my polling-unit.”
- P4: “Yes, I have approached and offered cash for votes by party agents at the polling units when on the queue to register for accreditation.” P4 asserted that “voters sell their votes during elections.”
- P5: We need to be sincere. We accepted cash for votes.” She added that “voters engage in vote-selling. The politicians were prepared to give money to voters and the voters were prepared to collect the money
- P6: Yes, my friends and I accepted cash for votes on the day of the last governorship election...I’m sorry to say that election these days is all about which candidates spent the most money on the day of the election.

P7: Yes, voters collect money from politicians because they are of the opinion that when they get elected, they do not remember them...I know many voters that collected money from party agents on election days.

P8: Voters engaged in vote-selling. It has even become part of the culture during elections. It is so bad that voters look forward to being bribed for votes during elections...I've been approached for vote-selling and I have witnessed many voters collecting cash for votes on Election days. Some voters would collect cash from more than one political party and eventually vote for the candidate whose party agent paid the highest amount of money.

P9: Voters accepted cash from the party representatives and voted as instructed...I was approached for vote-selling on the day of the last governorship election outside the polling center before the start of accreditation.

P10: Voters sell their votes to the highest bidder during elections. In fact, it was very common during the last governorship election... The politicians exhibit their new-found wealth after they got elected which made voters feel it was alright to take money from them as well...They approached me to sell my vote, and I saw other voters collecting cash for votes.

Subthemes

The openness of vote-selling. Eight participants reported that they witnessed cash collection and that vote-selling occurred publicly. The following significant

statements from the interview data support the notion that participants witnessed cash collection and that vote-selling occurred publicly.

P1: I saw party agents giving voters money at the polling centers during elections.

P2: Nobody hides it...Even the security officers were aware that voters were collecting cash for votes from the party agents. In fact, the party agents gave the security officers at the polling centers cash for refreshments... It was so bad that it became an open act during the last election when the popular slogan was “Edibo esebe” which means in English accept cash for the vote to enable you to make good soup. ..It was public knowledge that party agents were distributing cash to voters on the day of the election... Some of the voters that I had interactions with were boastful of collecting cash from more than one party agents.

P3: Some collected five thousand naira while others collected seven thousand naira just for a vote... This just concluded gubernatorial election in Ondo State was a monetized election. Many voters voted for the highest bidder.

P3: Monetized election a common term that voters and politicians use to describe vote-buying. It means the act of voting in an election has become transactional. It means buying votes with money, and that money determines who voters voted for in the election.

P5: In some case, the transactions occur openly while in other cases they do it around the corner where the party agents would sit to give out cash before or after voting.

P7: I saw cash exchanging hands between party agents and voters. Everybody knew it was happening. It was an open secret.

P8: I had witnessed voters telling party agents before the Election Day that they were expecting cash and gifts from their political parties. They told the party agents openly that they would not vote for their candidates on the Election Day if arrangements to give them cash for votes were not made.

P9: I saw many voters collecting cash immediately after they cast their votes during the last election. Many voters whom I know very well told me that they accepted payment of cash to vote. The three main political parties distributed money, for votes but the amount of money they offered was different.

P10: Everyone saw them and knew that voters were going to the place to collect the money they had promised them before they voted. Many voters said it openly that they have collected their share of government money.

Party agents' vote-buying strategies. Seven participants described some of the vote-buying strategies used by the party agents. The following significant statements from the interview data support the notion that party agents employed vote-buying strategies.

P1: The party agents would make prior internal arrangements with voters before the voting took place. The arrangement would include getting paid after voting had taken place...Internal arrangement is the kind of agreement that party agents have with voters to pay them outside of the polling center

environment after voting had taken place and confirmation that the voters had voted for their preferred candidates as arranged.

P4: Yes, I have approached and offered cash for votes by party agents at the polling units when on the queue to register for accreditation. In some cases, the head of a family will negotiate with party agents and collect the cash on behalf of the voters in his family. In other cases, voters collect cash by themselves and vote as instructed by the party agents.

P5: We received cash from party agents or the representatives of the candidates on the day of the election.

P6: The party agents distributed cash to voters on the day of the election and voters accept the cash and vote as directed by the agents by voting for the agents' preferred candidates rather than voting for any other candidates of their choice.

P8: The political parties and the party agents use different strategies. Sometimes they would distribute cash and goods. Sometimes they would distribute goods on the eve of the election by going from house to house and distribute cash on the day of the election. Some would distribute cash at the polling-centers before voting commenced while others would monitor voters and give them the cash after voting had taken place.

P9: The representatives of the political parties will tell them what to do to ensure that they have voted as instructed. Most of the time, the voters will be told to hold their ballot paper in a manner that the agent of the candidate in the

polling center will be able to see how they voted and the representative will then send a signal to the party agent outside the polling center that a particular voter has voted as instructed. The voters will then go and collect their money outside the polling center. Party agents use different strategies on election days to monitor voters and pay them for voting as directed.

P10: The transaction between the party agents and voters were carried out in the open while the collection of cash after voting had taken place occurred under a tree about 30 meters away from the polling center.

Disappointment, Lack of Trust, and Voter Apathy

The interview question: “What reasons would you give for acceptance of cash instead of voting on the basis of political parties’ manifestoes?” was aimed at understanding the reasons voters accept cash from political parties and candidates. The theme that was derived from the interview data was that “disappointments, lack of trust and voters apathy.” Nine participants reported that voters sell their votes because they were disappointed with the performance of the elected public office holders; they no longer trust them and have become apathetic. Also, two sub-themes emerged from the questions. The sub-themes were “poverty” and “share of public funds.”

P1: I will say that the voters are disappointed with the performances of the politicians in government. When the politicians campaigned, they promised heaven and earth, but at the end of the day, the reverse is the case. The voters prefer to take something from them rather than voting on the basis of the political parties’ manifestoes.

P2: Voters accepted cash for votes instead of voting on the basis of political parties' manifestoes because politicians always failed to fulfill their election promises. We only see our politicians during election time. Immediately after the election, they will all vanish from the public. You cannot blame the voters for accepting cash for votes during elections because they know the politicians will never return to provide necessary infrastructure and public services for them, so they have to take advantage of the circumstances to collect their dividends of democracy.

P3: Like I have said earlier the elected political office holders are not living up to expectation.

P5: Further, if there is good government and the good governance is visibly demonstrated, many voters will not collect cash for votes. They will want to vote for candidates that will execute projects that will improve their well-beings. Also, voters accept cash for votes because they think all politicians are corrupt and the same. Some people think that vote-buying is better than other forms of election rigging, such as ballot snatching, intimidation of voters, and other violent conduct. They think offering cash for votes is preferable to other means of election rigging.

P6: Everybody believes that those governing us are corrupt. We can see that the politicians live in opulence beyond their income or earnings. We, therefore, believe that elections are an opportunity to get something from the politicians rather than consider voting for candidates who could provide us with good

governance because none of them can provide us with good governance anyway.

P7: I think the most important reason why the voters collected money is that the politicians do not stand by their words. The voters no longer trust them...

P8: I will say that voters are already tired of failed and unfulfilled promises by politicians. They think they have become wiser. Although, it is ironic. They think that it is their money anyway. They believe that it is better to collect cash for votes during the elections because the politicians would only enrich themselves after they get elected. Their experiences have shown that the politicians do not give them any consideration after the elections.

P9: I think the main reasons for the acceptance of cash are poverty and lack of trust. The voters are very poor, and they do not trust the politicians that they will perform their duties. They told me that politicians do not get elected to make any positive impact in the community.

P10: Voters no longer trust the politicians. They do not feel that political parties' manifestoes have any meaning because politicians don't remember manifestoes after they have been elected. All they do is to use their political offices to amass wealth by corrupt means. We no longer have access to them after the election. When you call them on the telephone, they won't answer your calls. Most of them will change their telephone numbers after elections. They disregard the voters... The majority of the voters were unemployed, and

most of those who were employed had outstanding salaries of about six months.

