
An empirical appraisal of the role of money in Nigerian politics

Mahmoud Alfa

Nigerian Infrastructure Advisory Facility,
United Kingdom's Department for International Development,
49 Agadez Street, Wuse 2, Abuja, Nigeria
Email: mahmoud.alfa@yahoo.co.uk

John Marangos*

Department of Balkan, Slavic and Oriental Studies,
University of Macedonia,
156 Egnatia Street, Thessaloniki 54006, Greece
and
Swiss Management Center University,
Transknowlogy Campus, Switzerland
Email: marangosjohn@gmail.com
*Corresponding author

Abstract: This study was conducted with the aim of ascertaining the impact of money on the quality of democracy and democratic consolidation in Nigeria. To achieve this major objective, the study employed the use of both primary and secondary data. The primary data consisted of questionnaires, while the secondary consisted of published materials. The study found that the use of money by politicians to influence the outcome of elections through vote buying among other malpractices in the country is firstly a consequence of the prevailing poverty and the expectation of the electorate for the aspiring politicians to dispense money. This development resulted in the lack of credibility of election results and in Nigeria's democracy. It is recommended that funding the electoral process must be reformed to make access and participation possible for a broader spectrum of society.

Keywords: democracy; poverty; election; money; violence; legitimacy; electorate; politics; leadership; corruption.

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Biographical notes: Mahmoud Alfa is a Technical Advisor with the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID). With over ten years work experience in both the public and private sector, he has garnered profound experience in vast areas which include project management, business modelling/development strategies for private, public and government concerns and an excellent working knowledge of mortgage investment banking and finance related activities. He is also a scholar who has presented papers at various local and international conferences like the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria and Ibrahim Badamasi

Babangida University, Lapai, Niger state. He belongs to professional bodies such as the Nigerian Society of International Affairs, the Nigerian Political Science Association among others.

John Marangos is a Professor of Comparative Economic Systems in the Department of Balkan, Slavic and Oriental Studies at the University of Macedonia. He is a Visiting Professor at SMC University. His focal points of research include transition processes in Russia, Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union and Asia, international development, and innovative methodologies for teaching economics. The publications or in the process of publication include: nine books (two of them the Greek), 13 book chapters, 63 refereed journal articles, eight refereed papers in conference proceedings, 13 entries in Encyclopaedias, one report, seven book reviews, four multimedia developments projects and nine research grants. His latest publication is a three volume set on comparative economic systems published by Palgrave MacMillan with the titles: *Consistency and Viability of Capitalist Economic Systems*; *Consistency and Viability of Socialist Economic Systems*; and *Consistency and Viability of Islamic Economic Systems and the Transition Process*.

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1 Introduction

Nigeria since 1999, has embraced democratic governance, which pundits and political analysts consider as a panacea for its multidimensional and perennial poverty (Anyanwu, 2007). However, democracy rather than addressing Nigeria's poverty has aggravated the situation (Usman, 2003). Interestingly in Nigeria, the distinctive power of money in politics is as one of the reasons that undermined democratic governance in the past and became part of the reason for military incursions in Nigeria in the first and second republics both of which lasted from 1960 to 1966 and 1979 to 1983 respectively (Ukiwo, 2005; Soyombo and Attoh, 2009; Osaghae, 2003). It is against this backdrop that the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, in their wisdom made provisions for regulating party financing in the country. In spite of this constitutional stipulation, there seem to be a general agreement that politics in Nigeria is almost always about money: how much one has to expend to elicit support, buy out opponents and/or mobilising people at the grassroots. Because of the prevalent poverty and deprivation in the country, politicians use their wealth to buy votes from the already impoverished majority (Danjibo and Oladeji, 2007).

Poverty and democracy are strange bedfellows (Usman, 2003). The rising incidence of poverty in Nigeria poses serious threats to the democratisation process and political stability of the country. This is so because Nigeria is the fifth producer of oil in the world and still has over 70% of its population living in poverty (Danjibo and Oladeji, 2007). The Nigerian experience reveals that most Nigerians in the percentage stated above, live in absolute poverty. According to Nigeria's National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), the measure of absolute poverty is most apparent in the northern region. In comparison with

the southeast and southwest zones, which have relative poverty rates of 67.0% and 59.1% respectively, the north-east and north-west zones have higher figures of 76.3% and 77.7% of relative poverty (National Bureau of Statistics, 2012). The result of this is that the electorate usually sells their voting rights leading to the election of corrupt and arrogant politicians who have neither respect for the rule of law or genuine desire for sustenance of the democratic system (Macaver and Maiangwa, 2005). This indicates that money occupies a central position in Nigeria's political process and that an analysis and comprehension of Nigeria's complex political system cannot be made without examining the role of money in the nation's polity.

