

## **Factors Informing the Voting Behaviour of Teaching Staff of Egbeoba High School Ikole-Ekiti in 2018 Ekiti Gubernatorial Election**

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### **Abstract**

Since the return of democracy to Nigeria in 1999, politics in Ekiti State has been characterised by swings in political and electoral behaviour in support of the two rival political parties. This has made the political terrain of the state unpredictable in respect of voters' attitude during elections. This study examines the factors that influenced voting behaviour of the electorates in 2018 governorship election in Ekiti State. It also examines the interplay between the campaign promises and voters' participation during the election. The study further ascertains whether party identification and gratification have an overriding influence on voting pattern in the 2018 governorship election. Data was obtained from both primary and secondary sources. Focus Group Discussions were used to sample the opinion of a secondary school teaching staff who are residents in Ikole-Ekiti, Ekiti State. Primary data gathered were analysed, using content-analysis method. The study discovered that campaign promises increased voters' turnout and stimulated voting behaviour while vote-buying increased voter turnout but changes voters' choice. It was

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also discovered that militarisation of the election has a less significant role to play in voting patterns. This study recommends that vote-buying should be discouraged as it affects democracy by producing candidates that are not credible.

**Keywords:** Voter's Behaviour, Voting Pattern, Voter's Choice, Governorship Election, Ekiti State.

### **Introduction**

Ekiti State is one of the most literate communities in Nigeria. It is considered to be politically sophisticated within the federation. Ekiti State of Nigeria was created on October 1, 1996, alongside five other states by a former Head of State, General Sani Abacha. The state was carved out of the old Ondo State and has as its capital Ado- Ekiti. The state took off with 16 local government areas spread across three senatorial districts, even though, recently, there has been a creation of 19 Local Council Development Areas in the state. Ekiti State is predominantly Yoruba and is homogeneous in population, cultural affinity and common language. Omilusi (2006) posits that Ekiti State is a conglomeration of compact rural communities of distinct history where communalism operates in its real form. Education is embraced by the people since it is seen as an indisputable path to great heights. Admittedly, the hooliganism of ethnic militias and incessant religious crises that characterise other parts of the country are not yet fully in Ekiti, but the face of politics has horrendously changed to accommodate insecurity of life and property.

The state has a high level of civic consciousness owing mainly to a high educated populace. Ekiti has been criticised for being one of the most controversial and politically volatile states in the country. This is due to its element of volatility in the nature and character of its political processes since the beginning of the Fourth Republic. It is worthy to note, for example, that the state recorded thirteen changes of administration/governors within the first nineteen years of its existence, making it the state with the highest frequency of rapid and multiple regime turnover in the country (Adetoye, 2010).

Elections, from foundational Athenian legacy, have been accepted to represent the core and central feature of participatory, multi-party democracy (YIAGA AFRICA, 2018). Elections and campaigns are dramatic events in democracy that are accompanied by rallies, banners, posters, headlines, town hall manifestoes familiarisation and television coverage, all of which call attention to the importance of participation in an election. Elections and voting are important mechanisms for selecting leaders into political offices in every democracy. Therefore, voting behaviour and the pattern it forms are internally and externally driven. Voting is an undisputed element of the democratic system, which facilitates and reinforces individual autonomy and freedoms of choice. It raises an important question of the exercise of rights to choose representatives and leaders during each election cycle, therefore, helping to achieve the fundamental right of government by consent (Mazrui, 2002). However, determinants of electoral behaviour constitute a very significant area of scientific investigation. Man is a rational creature in the philosophical sense of the term and he is not so rational in the realms of his economic or political behaviour. Voting behaviour is dictated by a plethora of complex issues that involve an analysis of individual psychological processes vis-à-vis perception, emotion and motivation. An empirical study of the determinants of electoral behaviour displays the astounding fact that the behaviour of man is influenced by several irrational factors and pressure groups which arise from religious and communal sentiments, influence of money, charismatic personality of a leader and a host of other irrationalities that influence the minds of voters. (Zahida and Younis, 2014).