Subthemes

Poverty. Six participants reported that voters accepted cash from political parties and candidates because of poverty. The following significant statements from the interview data support the notion that voters accept cash for votes because of poverty.

P2: The public office holders did not pay workers' salaries for about three to four months, so residents were poor and desperate for money. We had to collect cash for votes because we felt they needed the cash. We needed the money to buy food because we were hungry people.

P3: Yes, many voters engaged in vote-selling in the just concluded gubernatorial election in Ondo State. We were given cash for votes in my polling-unit. Most of us are poor. Some of us find it difficult to feed so we do not hesitate to accept cash for votes. Imagine if you were hungry and you were given five thousand naira to vote for a particular party. Certainly, you will collect it.

P3: The kind of hardship we are currently experiencing is so tough that many people find it difficult to have their daily meal. The government has not paid workers salary for about seven months. A majority of us are very poor. We were in a position where we felt we needed the money and had no choice.

P4: The economy of Ondo State is based or guided by salaries received by government workers because we do not have any big factory or private company that employs workers. Before the last election in Ondo State, the

state government has not paid workers' salaries for about seven months. We are hungry because we struggle to have food. So the politicians knowing that people were hungry distributed cash to voters during the elections to buy votes. Many voters are of the opinion that they have no option than to sell their votes for cash because their votes might not count anyway or that whoever won the election would act like others and would not carry out any project or make policies to improve their living conditions.

P4: I think poverty is the major reason for their actions...

P5: The main problem is poverty. The majority of the voters are very poor. So they accept to accept cash for votes because they want money even though it is not substantial.

P9: I think the main reasons for the acceptance of cash are poverty and lack of trust. The voters are very poor, and they do not trust the politicians that they will perform their duties.

P10: Another reason why they accepted cash for votes was the level of poverty.

The share of public funds. Six participants claimed that voters perceived the collection of cash for votes as their share of public funds. The following significant statements from the interview data support the notion that voters accept cash for votes because they believed the elected public office holders embezzle public funds and that they were only collecting their share of public funds.

P1: The voters prefer to take advantage of the circumstances to collect their dividends of democracy.

P6: We, therefore, believe that elections are an opportunity to get something from the politicians rather than consider voting for candidates who could provide us with good governance because none of them can provide us with good governance anyway.

P7: The voters no longer trust them and collecting money from them during the election was seen as their monetary benefit from the government.

P8: They think that it is their money anyway.

P9: They perceived the money received from the politicians as free money from public funds.

P10: The voters, therefore, expressed it openly that it was worthwhile to accept cash for votes rather than losing out altogether.

Good Governance

The interview questions: “Do you think those who accepted cash for votes would have voted differently in some cases if the state of public services was good?” and “Do you think those who accepted cash for votes would have voted differently in some cases if the elected public office holders have improved public services in your local government?” The questions were aimed gathering information relating to the participants’ experiences and perceptions about infrastructure and public services, and vote-selling. The theme that was derived from the questions was “good governance.” The theme was common to all the participants. The following significant statements support the perceptions of the participants that vote-selling will be significantly reduced if there

was good governance that facilitates the provision of good infrastructure and public services.

P1: I think they will vote differently if the public services were good but at the same time some voters will still collect money from party agents because of poverty and voted for cash.

P1: I think many of the people will not accept cash for votes if the condition of public services and infrastructure were good. They will prefer to have good public services to accepting the cash they will get on election days. At the same time, very few people may still get money from party agents and vote for cash even if the public services were good.

P1: I think the majority of the voters that accepted cash for votes would have voted differently if the elected public office holders fulfilled the promises made before the elections and improved the state of public services. The voters will surely prefer to vote for those who had carried out projects or implemented public services that improved their standard of living rather than voting for cash. However, some very few greedy ones may still accept cash irrespective of the improvement in public services.

P1: The politicians need to address some certain things. They should be able to give a good account of their stewardship to the people. The politicians should try to improve the public services. They should try to do things to improve the standard of living of the people so that people will prefer to vote for them on the basis of their policies rather than voting for cash.

P2: Yes, I so much believe that most of us would have voted differently in some cases if the state of public services was good. I reside in this community and can say that many of the voters always regretted their actions within a short time after the election. We would always complain about the inadequacy of the infrastructure and hoped that public office holders change their attitude towards the community.

P2: I can say that voters who accepted cash for votes would have voted differently if the elected public office holders have improved public services in this local government. I believe that there is nobody on earth that does not know what is good. I will say that voters collect cash for votes because we believe that once elected the politicians only use their positions to enrich themselves. If the government provided good public services most of the voters will not accept cash for votes.

P3: Of course, most of us would have voted differently in some cases if the state of public services was good. Most of my friends that accepted cash and voted as instructed by the party agent told me that they would have voted differently but for the seven thousand naira per vote that they were offered.

P3: We would have voted differently if the state of public services they attempted to improve our infrastructure. I am certain that if the government starts providing us with water, road, and electricity, we would prefer to vote for politicians that will main good public service as opposed to those who wanted to buy our votes. I will say that this applies to job creation as well. I mean if

we have jobs and there are good public services most of us would not accept cash for votes.

P4: Yes, those who accepted cash for votes would have voted differently if they received their salaries or the public office holders are doing well by providing good infrastructure and public services.

P4: Those who accepted cash for votes would have voted differently by voting for the candidate of their choice if elected public office holders were doing the right thing by improving the public services in the local government. Some of the voters who voted for cash had previously voted on the basis of party manifestoes, but they realized that the politicians that they voted for did not do well by initiating public policies that could bring about improvement to their well-beings.

P4: Generally, I will like to state that - if our public services are improved; if the government pays the government workers regularly; if the salary were increased regularly; and the working environment is improved – many vote sellers will vote for the candidates or parties of their choices and shun vote-selling.

P5: Indeed, I believe that if the state of infrastructure and public services was good, voters will vote for the candidates of their choice rather than voting as paid. The voters will prefer to enjoy good governance as opposed to accepting cash and suffer ban governance.

P5: Do you think those who accepted cash for votes would have voted differently in some cases if the elected public office holders have improved public services in your local government?

P5: Yes, I think if the politicians did well in the past, voters would vote for them to sustain their good deeds, but they accept cash for votes because they have not seen improvement in public services and infrastructure and believed that it does not make any difference whether or not they accept cash for votes. I think there cannot be any improvement by the politicians except by way of God's intervention. The politicians cannot change. It is even getting worse.

P6: Yes, certainly, certainly. If everything is in place, and politicians perform well in government majority of us who accepted cash for votes would have voted differently. Certainly, if the state of public services were good, we would have done the right thing by voting for those who will maintain or provide public services rather than accepting cash for votes.

P6: Yes, they would have voted differently if the politicians did well in government because if they improved public services that would have been sufficient to convince the voters that they should vote for those who can continue to improve public services instead of collecting cash for votes.

P7: I believe that most voters will not collect money to vote for any candidate or candidates they were instructed to vote for if the state of the public services was good.

P7: Yes. I think that most of them would have voted differently and would not have collected cash if they could trust the politicians. They do not trust the politicians because they never fulfilled the promises made during elections. I think vote-selling will be reduced drastically if the politicians use their offices to improve our standard of living.

P8: With my experience and what those who collected cash for votes had discussed with me, I can say that they would have voted differently if the state of infrastructure and public services was good and the politicians who had held elective offices in the past had fulfilled their election promises.

P8: Those who accepted cash for votes understand the importance of good governance and do not like the state of infrastructure and public services in the local government. They are more or less hopeless. Most of them always lamented the state of infrastructure and hoped that politicians would be trustworthy and develop our infrastructure for us. The majority of the voters will prefer to have good infrastructure and public services as opposed to the cash they collect during elections.