Furthermore, the political process has become so heavily monetised that the poor dare not aspire for elective offices no matter how knowledgeable they may be (Kurfi, 2005). The political process in Nigeria is such that the poor cannot afford the large expenditure involved in political campaigns and manoeuvring. This makes politics an instrument solely for the rich and influential (Salamone, 1997). Therefore, it calls for an empirical investigation of the problems that emanate from the incidence of poverty and its implications for democracy and social stability in Nigeria by highlighting the role of money in Nigerian politics. "Indeed, social stability is a fundamental prerequisite to any meaningful development enterprise just as, in contrast, a lack thereof can be a source of tension or instability" [Qerimi and Sergi, (2012), p.425].

The paper is structured as follows: Section 2 presents the literature review; Section 3 elaborates on the research methodology; Section 4 provides the data, analysis and discussion of finding, while Section 5 concludes and presents the policy implications.

2 Literature review

Fox (2010) argued that money is indispensable in the political process. He noted that campaigns cost money, as political office aspirants need funds to properly remunerate their staff, researchers, policy analysts and communications experts. He also pointed out that money is needed to print brochures, pamphlets, radio and television adverts, renting spaces for campaign offices, telephone expenses and other office requirements. Fox (2010) maintained that in fact running for office is not different from running a small business where money is central for operations.

Fox (2010) emphasises a reality in campaign financing that sufficient funds are required for a successful campaign, and that candidates must provide these funds if they are committed to winning the elections. It follows then, that this need can make candidates resort to illegal means of sourcing for funds, when the legal means prove unfruitful. Therefore, the increasing centrality of money in politics and campaigns implies that the more money an aspirant has the more chances of winning. For candidates with limited means their chances at the polls are slimmer.

Similarly, Ohman (2013) posited that while the nature of politics varies largely between various regions and nations, it is hardly contestable that there is nowhere in the globe where money does not matter in a political decision making process or in campaign organisation. Ohman (2013) argued further that money in politics has a significant nexus with key aspects of any modern state. He also notes that the management of political finance is central to credible and genuine elections and electoral campaigns. This in his

opinion is so because money has the propensity to mar competition between and among contestants.

Ohman (2013) furthermore posited that a democratic society must of necessity be characterised by ongoing dialogue with its citizens and this process requires funding. He noted further that the concern is that money has the capacity to make politicians more responsive to contributors than to the electorate. In view of the centrality of money to politics, Ohman (2013) emphasised the need for controlling its impact in order to nurture its positive aspects, while keeping at bay its negative influences. To this end, Ohman (2013) opined that no single model of control fits all states, all nations have varying oversight means, and that any analysis must be done contextually.

Ohman's (2013) opinion as presented in the foregoing brings to light the negative effects of uncontrolled use of money in the electoral campaigns and politics by the politicians. Money is central to campaign administration yet its flagrant use poses challenges, which have the capacity to violate the essence of elections in a democracy. It can, therefore, be gleaned from Ohman (2013) that too much money in politics makes governance undemocratic.

According to Walecki (2000), political finance is influenced by, and influences, relations between parties, politicians, party membership, and the electorate. Money matters for democracy because much of democratic political activity simply could not occur without money. Narrow definitions of political finance tend to focus on campaign and party funding. In fact, many extra-party actors are involved in political competition with the objective of shaping public policy agenda, influencing legislation or electoral debates and outcomes. Therefore, money matters for democracy because much of its political activity simply could not occur without it. However, when discussing its costs and benefits one should stress that the misuse of money in politics can create some major problems for a political regime.