As pointed out, voting choice is not just a personal preference. Preferences are conditioned and substantiated by the socio-economic and political context in which people live. Apparently, voters are more likely to vote for a party they like than one they dislike, but their likes and dislikes are influenced and conditioned by a number of variables of outside forces. These may be social and family background, personality, party manifesto, and the way the media portrays the party among others (Heath, Jowell and Curtice, 1985). For the 2018 Ekiti governorship election, poverty and exigency were major challenges that compromised and shaped voting pattern. Non-payment of salaries, allowances, pension and irregular promotion of staff also dictated voting behaviour in the election. In the July 14 election in Ekiti

State, the law of exigency took charge, as a result of ‘see and buy’, and many exchanged their votes for money contrary to predictions that even if people collect money they will still vote according to their conscience (YIAGA AFRICA, 2018).

For the July 14, 2018 governorship election in Ekiti State, a number of questions have been raised particularly to confront the choices of voters regarding the major contestants: Does performance matter? If not, what matter? Do Ekiti people have a preference for choice of candidate? Do they vote their preference? Can preference be wrong? Where preferences reflect interests, can interests be misinformed? Can we firmly declare that emotional appeal as against rational appeal took the better part of most voters in Ekiti or is it just a manifestation of politics of spite? Can this situation signify specific type of appeal that can sway the mind and voting pattern of the average Ekiti voters? Can the voting pattern in the 2019 general elections be regarded as an affirmation of the 2018 governorship election? Obviously, politics in Ekiti State since inception of democratic rule in 1999 has been characterised with swings in political behaviour in support of the two major political parties. 2018 gubernatorial election was keenly contested between two major political parties. All Progressive Congress (APC) had Dr. Kayode Fayemi as party flag bearer and the People Democratic Party (PDP) had Professor Olusola Eleka as party candidate. Professor Olusola Eleka of the PDP was supported by the then incumbent governor, Ayodele Fayose. It is on record that vote-buying and militarisation compromised the election and these influenced the voting behaviour and patterns of Ekiti indigenes.

Ekiti elections in recent years have raised intriguing issues around electoral malpractices and monetisation of the electoral process by political parties and their candidates. The implication of this emerging trend for democratic consolidation and development-oriented politics in the state has expectedly generated debates and drawn criticisms among analysts. Akinnaso (2014) observes that Ekiti politics has been typified by four main features namely: cut-throat intra-party intrigues and inter-party competition among contestants; imposition of candidates by political godfathers; physical and verbal thuggery; and electoral malpractices. Obviously, none of these features is unique to Ekiti politics, neither do they carry equal weight during

each election cycle, but what is unique about Ekiti, according to him, is the conjunctive interplay among the features and the intensity of their manifestations. Ayobolu (2015) posits that many analysts have directly or indirectly questioned the fidelity of Ekiti people to those principles and values for which they were once so highly regarded. These include industry, discipline, an ascetic disposition, honour, dignity, courage and courteousness. These values are gradually eroded as a result of party politics.

Participation in governance gives vent and meaning to the ideal in democratic environment such that sovereign power belongs to the people. It is through elections that the people express their sovereign power by determining which policies are prioritised in society and which party and candidates are best suited to develop and implement them (Alemika, 2007; Nwankwo, 2018). The Economist (2014) asserts that election is a clash between appeals to good governance on the one hand, and the lure of old-school clientelism and populism, on the other. Evidently, in spite of Ekiti having a relatively well-learned electorate, the old ways prevailed. Thomas (2014) argues that a voter's power should be exercised with some degree of sanity and logical discretion and should not be used to encourage the enthronement of tyranny in order to celebrate mediocrity under any normal circumstances. The psychological attachment influences the exercise of franchise, and generally, electoral behaviour in national elections and party politics in Nigeria; this also reflects in state elections. It is against this background that this study seeks to assess voting behaviour of teaching staff in Egbeoba High School, Ikole- Ekiti Community with a particular attention to 2018 Ekiti Governorship Election.

The objectives of this study are to: examine the factors that accounted for voters' political choice; determine the nexus between campaign promises and voters' participation during the election; ascertain whether party affiliation and gratification influence voting pattern in the 2018 Ekiti governorship election. This study adopted both primary and secondary data to discuss the issues bordering on the July 14, 2018 gubernatorial election in Ekiti State. It is qualitative and employed a focus group discussions method. Forty-Five (45) out of 51 teaching staff were grouped into 9 in order to sample opinions. Secondary data were sourced from relevant books, journals,

editorials, and online publications, among others. Obtained data was subjected to content-analysis.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