P9: Without any doubt, most voters that got paid and voted as instructed would not have done so if the state of public services was good. The majority of them did what they did as a result of frustration with the politicians and government. They knew what they did was bad but felt the politicians will embezzle the money or kept the money for themselves if they didn't accept it.

In some cases, none of the candidates would make any difference to their welfare whether or not they accepted the cash for votes.

P9: I think vote-sellers will vote differently if the elected public office holders have improved public services I have heard voters complaining that the politicians are rogue. They normally justified collecting cash and other goods from those seeking elective positions because they would not improve their welfare when they get to the offices being sought. For example, some time ago in this local government, funds meant for widows, and vulnerable people were not used for that purpose but were diverted the personal bank account of one of his family members. They will embezzle funds meant for infrastructural projects. If they used these funds for public services majority of the voters will not vote for cash.

P10: They would have voted differently if the state of public services was good. Many voters who accepted cash were saying that the politicians were useless. They complained that the state of infrastructure was too bad and that it was a waste to vote for them. We feel the effects of the lack of infrastructure, so if there were good infrastructure, most people would have good reasons to trust the politicians and voted for the best candidate without collecting cash for vote. We all wanted good government but are frustrated by the actions of the politicians, and many voters who were mainly unemployed and uneducated took their frustration too far by collecting cash for votes. Unfortunately, the majority of the voters were unemployed.

P10: Voters always complained about the state of public services. They only collected the cash because they felt it doesn't make any difference if they didn't collect it. They will have voted differently if the elected public office holders have improved public services because they will prefer to continue to enjoy good services.

Results

Moustakas (1994) explained that the textual description is: What the individuals experienced regarding the phenomenon? While the structural description is: How the individuals experienced the phenomenon or what circumstances influenced their experience? The significant statements made by the participants in their interviews and, the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the clustered statements were used to make textual descriptions of the participants' experiences, structural descriptions of the factors that precipitated the participants' experiences, and synthesize what they experienced and the circumstances that influenced their experiences. The data analysis revealed a connection between infrastructure and public services, and vote-selling.

Organizing the Horizons and Themes Into a Coherent Textual Description

Moustakas (1994) explained that "the challenge of description is to determine the textual components of experience, the 'what' of the appearing phenomenon" (p. 78). The composite textual description is, therefore, constructed from the aggregate of the significant statements and themes that emerged from the participants' experiences (Moustakas, 1994). I made composite texture descriptions of the participants' experiences

of vote-selling and the state of infrastructure and public services in Akoko North Local Government.

Composite textual descriptions. The participants freely expressed their experiences of vote-selling and the state of infrastructure and public services in Akoko North Local Government. There was a congruence of perceptions that infrastructure was inadequate, delivery of public services was poor, and vote-selling was rife and increasingly prevalent.

The participants described the state of infrastructure and public services in the local government as terrible, bad, outdated, dilapidated and pathetic. They claimed that the roads were not good, electricity was lacking, pipe-borne water was not available, schools were badly funded and managed, and health services were poor. P1 said “it is like we don’t have a government...Nothing is working.” For many of the participants, public services are non-functional or non-existent. P10 expressed that “many young mothers die during childbirth because of lack of good medical services.” Describing the condition of schools in the local government, P7 stated that:

The schools’ buildings are in bad condition. The schools do not have chairs and tables for students. The classrooms have become too dangerous to accommodate the students. In some schools, teachers do not have chairs and tables they could use to carry out their work. Students are being taught in the open air, under the trees in some primary schools.

The participants reported that the government had not executed any infrastructural project in the local government. They noted that elections did not bring any

improvements to the state of infrastructure and public services. They claimed that they had similar experiences of bad infrastructure and public services under successive democratic governments. They claimed that the government had abandoned infrastructural projects that were commenced by previous governments. The participants said that they were suffering as a result of the bad infrastructure and poor delivery of public services.

All the participants had common and shared experiences of vote-selling. They reported their experiences of being approached to sell their votes for cash by party agents during elections. Five of the participants expressly disclosed that they accepted cash for votes and gave various reasons for their behaviors. The other participant acknowledged that they were privy to other voters accepting cash for votes. The participants that confirmed that they received cash for votes did not express any regrets for doing so. They somewhat justified their actions and criticized the elected public office holders for bad governance.

Many of the participants stated that vote-selling occurred publicly. According to P2 “It was so bad that it became an open act during the last election when the popular slogan was “Edibo esebe” which means in English, accept cash for the vote to enable you to make good soup. They reported that the politicians were willing to offer cash for votes and a sizeable number of the voters were prepared to accept cash for votes. The participants described how the transactions between vote- buyers, and vote-sellers took place. They equally explained vote-buying strategies that party agents employed in buying votes and monitoring compliance.

Imaginative Variation

I reviewed the transcripts and undertook a deep reflection of the interviews to reaffirm my understanding of the participants' descriptions of their lived experiences and perceptions. I made composite structural descriptions of the factors that precipitated the participants' experiences - the underlying factors that accounted for the vote-selling phenomenon.

According to Moustakas (1994), the structural descriptions of an experience are “the underlying and precipitating factors that account for what is being experienced; in other words...How did the experience of the phenomenon come to be what it is (p. 98). The composite structural description is, essentially, the “vivid account of the underlying dynamics of the experience” of the participants as a group.

Composite structural descriptions. The participants described the underlying factors that accounted for the vote-selling phenomenon. The participants reported that the elected public office holders neglected infrastructural projects and public services. P3 claimed that “they received constituency allowances but never embarked on any constituency project...They only come home at the time of elections to seek re-elections.” P9 said that they “need good roads, pipe-borne water, electricity and other public services that will enhance employment opportunities.” The participants reported that the elected public office holders did not address their needs, in particular, their infrastructural and public services' needs. P4 stated that the elected public office holders “will allocate substantial funds to execute projects in the budgets and at the end of the year they will not carry out work on the projects. P8 stated that “they would commence

preliminary works on infrastructural projects when shortly before the elections so that voters will assume that they were about to address their needs.” They claimed that the elected public office holders did not have considerations for their welfare.

The participants expressed their disappointments with the actions of the elected public office holders, claimed they do not trust them any longer and that the voters have become apathetic. Resultantly, according to P1, “the voters prefer to take something from them rather than voting on the basis of the political parties’ manifestoes.” P6 said that “elections are an opportunity to get something from the politicians rather than consider voting for candidates who could provide us with good governance because none of them can provide us with good governance anyway.” P8 explained that the voters “believe that it is better to collect cash for votes during the elections because the politicians would only enrich themselves after they get elected.” They reported that the voters were disappointed in the elected public office holders and had to collect cash for votes as they do not trust them.

For some participants, poverty was a significant influencing factor. They represented their disappointments in the elected public office holders in respect of their disregard in providing them with good infrastructure and public services, but they stated that poverty drove the voters to exchange their votes for cash. They said that many of the voters were poor. P3 explained that “the kind of hardship we are currently experiencing is so tough that many people find it difficult to have their daily meal.” P2 added that “we needed the money to buy food because we were hungry people.” P2 reported that “some of us find it difficult to feed so we do not hesitate to accept cash for votes.” P9 said that

many voters were poor, and they accepted cash for votes because of the lack of trust in the elected public office holders.

Also, most of the participants noted that disappointments in the elected public office holders, cynicism on the part of the voters, and poverty led to the willingness of voters to seek a way in benefitting in their little way from the public funds by accepting cash for votes during elections.

Synthesis of the Meanings

The themes and sub-themes were used to synthesize the composite textual descriptions and the composite structural descriptions of the participants' lived experiences about vote-selling, the state of infrastructure, and public services in Akoko North West Local Government.

Moustakas (1994) described the textual components of experience as “the ‘what’ of the appearing phenomenon” (p. 78), and the structural components of the experience as involving “conscious acts of thinking and judging, imaging, and recollecting, in order to arrive at the core structural meanings” (p. 79).