Adetula (2000) notes that in many societies, the role of large donors raises concerns about representative government. This issue of private donors is also relevant in newly established democracies. In one of its surveys in the transition countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the World Bank (1999) uses illegal political finance as one of six dimensions of the state capture phenomenon. The resulting Illegal Private Political Finance Index (IPPF) measures the percentage of firms that consider themselves directly affected by illegal political donations. The index does not give a full picture of corrupt political finance. It fails to take into consideration many forms of irregular political finance, including misappropriation of public funds (this implies unauthorised use of public resources for political purposes such as a ruling party using its influence to embezzle funds from the coffers of state-owned companies) or abuse of state resources for political finance purposes (the use of state employees, offices and vehicles for campaign purposes) (Adetula, 2010). Thus, it is important not only to evaluate illegal private political funding, but also to analyse the degree of illegal state funding and abuse of state resources. Government favouritism to maintain privileged positions within the economic system for powerful political and economic elites, together the general lack of political accountability, leads to corrupt political finance.

2.1 Controlling political finance: an exercise in damage limitation

Every democratic system has to regulate the flow of money into politics (Ohman, 2013). Unregulated political financing presents certain problems for modern liberal democracy

as noted earlier. It fails to guarantee that candidates and political parties compete on equal terms, political competition under unregulated political financing, according to Ewing (1992), would be like inviting two people to participate in the race, with one participant turning up with a bicycle, and the other with a sports car. Measures concerning political finance are divided into regulations and subventions. Most democracies restrict the use of at least some sources of private donations, either by banning them or by setting contribution limits (Ohman, 2013). Restrictions on donations aim at preventing parties and candidates from obligating themselves to private interests.

Walecki (2000) noted that democracies employ different strategies to control the flow of money into politics, creating a framework within which political parties and individual candidates can operate. More effective formulas for public control of political money seem to require the existence of a comprehensive system of political finance based on three necessary pillars: full disclosure, independent enforcement agency, and reasonable public funding. Disclosure requires systematic reporting, auditing, public access to records and publicity. The objective of disclosure of political finances is to make politicians accounts a subject of public knowledge and political debate. Enforcement demands an independent agency endowed with the necessary legal powers to supervise, verify, investigate and if required, institute legal proceedings. Assuming private funding as a constant, regular public funding diversifies the sources of funding.

Walecki (2000) further posited that transparent public funding, in fact, is one of the options for combating the practices of abusing state resources and plutocratic funding that fuels the financial corruption of politics. Public funding limits the opportunity for corporations and wealthy individuals to exercise external control, capturing political parties and their policy-making capacities. It relieves parties, largely, from pressure of constant fundraising and reduces the prospects for some types of political finance-related corruption, such as from funding from infamous sources and from the abuse of state resources. Furthermore, in semi-authoritarian regimes, such as Russia and Ukraine, lack of significant public funding serves the purpose of starving the opposition of resources (Walecki, 2000). Nonetheless, even substantial public funding is not a sufficient condition to eliminate other types of political finance-related corruption, such as personal enrichment, illegal expenditure or vote buying.

2.2 Money and the electoral process in Nigeria

It has been highlighted in the foregoing arguments that the political process requires funding in order to operate; therefore, money is a necessary requirement for the success of an election. However, the amount of money, the source of the money, and the specific purpose the money serves in the execution of a campaign or electoral activity are important matters to consider. At the outset, it should be acknowledged that money is needed and is used in all electioneering activities all over the world. The problem of money in politics arises only when set limits, sources, and uses are either violated or abused by politicians and other relevant actors. In a situation where prescribed limits or sources are ignored, the political space and the institutions governing the processes of elections and politicking become compromised.

In societies undergoing political transition, like Nigeria, legal frameworks and the implementation of the existing legal limitations regarding election financing, accounting, and auditing are weak and unsustainable (Smah, 2000). The failure of the system to be

transparent raises fundamental issues, which touch on justice and equity principles. Since independence in 1960, Nigeria's experience has shown that the electoral laws made are hardly enforced comprehensively (Smah, 2000). The violation of the laws with impunity by political actors and players creates a fragile system that is ready to collapse at the perception of real or imagined injustice and deprivation. However, the main roots of violence associated with the political process are the basic political culture and its zero-sum philosophy.

Various types of democracies from different parts of the world exhibit different kinds and magnitudes of weaknesses, thus making some states more vulnerable. It is pertinent to note that in countries like Nigeria, corruption is a major problem. The legitimacy of authorities in power is compromised by widespread incidences of corruption in public and private life. The electoral process is not immune to corruption; indeed, while corruption in most spheres of the national life is often undetected due to the very low level of literacy, awareness, or social consciousness, corruption in the electoral system provokes violent protest. This is against the backdrop of perceived injustices, deprivation, and collective assault that are meted out on the sensibilities of all financiers and other citizens who may have genuinely participated in the electoral process at one point or the other (Adetula, 2000). This study examines the complex issue of electoral financing/election funding, as well as, the associated violence that follows the loss of an election and the threats that particular candidates pose to others in winning an election.