This study is anchored on the rational choice theory. The concept of rational choice theory was conceived from the economic explanation of voting behaviour as espoused by Anthony Downs (1957) in the work, “An Economic Theory of Democracy.” This is an attempt to explain electoral behaviour taking its root from the work done within political economy by Kenneth Arrow (1951, 1986) that relate economic parameters – resources, goods and technology – with political outcome or choice. The theory of rational choice is essentially associated with the works of Friedman Milton (1953), William Stanley Jevons (1956), Gary S. Becker (1976), Blume E. Lawrence and Easley David (2008), Susanne Lohmann (2008), Carloth Stern and Peter Hedstorm (2008), Grune-Yanoff Till (2012). The rational choice theory allows preferences to be represented as real-valued utility functions and to that degree, provides a compact that makes empirical predictions possible (Milton 1953). However, the rational choice theory focuses attention on the link between attitudes and voting. It rejects the question of where the voters derive their attitudes from and keeps attention on the fit between voters’ attitudes and their voting choice.

The basic assumption of the rational choice theory is that the voters make up their own minds about issues, performance and personalities, and then vote for the party that comes closest to delivering the policies and performance they want. It also states that all decisions, whether made by the voters or political parties, are rational and guided by self-interest (Saxena, 2017). The operation of the theory is based on three fundamental premises. The first is that all decisions that are made by voters and political parties are rational and are guided by self-interest and enforced in accordance with the principle of maximisation of action’s utility. This is followed by the assumption that, the democratic political system implies a level of consistency that supports predictions about the consequences of decisions made by voters and political parties. This is to mean that voters, parties and government are responsible and trustworthy and this makes it possible to make predictions about the consequences that result from different choices.

Finally, there is the assumption that, the democratic system has a level of uncertainty, sufficiently important to allow different options.

The centrality of the application of the theory to this study is hinged on the basis that voters are rational beings who can think individually and are able to have view on political issues and votes accordingly. Voters' behaviour during elections is considered important in evaluating and examining the reason for their decisions to participate and vote in way and manner in which they vote during elections in Nigeria, particularly Ekiti State. This is evident in the electoral transition history of Ekiti State where since the return of democracy to the country in 1999, the state has witnessed a change of political party in five different elections in which no political party wins governorship election consecutively.

## **Conceptualisation**

### ***Voting Behaviour***

Many notable scholars have made conscious attempt to conceptualise the etymological meaning and nature of voters' behaviour. Some of these scholars argue that voters are more likely to vote if they can derive benefit from candidates. Bratton (2013) defined voting behaviour as a set of personal electoral activities, including participation in electoral campaigns, turnout at the polls, and choosing whom to vote for. Zahida and Younis (2014) described voting behaviour as a field of study that is concerned with the ways in which people tend to vote in public elections and reasons why they vote as they do. They, however, argue that voting behaviour has recently been expanded in meaning and is taken as one major and broad area of study. The study of electoral behaviour constitutes a very significant area of empirical investigation. Socio-economic factors of voting behaviour have become a growing debate among scholars in many developing democracies. However, scholars like Leduc, Dalton, Beck and Flanagan (1984) Clark, Jenson, Leduc and Pammert (1992) strongly disagreed that economic factor is not a driving force of voting behaviour. As stated by Bickerton, Gagnon and Smith, (1999) most studies have found that socio-economic characteristics are an important predictor of voters' choice in election especially in a democratic centralism. This study therefore, sees centrality in purported argument that voters' behaviour is an essential ingredient in a

democratic setting since the actions or inactions of the voter determines the outcome of the election.

### ***Vote-Buying***

Vote-buying has become a national political malaise as both voters and officials of national electoral body are regularly enticed by financial inducement to alter either their decision about the party or candidate so that the outcomes of an election can be in favour of those offering gratification. With the pervasiveness of the influence of money on Nigeria's politics, vote-buying has assumed a disastrous dimension. Oke (2018) described vote buying as the undisputed and inescapable fact of money changing hands. According to YIAGAAFRICA (2018), vote-buying can be described as an economic transaction in which parties and candidates distribute material benefits to individual citizens in exchange for their support at the polls. Stokes (2007) in his comparative research, argues that money is relatively more important in electoral politics in poor countries with a challenging geography and infrastructure compared to more developed countries. To Rodriguez (2018) the method of vote buying is systematic in such a way that the candidates themselves do not do the actual vote buying but have coordinators who do the dirty work for them. While Uwamahoro submits that vote buying perpetuates corruption throughout the entire political system (Young African Leaders Initiative, 2018). He further states that a candidate who pays for support, rather than compete fairly for votes, will show disregard for democratic norms and use illegal means to run government affairs. However, vote- buying constitutes a major problematic issue to electoral processes and integrity. This is because either through financial or material inducements, vote-buying is intended to persuade individuals to vote in certain ways in order to influence the outcome of elections. To corroborate this, Leight *et al* (2016) asserts that vote-buying endangers the validity of election results; undermines public trust in the democratic system; and negatively affects post-election politics, government accountability, and public perceptions of that accountability.