Textual-structural synthesis. On the one hand, the themes “inadequate and poor state of infrastructure and public services,” and “voters engaged in vote-selling,” and sub-themes “openness of vote-selling and witness of cash collection” and “party agents’ vote-buying strategies” emerged from the participants’ descriptions of what they experienced regarding the phenomenon. On the other hand, the themes – “insensitivity to voters’ needs and expectations,” “non-fulfillment of promises, corruption and self-enrichment,” and “disappointments, lack of trust and voters’ apathy” as well as the sub-themes

“poverty” and “share of public funds” emerged from the participants’ description of the factors that precipitated or influenced their experiences. The themes and subthemes, therefore, embodies the textual and structural components of the participants’ experiences (Moustakas, 1994). The participants described the poor state of infrastructure and public services, insensitivity of the elected public office holders and their penchant for nonfulfillment of promises. They perceived the elected public office holders as corrupt, untrustworthy and expressed their disappointment in them. They stated that voters had become apathetic. They reported that poverty and the perception that the politicians were handing them their share of public funds propelled them to accepting cash for votes.

The following findings were, therefore, derived from the emergent themes and the overall data: (a) infrastructure and poor public services are inadequate and in a bad state; (b) the elected public office holders are insensitive to voters’ needs and expectations; (c) the elected public office holders are corrupt; (d) vote-sellers’ justified and reacted to the elected public office holders’ actions and the environment; (e) vote-selling and vote-buying were widespread, and prevalence; and (f) good governance that provides and maintains infrastructure and public services may eliminate vote-selling.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

The instrument used for data collection in this phenomenological study was interviewing. The interviews were conversational and open-ended. Interviewing may be prone to misconceptions (Moustakas, 1994). However, I employed various strategies to ensure that the result of the study is credible, transferable, dependable and confirmable.

Credibility

I employed Moustakas' (1994) transcendental phenomenological data analysis that is an established phenomenological method of inquiry to ensure credibility. I established rapport with the participants and gave them an opportunity to withdraw from the study at any time to improve the credibility of the research. I listened attentively to the participants and asked probing questions - such as: Please elaborate on that issue. Please give more detail on that? Tell me about it? What do you mean? - to clarify some of their responses to the interview questions to ensure the credibility of the findings. Moustakas (1994) explained that in phenomenological studies, interviewees should "review and confirm or alter the research data to correspond to her or his perception of their experience" (p. 110).

I undertook member checking strategy by confirming the transcriptions of the interviews with the participant to ensure the credibility of the statements made and recorded. I contacted some of the participants during data analysis to confirm the accuracy of the description of their experiences of the vote-selling phenomenon. P2 was recorded as saying "it was apparent we accepted cash during the last elections." While P5 was recorded as saying "we need to be sincere. We accepted cash for votes." I contacted P2 and P5 to confirm whether they accepted cash because of the use of "we" in their responses. Also, I contacted P4 to confirm her response that "voters are generally poor and cannot reject cash when offered by party agents during elections" to the interview questions: "what reasons would you give for acceptance of cash instead of voting on the

basis of political parties' manifestoes?" I had to contact her to confirm her response because it was not in consonance with the other participants.

Transferability

Thick descriptions in qualitative research enable readers to assess the extent to which the research findings can be transferred to other settings (Lincoln & Guba, 2005). I ensured that I gave a thick description of the sampling strategies employed, data collection process, data analysis protocol, research findings and the entire research design. I vividly described the participants' selection process, the interview procedures and how I undertook the four main steps of four main steps of Moustakas' (1994) transcendental phenomenological data analysis process - Epoche, Transcendental Phenomenological Reduction, Imaginative Variation, and Synthesis of the Meanings. I carefully and thoroughly read the transcriptions of the interview. I treated every statement as having equal value and sifted significant statements from irrelevant statements. I sifted statements that related to the provision of infrastructure, delivery of public services and vote-selling from the responses of the participants. I clustered the significant statements made by each of the participants into themes. I described the meanings ascribed by the participants to their common experiences based on the themes that emerged from the significant statements made by them. The thick description will enable the application of the research to other contexts.

Dependability

I cross-checked and corroborated the participants' description of their personal experiences by asking probing questions during the interview and cross-checking the

transcriptions. I used digital voice-recorder and notebooks for data collection and transcribed the interviews for data analysis to enhance the dependability of the research findings. I will keep an audit trail of all the data and store all the physical records including the transcribed records, and removable disk for at least five years after completion of the study for any potential audit to ensure dependability.

Confirmability

Bias is a source of concern in a qualitative study because it could easily intrude to a qualitative study given that data collection is undertaken by human beings (Baker, 2014). However, the use of Moustakas (1994) transcendental phenomenological method of inquiry in this study enabled me to be reflexive by clarifying and re-examining my biases, prejudgments, and preconceptions through deep reflections at the epoch stage of the transcendental phenomenological process. I did not influence the participants at any time during the study with my personal experiences and made conscious attempts to bracket out all extraneous considerations at the bracketing stage of the data analysis.

Discrepant Cases

A comment by one of the participant was non-confirming having regards to the substantial similarity in the responses of all the participants to the interview question: “What reasons would you give for acceptance of cash instead of voting on the basis of political parties’ manifestoes?” P4 stated that “voters are generally poor and cannot reject cash when offered by party agents during elections.” P4’s response contradicts all the other responses because of her position that insofar as voters are poor they will sell their votes.

Summary

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to uncover voters' behaviors by investigating their common and lived experiences in respect of the provision of infrastructure, poor delivery of public services and vote-selling in Akoko North West Local Government, Ondo State, Nigeria. The objective of the study was to provide a better understanding of the connection between the provision of infrastructure and public services, and vote-selling. In this chapter, I presented a detailed analysis of the research findings and specifically addressed the research problem, research purpose, and research question. I provided an in-depth description of the data collection process, data analysis used in the study, and presented the research findings that were distilled from the data analysis. The research employed Moustakas (1994) transcendental phenomenological method of analysis and based its findings on the selected significant statements and the themes that were derived from the significant statements. Seven themes emerged from the interview data. The themes revealed common and substantial similarity in the perceptions of the participants.

The first theme revealed that infrastructure and public services are inadequate and in a bad state. The second theme showed that voters' main expectations and needs from the public office holders are infrastructure and public services. The third theme revealed that voters perceive the elected public office holders as insensitive to their welfare. The fourth theme revealed that the elected public office holders are corrupt, use their offices to enrich themselves and never fulfilled their election promises. The fifth theme revealed that voters engaged in vote-selling, and that vote-selling was prevalent and carried out in

public. It further revealed some of the strategies employed by the party agents to buy votes. The sixth theme disclosed that voters were disappointed with the elected public office holders and are apathetic. The last theme explained the perception of the voters that good governance by primarily investing in infrastructure and public policies may lead to substantial reduction in vote-selling.

I discuss the research findings in full and explain how the themes support the literature, draw conclusions, make recommendations and address the implications of the study for future research in chapter 5.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to uncover voters' behaviors by investigating their common and lived experiences in respect to the provision of infrastructure, poor delivery of public services, and vote-selling in Akoko North West Local Government, Ondo State, Nigeria. The study was triggered by the need to understand the connection between the provision of infrastructure and public services, and vote-selling. The central research question that guided the study was the following: "How do individuals who participated in the most recent elections describe their lived experiences of vote-selling in relation to the provision of infrastructure and public services in Akoko North West Local Government?" I used Bandura's theory of reciprocal determinism as a theoretical lens to examine the phenomenon of vote-selling. The theory indicates that there is a connection between the environment and behavior and that the environment influences human behavior (Bandura, 1974).