2.3 The zero-sum-game and investment mentality in the political process in Nigeria

Losing an election in Nigeria means to be expelled from political life. The winner takes all. Those who win in elections do so at the expense of the losers. Once opponents, for whatever reason, scuttle an individual's chances they become completely irrelevant in the political process. He or she cannot contest an election again. It is against this backdrop that one works so hard to win an election. When a candidate is sure of losing an election, followers' votes are traded for positions in the regime of the winners. Vote-buying at the party or flag bearer's level becomes one of the most accessible means of securing political relevance and participation. If negotiations fail to produce a workable bargain at this level, then violence takes centre-stage.

Financiers in the political process often fund campaigns for ulterior motives. Knowing that losing an election in Nigeria has dire financial consequences, the certainty of candidates getting something in the end, through vote-buying and other corrupt activities encourages funding of political campaigns. As such, electoral funding is an investment with expected returns. The eventual failure to gain massive returns from such investments triggers violence. This could be at the individual or corporate/social level. At the individual level, campaign officials, candidates, and officials representing political institutions become ready targets of assassinations and murder. For example, after the 2003 general elections, the Chairman of Kogi State Independent Electoral Commission was murdered on March 3, 2004, by yet to be identified assassins (Adetula, 2005).

In summary, the review of literature has shown that the financiers (also called godfathers in Nigerian politics) are a major force to reckon with because their contributions towards the electoral victory or otherwise of the candidates, play a major role in campaign financing. These financiers consider their participation during elections

as an investment which must yield results once their candidates are elected. Nevertheless for Nigeria, “marker reforms, democracy, less corruption and the ability to attain the opportunities of the global economy are the way forward ...” [Adekola and Sergi, (2007a), p.358].

3 Research methodology

3.1 Study areas

The study took place in six states spread across the entire six geo-political zones of the Federation of Nigeria and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. These states are: Kaduna representing North West; Bauchi representing North East; Kogi representing North Central; Lagos representing South West; Enugu representing South East; Edo representing South-South. These locations were selected using Stratified and Simple Random Sampling (Adogbo, 2009) with its details discussed in the section containing the sampling procedure. The selection of respondents to complete the questionnaire in the states necessitated the use of Simple Random technique. Therefore, 200 questionnaires were allocated to each selected state in order to give each member of the electorate respondent equal chances of being represented. A total of 1,200 questionnaires were distributed to the six geo-political zones. This apart, the choice of locations of the study took cognisance of time and financial constraints. In addition, considering the time constraint at the disposal of the researchers, they engaged the services of five research assistants resident in the states selected. Moreover, the areas selected across Nigeria represent the diverse cultural and socio-political views of the country.

3.2 Types and instruments of data collection

The methodology of this study is founded on information obtained from primary and secondary sources. Information is critically analysed using the descriptive method of documentary analysis and logical conclusions drawn from the analysis. The primary source for this study consists of the use of close ended questionnaires, direct observation and in-depth interviews (IDIs). The rationale for the choice of the two sources was for the purpose of one complementing the other to strengthen the findings of the study.

3.3 Questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed in such a manner so that respondents whose opinions could not be covered in the interview sessions would have an opportunity to send their responses. The questionnaire comprised of five sections. The first covers the bio data of respondents. The second section comprises of questions on poverty and the electoral process. The third section covers questions on vote buying and the electoral process. The fourth section covers questions on electoral laws and the electoral process, while the fifth, and last, section covers questions on the way forward. The questionnaire is provided in Appendix.

3.4 Interview guide

A structured in-depth interview (IDI) guide was designed in order to obtain qualitative information from the respondents. As such, a sample of principal officers of the organisations and associations were contacted. The rationale for the choice of these categories of specialised agencies and officials is predicated on the fact that the nature of the study requires that data should be generated from relatively informed individuals who are not only conversant with the political activities of the country, but who can provide useful information on the subject under study.