Several reasons feature as causes for people selling their votes. Among these are: betrayal by leaders, poverty, and rampant corruption at top levels of leadership. Citizens, especially the poorest and most marginalised, can



come to see the disbursement of cash before elections as the only thing they get from an ineffectual government.

### ***Militarisation of Election***

The conduct of elections in Nigeria has always been turbulent. The history of post-colonial electoral engineering in Nigeria is replete with instances of militarism and violence during election times. Bonn International Centre for Conversion (2019) posits that militarisation is a difficult term with ambiguous interpretations and definitions. BICC (2019) defines the concept as the process by which a society organises itself for military conflict and violence. To Uyangoda (2005), militarisation is the use of military power and force to solve political and social problems. This implies not just the deployment, threat or use of force, but also the solving of political and social conflicts with the use of force. Farzana (2005) is of the opinion that, militarisation is a process that normalises the use of coercive structures and practices in all forms of social interaction and institutions. It is an ideology that privileges coercion and glorifies military power in the name of state security, institutionalises methods of overlooking the due process of law, while also criminalising dissent in the interest of national security.

The Transition Monitoring Group (TMG), a civil society group which regularly monitors the conduct of elections in Nigeria justified the deployment of soldiers for elections in the country including the Ekiti election citing past experiences where politicians take elections as an act of war (Olaniyan and Amao, 2015). The group's chairman, Ibrahim Zikirullahi, argued that the soldiers' deployment was not new and that the success recorded by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in Ekiti may not have been possible if they were not on ground to ensure security. To buttress this, Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Nigeria's electoral umpire, hold that the heavy troop deployment was necessary to provide security to officials of the commission and the voters. The commission through its Chairman, Attahiru Jega, noted that:

The military performs what we describe as peripheral outer cordon. It is the mobile police that handle internal movement in terms of movements in the towns but away from polling

unit. And it is unarmed policemen that you have on an average of three per polling units, and that is exactly what happened in Ekiti (Jega, cited in Olaniyan and Amao, 2015).

However, the purpose of militarisation could be in two folds: One, there could be militarisation to ensure safety, two, there could be militarisation to intimidate the opposition. In the case of the states under study, the situation is that of the latter as evident in the selective harassment of members of the opposition parties. What obtained was a situation in which security forces were deployed to intimidate the opposition in order to secure a victory for the federal ruling party. Unfortunately, this does not bode well for democracy.

Oyeyipo and Oluku (2019) reported that in 2014, the PDP-led government deployed platoons of armed soldiers to Ekiti State for the gubernatorial election. A week before the election, the army banned two APC governors namely Comrade Adams Oshiomhole and Mr. Rotimi Amaechi from entering Ekiti State. During the election, the voters were subjected to horrendous harassment by the armed troops. In 2018, gubernatorial election in Ekiti State also witnessed what is similar to that of June 21, 2014, where INEC requested for 30 thousand security personnel. Olukosi (2015) notes that militarising elections in Nigeria indirectly contributed to low voter's turnout. Because of the precedence of aggression that Nigerian soldiers have exhibited, most electorates dread them to the extent that they do everything to avoid them.