The research aimed to collect information-rich data by using the phenomenological approach to qualitative research to explore and capture voters' lived experiences concerning the provision of infrastructure, poor delivery of public services, and the phenomenon of vote-selling. The phenomenological approach was most suited for the study because it enabled individuals who participated in the most recent elections, resided continuously in the community for at least 5 years, and had been exposed to the phenomenon of vote-selling to describe their common experiences. Semistructured, open-ended interviews were used to capture the participants' perceptions and descriptions of

their lived experiences. Moustakas's (1994) transcendental phenomenological method of inquiry was employed to conduct the data analysis. A sample of 10 individuals was selected for the study. The phenomenological study revealed themes that emerged from significant statements made by the participants regarding their lived experiences. The findings of the study were presented in the previous chapter. In this chapter, I present a full discussion of the study's findings and make recommendations.

Conclusions

In this section, I focus conclusions on six areas. Seven themes and four subthemes emerged from the data analyses. The themes and subthemes were used to synthesize the composite textual descriptions and the composite structural descriptions. The themes and subthemes led to the following findings:

1. Infrastructure and public services were inadequate and in a bad state. This finding was derived from two themes: inadequate and bad state of infrastructure and public services, and infrastructure and public services.
2. The elected public office holders are insensitive to voters' needs and expectations. This finding was derived from the theme of insensitivity to voters' needs and expectations.
3. The elected public office holders are corrupt. This finding was derived from the theme of nonfulfillment of promises, corruption, and self-enrichment.
4. Vote-sellers justified and reacted to elected public office holders' actions and the environment. This finding was derived from the theme of disappointment,

lack of trust, and voter apathy and the subthemes of poverty and share of public funds.

5. Vote-selling and vote-buying were widespread and prevalent. This finding was derived from the theme of voters engaged in vote-selling and the subthemes of the openness of vote-selling and party agents' vote-buying strategies.
6. Good governance that provides and maintains infrastructure and public services may eliminate vote-selling. This finding was derived from the theme of good governance.

Public Office Holders Are Insensitive to Voters' Needs and Expectations

In the literature review, it was disclosed that voters' behaviors and perceptions were predicated on the apparent transformation of the financial status of public office holders following their elections to public offices (Onapajo et al., 2015). All 10 participants reported that public office holders always became unresponsive to their needs after elections, noting that they witnessed a drastic change in their lifestyle. They expressed that politicians usually displayed their wealth publicly. All of the participants affirmed that elected public office holders have the propensity and proclivity for self-enrichment. They claimed that elected public officers diverted public funds to their private purses and personally enriched themselves with public funds. For instance, P1 stated that "the politicians enrich themselves with public funds" and P10 claimed that they are "interested in their pockets rather than public welfare." The participants held the

view that elected public office holders are self-centered and do not govern in the interest of the public.

All of the participants affirmed that the elected public office holders exhibited their wealth ostentatiously and showed a transformational change in their wealth shortly after they were elected to political offices. They expressed that the financial metamorphosis of the elected public office holders was traceable to fraudulent self-enrichment. P1 expressed the instantaneous visible change in the personal circumstances of the elected public office holders in the following terms. They “flaunt their wealth as soon as they get elected instead of using the funds to provide us with good roads, pipe-borne water, and electricity.” P2 said that the elected public office holders divert public funds to their private bank accounts. P9 reported that they do not care about constituents’ needs. The participants expressed that the elected public office holders are deceptive. P3 put it deridingly, stating that “they regard us as spanners to be used and dumped.”

Elected Public Office Holders Are Corrupt

Nonfulfillment of election promises was one of the main themes generated from the data in this study. The finding that elected public office holders are corrupt and do not fulfill the election promises they make to the electorate resonated with what was revealed in the literature review. The literature on vote-buying disclosed that elected public office holders in emerging democracies do not fulfill their pre-election commitments regarding infrastructure because of lack of accountability and political corruption (Hanusch et al., 2016).

The participants were univocal in expressing their perceptions about nonfulfillment of election promises by elected public office holders. They reported that elected public office holders would promise to provide good infrastructure prior to the elections and would disregard their commitments after the elections. According to P5, the elected public office holders “made lofty promises ... but they forgot about their promises after they have been elected into offices.” P3 noted that “the politicians are in the habit of making false promises that they probably knew they would not fulfill.” P1 bluntly stated that “they would always promise to provide or improve services and infrastructure, but there has not been any transformation in our wellbeing.” P6 reported that “it is one thing to promise, it is one thing to fulfill. The politicians always made promises but always failed to fulfill their promises.” P9 referred to politicians as liars and said, “there is some spirit that possesses them as soon as they get elected to public offices... They change as soon as they get elected.”

The literature review highlighted controversy concerning vote-buying and election promises and lack of consensus regarding whether the two phenomena equally distort democracy or whether they are equally excusable (Lippert-Rasmussen, 2011; Mares & Young, 2016; Wong, 2017). Hanusch et al. (2016) considered vote-buying and election promises as electoral strategies. This study found that vote-buying and election promises were equally employed as electoral strategies. It found that nonfulfillment of election promises has negative impacts on the electorate. The participants condemned election promises as an electoral strategy. They disdained politicians’ practice of making election promises and failing to fulfill them. They believed that it was not excusable to

break election promises and linked nonfulfillment of election promises to the poor state of infrastructure and public services. They reported that despite pre-election promises, elected public office holders failed to provide good infrastructure and public services. P2 stated that “they always failed to execute any project.” P4 added that “they will award contracts for infrastructural projects and will not execute them.”

The participants were of the opinion that the elected public office holders manipulated public policies to enrich themselves. The findings in the literature indicating that elected public office holders are corrupt and divert public funds during their terms in office to maximize vote-buying during elections supported the participants’ position (Devadoss & Luckstead, 2016).

The literature revealed that political corruption caused the diversion of public funds from roads, health care, electricity, education, and other necessary infrastructure and public services toward programs or projects that gave politicians personal benefits at the expense of the electorate (Ajisebiyawo, 2016). Rose-Ackerman (2001) pointed out that politicians manipulated public policies for personal gain by providing narrowly focused goods and services rather than broad-based public services. They diverted public spending to fewer projects that had little or no socioeconomic benefit (Jain, 2001; Ogunlana et al., 2016). This study corroborated the literature review by finding that elected public office holders were interested in personal gains as opposed to public goods. All of the participants reported that the politicians were self-centered and interested in self-enrichment. The participants expressed that the elected public office holders were not holding public offices to serve the people but to enrich themselves.

Inadequate and Bad State of Infrastructure and Public Services

The environment influences human behavior, and human behavior reacts to the environment (Bandura, 1974). It is important to comprehend the nature or state of the environment to understand how the environment influences human behavior.

Infrastructure and public services encompass vote-sellers' environment.

As disclosed in the literature review, representative governments by way of elections have not had positive impacts on economies in Africa, except in cases where incumbent governments lost the election (Collier & Vicente, 2014). In Nigeria, poor leadership has denied the people the opportunity to advance their economies or positively transform the country (Omosho, 2014). The participants were in congruence regarding their perceptions of the impacts of elections and representative governance in Akoko North West Local Government. All of the participants wanted the government to provide them with infrastructure and public services. P4 stated that "we need the politicians to address our problems and put things rights ... They need to ... spend the state's resources to provide us with roads, electricity, hospital and other infrastructure and public services." P1 stated that people need good public services that will result in the improvement of their standard of living. P3 contended that the government should carry out programs that will improve the welfare of the people. P9 and P10 wanted the government to provide infrastructure that would create the necessary environment to advance the economy. They all expressed that the local government area requires good infrastructure and public services.

It is instructive that all of the participants equally maintained that the state of infrastructure and public services was bad. The literature review disclosed a link between vote-buying on one hand and infrastructure and public services on the other. Kramon (2013) claimed that there is a close nexus between vote-buying and negative effects of bad governance in emerging democracies. The participants stated that bad governance was exhibited in the local government. P1 claimed that lack of infrastructure made the voters felt as if they “don’t have a government” and that “the government has abandoned its responsibilities.” P2 stated that “there are no good public services from the government in my local government. There are no government programmes.” P3 stated that there were no “functional public services in this local government.” P8 pointed out that “the infrastructure and public services are very bad” and that they “are really suffering in this local government.”

Jenson and Justesen (2014) found that vote-buying accounted for a reduction in the supply of public goods. Additionally, Tanzi and Davodi (1997) claimed that vote-buying was responsible for the provision of low infrastructural quality. In essence, vote-buying results in poor public service delivery (Omosho, 2014; Vincent, 2014) The participants’ responses were in congruity with the finding in the literature that vote-buying brought about the provision of low infrastructural quality, a reduction of supply of public goods, and poor public service delivery. P2 expressed that “residents are always complaining about the lack of good public services and infrastructure.” P5 reported that they “now have many private schools. Government schools are no longer good. The

students that attend government schools are children whose parents are poor and cannot afford private schools' fees." P7 noted,

The schools do not have chairs and tables for students. The classrooms have become too dangerous to accommodate the students. In some schools, teachers do not have chairs and tables they could use to carry out their work. Students are being taught in the open air, under the trees in some primary schools ...

P8 indicated that "hospitals are not functioning. The doctors and nurses do not have the necessary equipment. The buildings in our schools are in a very bad state. We do not have electricity supply and pipe-borne water." P9 confirmed that the politicians "have failed to maintain the public facilities." P10 added,

There's serious deficiency of infrastructure ... We don't have access to good medical care. Many young mothers die during childbirth because of lack of good medical services. Motor accidents with fatalities frequently occur on our roads because the roads are bad ...

Swamy (2016) asserted that government intervention through the implementation of welfare policies had positive effects on voters' behaviors. The participants reported that the government had failed to implement good welfare policies in the local government. P1 stated that "we expect them to take care of our welfare." P3 expressed that "we expect them to undertake projects that will improve the welfare of the people." P10 noted that "they know our problems, but they are interested their pockets rather than public welfare."

Voters Engaged in Vote-Selling

Vote-buying is rampant and ubiquitous in emerging democracies (Jensen & Justesen, 2014; Kranon, 2013). Electoral fraud has led to problematic election outcomes and has been a continual problem of elections for political offices in Nigeria (Danjibo & Oladeji, 2007). The results of this study are in harmony with the findings disclosed in the literature indicating that in Nigeria, a sizable percentage of the voting population is exposed to vote buying or engages in vote-selling (Gans-Morse et al., 2014).

All of the participants acknowledged that they had been exposed to vote-buying. They confirmed that they had been approached to sell their vote for cash. Four of the participants disclosed that they had accepted cash for votes. P1 was categorical in stating that he “took money for voting for the candidate I voted. Also, all my friends collected money to vote for the candidates they cast their votes for in the last election.” P3 reported that he “received cash for votes and many other voters received cash for votes.” P5 claimed that voters “accepted cash for votes.” P6 added that he and his friends “accepted cash for votes on the day of the last governorship election.” All of the participants confirmed that a sizeable number of voters received cash for votes during elections. The experiences and perceptions of the participants echoed what was found in the literature review, which indicated that vote-selling is widespread in Nigeria (Lucky, 2013).

The experiences of the participants confirmed that vote-selling was not only widespread as revealed in the literature, but vote-sellers brazenly conducted it in the open without hindrances. P1 stated that he “saw party agents giving voters money at the polling centers during elections.” P2 and P5 reiterated that vote-buyers and vote-sellers

were readily conducting the transactions in the open. P7 added that everybody was aware of the vote-buying and vote-selling transactions. She described the transactions as “an open secret.” P9 expressed that she “saw many voters collecting cash immediately after they cast their votes during the last election,” and P10 added that he saw many voters collecting cash for votes and that many of them even bragged openly after the election that they had accepted cash for votes.

The literature highlighted the debate regarding the effectiveness of secret ballots as a safeguard to vote-buying and vote-selling. Some proponents of the efficacy of secret ballots argued that it is an effective safeguard for vote-buying because it denies vote-buyers the ability to monitor the voting process and thereby control voters’ choice or enforce the vote-buying transaction (Collier & Vincente, 2012; Finan & Schechter, 2012; Vincente, 2014). However, some authors argued that the impacts of secret ballots are paradoxical. They asserted that secret ballots on the one hand effectively disables the capabilities to vote-buyers to monitor voters’ sincerity in the polling booth and on the other hand enables a sizable number of voters to vote in compliance with the vote-buyers’ requests which increases vote-buying (Morgan & Vardy, 2012).

The finding in this study disconfirmed the literature that secret ballots prevents monitoring and thereby reduces the effect of the use of monitoring to control voters’ choice or enforce the transaction (Collier & Vincente, 2012; Finan & Schechter, 2012; Vincente, 2014). It supported an alternative finding in the literature that vote-buyers have invented means or strategies to counteract the effect of secret ballot on monitoring of voters during the voting process (Jensen & Justesen, 2014). The participants disclosed

some of the strategies employed by vote-buyers to monitor how voters' vote or ensure that they voted as requested. P1 stated that the vote-buying transaction involved what he termed "internal arrangement." He described the arrangement as follows: "internal arrangement is the kind of agreement that party agents have with voters to pay them outside of the polling center environment after voting had taken place and confirmation that the voters had voted for their preferred candidates as arranged." The participants explained the monitoring mechanisms or strategies. P9 described the monitoring process as follows:

The representatives of the political parties will tell them what to do to ensure that they have voted as instructed. Most of the time, the voters will be told to hold their ballot paper in a manner that the agent of the candidate in the polling center will be able to see how they voted and the representative will then send a signal to the party agent outside the polling center that a particular voter has voted as instructed. The voters will then go and collect their money outside the polling center.

The participants' descriptions of the monitoring strategy employed by party agents during elections, resonated with the "See and Buy" vote-buying strategy whereby political parties' representatives position themselves strategically at locations where they can monitor and confirm how voters vote before payments are made (Onapajo et al., 2015).

Vote-Sellers Justified and Reacted to Elected Public Office Holders' Actions and the Environment

This research's finding that vote-sellers' justified and reacted to the elected public office holders' actions and the environment, is in harmony with Bandura's (1974) proposition that external consequences are not the sole or independent determinant of human behavior and that people create the society and equally react to environmental factors. The participants reported that vote-selling was a product of disappointment, lack of trust and voters' apathy, willingness to accept their own share of "national cake," and poverty. It is instructive that the finding in this study disconfirmed the position of some scholars that the norm of reciprocity drives voters to sell their votes to their political benefactors to sustain them in office (Finan & Schechter, 2012; Lawson & Green, 2014). All the participants expressed disappointments in the performance of the elected public office holders, and none indicated that their voting choice was influenced by previous benefits received from the politicians.

The literature revealed that vote-buying is prevalent in areas where the credibility of politicians is low and where they had failed to fulfill their commitments (Hanusch & Keefer, 2013; Hanusch et al., 2016). This proposition is in congruence with the participants' perceptions that they found the performance of the politicians disappointing because they failed to meet their expectations. P1 noted that "the voters are disappointed with the performances of the politicians in government." P2 stated that the politicians did not live up to their expectations. P6 stated that they have failed to provide the electorate with public goods.

Carreras and Irepoglu (2013) found that voters have little expectation that political institutions will provide public goods because they believe elections are not credible or trustworthy. This position corresponds closely with the participants' perceptions of the elected public office holders. P7 stated that voters do not trust politicians and reported that "most of them would have voted differently and would not have collected cash if they could trust the politicians." P9 said that one of the reasons why voters accepted cash for votes was because they did not trust politicians to fulfill pre-election promises. P10 added that "voters no longer trust the politicians." The research result confirmed that voters are skeptical about the integrity of the elections in Nigeria, had little regard to election promises by politicians and did not perceive vote-selling as unethical (Lucky, 2013; Onapajo et al., 2015).