### ***Campaign***

Election campaign is an important aspect of electioneering that alters the emotion, attitude and perception of electorates towards political party. Election campaigns processes can be in many forms through which manifestoes of a party are announced in order to appeal to individual voters to decide which party or candidate gets their votes. Each party launches a vigorous campaign for influencing the voters in its favour. Use of such means as mass meetings, town hall meetings, personal contacts, posters, billboards, T.V and radio broadcasts, Newspaper advertisements, hand bills, processions and propaganda are made to win votes, particularly floating

votes during election campaigns. For instance, Omisore, a governorship candidate in September 10, 2018 Osun State election, had a billboard which did not contain any manifesto. However, it had messages like: “Eni tanwi de” meaning that here comes the one we have been talking about, “Ni Ipinle Osun, eniyan iyi ni wa”- in Osun State we are men of honour. -These convey no message about his programmes. The election campaigns are designed to make a voter believe that his interest can be best served by the party or the candidate of the party contesting from his constituency. Thus, election campaigns act as an important determinant of voting behaviour.

### **Discussion of the Findings**

Focus Group Discussions were held with the teaching staff of Egbeoba High School, Ikole-Ekiti. The following are some of the findings from the research.

#### ***Factors that Account for Voters' Political Preference***

The people of Ekiti are believed to be politically sophisticated and dynamic. Different political parties have ruled the state since its creation in 1996. This study interrogated teachers on what accounted for their choice of political party. Some of the teachers agreed that emotional appeals during political campaigns induced them to support the candidacy of Governor Kayode Fayemi of All Progressive Congress (APC) as they were made to believe that the administration would run an inclusive government which accommodates all interest groups in the state. This was widely used by the APC to instil positive emotions such as enthusiasm and hopefulness about the candidate. Others were of the opinion that they casted their votes for the candidate of the People Democratic Party (PDP), Prof. Olusola Eleka because of his academic prowess. Their belief is that he would run people-oriented policies. Although, his counterpart is also learned but the Deputy Governor, Prof Olusola Eleka only came into political limelight in 2014. He is a humble and quiet gentleman and was perceived by many as being more a sound university scholar than being seen as an astute politician. However, some other teachers voted for Prof. Eleka of the PDP because of his personality.

Some were scared that the candidate, Prof Olusola Eleka, would be a stooge to the outgoing governor, Mr Ayodely Fayose. To buttress this, Durotoye (2014) noted that evaluations of candidate qualities and government performance are distinctly short-term forces, capable of substantial shifts from one election to the next. In all, majority believed that economic benefits prompted them to vote for a particular party believed to have such values. This corroborates the position of the rational choice model which states categorically that economic value is more central to electorates than attitudes and emotions.

#### ***The Nexus between Campaign Promises and Voters' Participation***

The success of political party in a democratic system is determined by the content of its manifestoes, which would normally encompass the political party's ideology. The critical issue for the voters to determine the component of campaign promise is the relationship between the voter's evaluation of candidates and the candidates' policy positions, service promises, and interest group contributions.

When asked a question about the relationship between the campaigns and voters' participation during the election. 70% of the respondents were of the opinion that there is indeed high perception that candidate programmes in line with the party's objectives will definitely increase the number of turn out during the election. They further cited that during Governor Kayode Fayemi the first tenure in officer, , he adopted a policy of paying aged people who are from 70 years and above. However, the administration, due to its conduct of teachers' assessment, was not given support from the teachers for the second term. This is because any reform and policies that public servants consider exogenous, strange and sapping will not go down well due to the fact that the state is mainly a civil servant state with the larger part of the workers dependent on government for livelihood.

#### ***The Influence of Party Affiliation and Gratification on Voting Pattern***

Findings from the respondents' opinion showed that party affiliation is much common in Ekiti politics. Despite this, Ekiti people are still considered as rational and responsible actors in the democratic process. Findings showed

that gratification such as material inducements, vote-buying, played a major role in the July 14, 2018 Ekiti governorship election. The findings corroborate the views of Lust-Orkar (2007), Ihonvbere and Shaw (1989) Nigeria that citizens are more likely to participate and vote if they feel they can derive material benefits from candidates and political parties.

### **Conclusion**

This study set out to investigate the factors that influence voters' behaviour in the 2018 Ekiti gubernatorial election with a special reference to Ikole-Ekiti community. The study has shown that a combination of party identification, materials and financial inducements, non-payment of salaries influenced voters' behaviour in the said election. The study further revealed that candidate's personality and party manifestoes invariably contributed to the pattern of voting. Therefore, this study advocates that voters must not be carried away by the selfish interest of political gladiators to upset their rational choice of voting credible candidates. Electorates ought to note that the dividends of democracy can only be achieved through a responsible and committed government. Consequently, voters must be firm in their decision on which political party or candidate to vote for.

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