Besides the skepticism relating to the credibility of the voting process or elections, the voters were willing to accept cash from the vote-buyers because they considered it as an opportunity to participate in the sharing of "national cake" (Onapajo et al., 2015). P1 stated that "voters prefer to take advantage of the circumstances to collect their own dividends of democracy." P2 reported that voters had "to take advantage of the circumstances to collect their own dividends of democracy." P3 added that elections presented them with "an opportunity to get something from the politicians rather than consider voting for candidates who could provide us with good governance because none of them can provide us with good governance anyway." P7 expressed that voters collected cash from politicians on Election days because they perceive the cash "as their own monetary benefit from the government." According to P8, the cash they collected for

votes was “their money anyway.” P9 described the cash for votes “as free money from public funds.” While P10 said that “it was worthwhile to accept cash for votes rather than losing out altogether.”

The literature identified poverty as one of the factors that precipitated vote-buying. Also, it revealed that political representatives neglected the poor and that poverty fundamentally necessitated poor voters’ decision to sell their votes to vote-buyers (Hicken, 2007; Owen, 2013). Poverty was pivotal to vote-sellers' inclination to place more value on instant financial benefits as opposed to future benefits or future commitments contained in election promises (Khemani, 2015). The vote- buyers, therefore, recognized that poor voters were vulnerable because of the microeconomic conditions and specifically targeted them with the offer of immediate benefits in exchange for their votes (Çarkoğlu & Aytaç, 2015; Jensen & Justesen, 2014). Some scholars opined that vote-sellers regarded vote-buying as a legitimate electoral strategy that political parties used during elections (Gonzalez-Ocantos et al., 2012; Jensen & Justesen, 2014). Accordingly, poverty had a significant influence on how poor voters perceived vote-buying. They were aware of the elected public office holders control or possess substantial public funds that they had failed to use for their benefits and believed that it was in their interest to accept cash for votes by obtaining their own piece of the pie or share of the public funds (Onapajo et al., 2015). The responses of some of the participants and the findings in the literature were in consonance. The participants expressed that most of the voters in Akoko North Local government are poor. P4 explained that they “are hungry because we struggle to have food. So the politicians

knowing that people were hungry distributed cash to voters during the elections to buy votes.” P2 added,

The public office holders did not pay workers’ salaries for about three to four months, so residents were poor and desperate for money. We had to collect cash for votes because we felt they needed the cash. We needed the money to buy food because we were hungry people.

According to P3, a number of them struggle to make end means and would readily accept cash for votes to ease their suffering albeit temporarily. He stated that “the kind of hardship we are currently experiencing is so tough that many people find it difficult to have a daily meal.” He surmised that “if you were hungry and you were given five thousand naira to vote for a particular party, certainly you will collect it.”

Good Governance

A preponderance of literature on vote-selling supports the finding in this study that good governance that provides and maintains infrastructure and public services may eliminate vote-selling. Yusuf et al., (2014) contended that there is a link between bad governance and corruption, and found that bad governance leads to corruption, while good governance significantly reduces corruption. There is equally a close link between corruption and inadequate infrastructure (Ogbuagu, & Effiom, 2014). Political corruption in particular lack of transparency and accountability were responsible for the inadequate provision of infrastructure (Ogbuagu & Effiom, 2014), and provision of low infrastructural quality in emerging democracies (Tanzi & Davoodi, 1997). Also, the

literature found that there is a connection between the level of corruption and the quality of the infrastructure (Castro et al., 2014).

The literature review found a connection between vote-buying and delivery of public services (Khemani, 2015). It equally found a nexus between vote-selling and good public services (Bardhan et al., 2015). According to Vicente (2014), vote- buying results in bad public policies and inadequate infrastructure. The findings in this study reaffirmed the connection between vote-buying and public services. Also, they harmonized with the findings in available research that vote-buying impacts negatively on good governance and accountability (Gonzalez-Ocantos et al., 2014; Kramon, 2013). It impacts on good governance through the quality of the representations produced and the consequent policy outcomes that emanated from the products of vote-buying (Leight et al., 2015).

Voting and elections are the fundamental ingredients of democratic practices, and good governance influences or drives democratic practices (Gilbert & Allen, 2014). Good governance is, therefore, linked to a reduction in corruption and level of corruption because it is evident that vote-buying does not flourish in places where there is the good delivery of public services (Bustikova & Corduneanu-Huci, 2011; Weighost, 2013).

The participants' perceptions of the connection between vote-selling and public services were explicitly described. P1 stated that voters "will vote differently if the public services were good." He added that "they will prefer to have good public services to accepting the cash they will get on election days." P2 confirmed that most of them "would have voted differently in some cases if the state of public services was good." P3 explained that he was certain "that if the government starts providing us with water, road,

and electricity, we would prefer to vote for politicians that will main good public service as opposed to those who wanted to buy our votes.” P4 reported that “some of the voters who voted for cash had previously voted on the basis of party manifestoes, but they realized that the politicians that they voted for did not do well by initiating public policies that could bring about improvement to their well-beings.” P5 stated that “the voters will definitely prefer to enjoy good governance as opposed to accepting cash and suffer ban governance.” He added that “if the politicians did well in the past, voters would vote for them to sustain their good deeds, but they accept cash for votes because they have not seen improvement in public services and infrastructure.”

P6 reported that “if everything is in place, and politicians perform well in government majority of us who accepted cash for votes would have voted differently.” He reiterated that “if the state of public services were good we would have done the right thing by voting for those who will maintain or provide public services rather than accepting cash for votes.” P7 stated that “vote-selling will be reduced drastically if the politicians use their offices to improve our standard of living.” P8 explained that “those who accepted cash for votes understand the importance of good governance and do not like the state of infrastructure and public services in the local government.” P9 said that “majority of them did what they did as a result of frustration with the politicians and government.” P10 confirmed that “they only collected the cash because they felt it doesn’t make any difference if they didn’t collect it.” All the participants gave credence to the connection between vote-selling and public services.

It is noteworthy that the study equally found that other factors were traceable to vote-selling. These findings were in line with the theory of reciprocal determinism that recognizes that notwithstanding the influence of external factors, they do not independently determine behavior (Bandura, 1974). It equally substantiates the literature that found that vote-buying “is a function of a mix of socioeconomic, cultural and institutional factors” (Hicken, 2007, p. 58). Factors such as institutions, electoral systems, cultural and socio-economic factors facilitated vote-selling (Hicken et al., 2015; Onapajo et al., 2015; Jensen & Justensen, 2014). The study found that vote-selling was a product of disappointment, lack of trust and voters’ apathy, willingness to accept cash for votes as their own share of “national cake.”

Some of the participants’ statements substantiate the conclusion that poverty, disappointment, lack of trust and voters’ apathy were, nevertheless, factors that have a close link to the state of infrastructure and public services. Concerning poverty, P4 stated,

We are hungry because we struggle to have food... Many voters are of the opinion that they have no option than to sell their votes for cash because their votes might not count anyway or that whoever won the election would act like others and would not carry out any project or make policies to improve their living conditions.

Regarding disappointment, P2 reported,

Voters accepted cash for votes... because politicians always failed to fulfill their election promises... You cannot blame the voters for accepting cash for votes during elections because they know the politicians will never return to provide

necessary infrastructure and public services for them, so they have to take advantage of the circumstances to collect their own dividends of democracy.

On lack of trust and voters' apathy, P10 reported that "voters no longer trust the politicians. They do not feel that political parties' manifestoes have any meaning because politicians don't remember manifestoes after they have been elected. As per voters' willingness to accept cash for votes as their own share of the national cake, P3 pointed out that "an opportunity to get something from the politicians rather than consider voting for candidates who could provide us with good governance because none of them can provide us with good governance anyway." These significant statements and the literature concretized the finding that that of disappointment, lack of trust and voters' apathy, willingness to accept cash for votes as their own piece of the pie, and poverty were linked to bad governance and inability of the elected public office holders to provide good infrastructure and public services.

Limitations of the Study

This qualitative transcendental phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of individuals who participated in the most recent election in Akoko North West Local Government. The study used Moustakas's transcendental phenomenological method of inquiry to collect and analyze data obtained from individuals who had first-hand information about vote-selling phenomenon and the state of infrastructure and public services in Akoko North West Local Government. A sample of ten participants was used to obtain detailed and in-depth information about their experiences of the vote-selling phenomenon

The study was confined to Akoko North Local Government. It was highly possible that the ten participants did not represent all the socioeconomic circumstances of the voters in the local government, and it might not cover some variables. The confinement of the study to Akoko North West Local Government and the relatively small sample size might make it difficult to transfer or generalize the data from this study and research findings to other locations or a larger population.

Onwuegbuzie & Leech (2007) posited that a sample ought not to be too large to dispossess a study of the capability of obtaining information-rich data. The purpose of this study was to capture the lived experiences of the participants. A diverse sample of participants who satisfied the study's inclusion criteria and had different personal backgrounds or socioeconomic circumstances was deliberately selected. The small sample size enabled the researcher to achieve the purpose of the research sufficiently and creditably.

Despite the potential limitations, other researchers may apply the study in other contexts, and the research findings are generalizable because of the detailed descriptions of the research design, and the insights the qualitative study obtained into the vote-selling phenomenon (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007).

Recommendations

A review of literature established a nexus between vote-buying and delivery of public services. This study found a connection between vote-selling, and infrastructure and public services. Also, it found a reciprocal relationship between vote-selling, and infrastructure and public services. The research found that bad governance and

inadequate infrastructure catalyzed to voters' disappointment, lack of trust and voters' apathy, willingness to accept cash for votes as their own share of the national cake and poverty. It was found that while the stated resultant effects of bad governance and inadequate infrastructure led to vote-selling, the consequent effect of vote-selling was bad governance and inadequate infrastructure and public services. There is a need for further research to determine the extent or degree to which an improvement in the provision of infrastructure and public services will reduce vote-buying and vote-selling.

The study examined and explored the vote-selling phenomenon from the perspectives of the voters. The agencies that conduct elections need to develop policies and encourage initiatives for voters' education to point out the connection between vote-selling, and infrastructure and public services and sensitize voters about the import future benefits or developmental projects as opposed to immediate benefits in the form of cash payments for votes. There is a need to establish non-governmental organizations that will champion the dissemination and propagation of the democratic ills associated with vote-selling to the voters and the consequential adverse effects of vote-selling on governance and their general well-beings.

Implications for Positive Social Change

The findings of this study have extensive practical implications for positive social change in Nigeria and other emerging democracies. This study filled the gap in the literature by identifying the connection and reciprocal interaction between vote-selling, and infrastructure and public services. It found that the inadequacy infrastructure and poor public services impacted on voting, and vote-selling adversely affected

infrastructure and public services. The findings provided a greater and broader understanding of the connection between vote-selling, and infrastructure and public services. The study may, therefore, inspire other researchers to make further exploration of the degree to which the provision of infrastructure and public services will reduce vote-selling.

The findings will lead to positive social change by enabling INEC to concretize its focus in ensuring the conduct of free and fair elections by combatting vote-buying and vote-selling through a better informed and more strategic enlightenment programs or voters' education that will explicate the reciprocal relationship between vote-selling and infrastructure and public services. It will help INEC to redirect its focus to combat vote-selling by developing policies to combat vote-buying and vote-selling, and promoting enactments of regulations/laws against vote-selling. Also, it will help INEC to sensitize the political parties to the implications of infrastructure and public services on electoral practices, and voters to the relevance of their votes in relation to infrastructure and public services.

Another positive social change implication of the findings is that they may galvanize political parties, elected public office holders and aspirants to public offices in Nigeria and other emerging democracies to review how they prioritize their policies and allocate states' resources, and place more weight on making and fulfilling election commitments on the provision of infrastructure and delivery of public services.

An additional positive social change implication is that the research findings may lead to an increase in voters' awareness of the great importance or value of votes in a

democracy, strengthen democratic practices in emerging democracies, and reduce voters' cynicism and vote-selling in general.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to uncover voters' behaviors by investigating their common and lived experiences with respect to the provision of infrastructure, delivery of public services, and voting during elections in Akoko North West Local Government, Ondo State, Nigeria. This study examined the phenomenon of vote-selling through the theoretical lens of Albert Bandura's theory of reciprocal determinism. Bandura (1977) contended that "behavior partly creates the environment, and the resultant environment, in turn, influences the behavior" (p. 40), and that behavior creates the environment in part while the environment influences behavior reciprocally. He asserted that personal and environmental factors are corroborative determinants (Bandura, 1978).

Regarding the environmental influences, the finding was that inadequate infrastructure catalyzed to voters' disappointment, lack of trust and voters' apathy, willingness to accept cash for votes as their own share of "national cake" and poverty. The resultant consequences of inadequate infrastructure and public services significantly contributed to vote-buying and vote-selling. On the behavioral part, the finding showed that vote-buying and vote-selling crystalize into bad governance and the provision of inadequate infrastructure and public services. The overall finding of this study was that bad governance, and inadequate infrastructure led to voters' disappointment, lack of trust and voters' apathy, willingness to accept cash for votes as their own share of "national cake" and poverty that brought about vote-selling. While vote-buying and vote-selling, in

turn, created bad governance and inadequate infrastructure. The research identified the dialectical interactions between vote-selling, and infrastructure and public services. The research findings may help the relevant government agencies to sensitize the voters to evaluate their options properly during elections to elect credible political representatives that will bring about good governance, and provide better infrastructure and deliver good public services rather than continuing to accept cash for votes due to despair, cynicism and perverse propensity to partake in sharing the public funds.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Vote-selling: Infrastructure and Public Services

Walden University

Time of interview:

Date:

Place:

Interview:

Interviewee:

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to uncover voters' behaviors by investigating their common and lived experiences with respect to the provision of infrastructure, delivery of public services and voting during elections in Akoko North West Local Government, Ondo State, Nigeria.

The interview will commence with preliminary questions followed by the interview questions. The preliminary questions consist of enquiries regarding demographic profile and criteria for participation. The interview questions are the primary research questions. The interviewees will be reassured that their statements and identities will remain confidential and that their real names will be masked with assigned codes. Their permission to record the interviews will be sought. They will be informed that they can withdraw from the interview at any time.

Demographic information

1. What is your gender?
2. How old are you?

3. Did you have formal education? If yes, what is your level of education?
4. What is your employment status?

Criteria for Participation

5. How long have been residing continuously in Akoko North Local Government?
6. Did you participate and vote in all the elections that took place in the local government since 2012?
7. Have you been exposed to vote-selling?

Interview Questions

8. What is your opinion about the state of infrastructure and public services in your local government?
9. What do people need or expect from elected public office holders?
 - a. Have elected public office holders addressed these needs or expectations while in office?
10. What do you think about the election promises by elected public office holders to provide or improve infrastructure and public services?
11. Do voters engage in vote-selling in your local government?
 - a. If yes, have you or do you know anyone who had been approached for vote-selling, or accepted cash for votes? Please do not mention names.
12. What reasons would you give for acceptance of cash instead of voting on the basis of political parties' manifestoes?
13. Do you think those who accepted cash for votes would have voted differently in some cases if the state of public services was good?

14. Do you think those who accepted cash for votes would have voted differently in some cases if the elected public office holders have improved public services in your local government?
15. That covers the things I wanted to ask, would you like to add to what you have told me?
16. (Thank the interviewees and tell them that their responses will remain strictly confidential).

Potential follow-up questions:

Please elaborate on that issue.

Please give more detail on that.

What was your involvement?

Tell me about it?

What influenced your decision?

What do you mean?

Why did you do that?

How did that affect you?