The population sample of this research constitutes key persons from the political parties, Civil Society Organizations (CSO), the electoral body, security agencies, and the academia. Principal officers of the political parties were identified and interviewed and knowledgeable adult Nigerians from the academia and CSOs that are familiar with the issues under investigation were also interviewed. The nature of this study required that data should be generated from relatively informed individuals. However, in the selection of the organisations whose officials were chosen for the IDI, the researchers identified and listed (CSOs) on a piece of paper and placed in a bowl for selection. The justification for this technique was to give every one of them equal chances of being selected.

3.5 Method of data analysis

The descriptive method was used in analysing data in the study for easy comprehension. A triangulation method was adopted for the analysis of the data generated. This was informed by the nature of the phenomenon under investigation in which documentary surveys, the questionnaire and interviews were used. These methods were adopted, so that one would complement the other and ultimately strengthen the research findings. Concisely, the data generated from the IDIs were analysed using triangulation method with all the relevant issues such as research problem, research questions and research objectives listed in form of themes and sub-themes. Inferences were later drawn from the documentary records and interviews to explain these issues under investigation for the purpose of validity and reliability.

The chi-square method was adopted as statistical tool of analysis. It is a non-parametric tool for validating or invalidating the degree of agreement based on 95% confidence level or 0.05% level of significance. In the event that the resultant chi-square is below 0.05%, the agreement is accepted and if it is above, the agreement will be rejected (Olayiwola, 2007). In this case the result of the test shows a significant level of confidence or agreement with the research questions hence the validity of the chi-square result.

4 Data presentation, analysis and discussion of findings

4.1 Demographic data of respondents

A total of one thousand and two hundred (1,200) questionnaires were distributed but 1,012 were duly filled and returned which constitutes 84%. Table 1 provides the demographic information about the respondents.

Table 1 Demographic data of respondents

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
1 <i>Sex</i>		
Male	822	81.2
Female	190	18.8
<i>Total</i>	<i>1,012</i>	<i>100</i>
2 <i>Age</i>		
18–23	18	1.8
24–29	67	6.6
30–35	113	11.2
36–40	289	28.6
40 and above	525	51.9
<i>Total</i>	<i>1,012</i>	<i>100</i>
3 <i>Marital status</i>		
Single	278	27.5
Married	536	53.0
Widowed	51	5.0
No response	147	14.5
<i>Total</i>	<i>1,012</i>	<i>100</i>
4 <i>No. of children</i>		
1–5	292	28.9
6–10	364	36.0
10 and above	78	7.7
No response	278	27.5
<i>Total</i>	<i>1,012</i>	<i>100</i>
5 <i>Educational qualifications</i>		
Primary school leaving certificate	7	0.7
Senior school certificate	147	14.5
National diploma/NCE	266	26.3
Higher national diploma/degree	411	40.6
Masters and above	181	17.9
<i>Total</i>	<i>1,012</i>	<i>100</i>
6 <i>Occupation</i>		
Student	89	8.8
Civil servant	317	31.3
Security agent	132	13.0
Teacher/academics	209	20.7
Political party agents	118	11.7
INEC officials	150	14.8
<i>Total</i>	<i>1,012</i>	<i>100</i>

Table 1 Demographic data of respondents (continued)

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
7 Earnings in (US dollars) per annum		
\$700–\$1,700	203	20.1
\$1,701–\$3,300	141	13.9
\$3,301–\$5,000	155	15.3
\$5,001–\$7,000	73	7.2
\$7,001 and above	17	1.7
No response	423	41.8
<i>Total</i>	<i>1,012</i>	<i>100</i>

In view of the patriarchal nature of the Nigerian society 81.2% of the respondents were males, while the females were represented by 18.8%. This variation can be explained by the fact that males have more recognition in public affairs than the females. In terms of the age of respondents, the age bracket 18–23 had the least representation of 1.8%. This was followed by age bracket 24–29 which had 6.6% representation. Age bracket 30–35 was represented by 11.2%, while age bracket 36–40 was represented by 28.6%. The age bracket 40 and above had the highest representation of 51.9%. It may be deduced that majority of Nigeria's active population are from age bracket 40 and above, hence its highest representation.

With regard to marital status 27.5% stated that they are single, 53.0% indicated being married, while 5.0% are widowed. The other 14.5% did not respond. It could be deduced that these ones are divorced. What can be said generally is that the population of this study are mature Nigerians. The respondents were requested to indicate the number of children. Of the respondents, 28.9% indicated having between 1–5 children, 36.0% chose the 6 to 10 option, while 7.7% answered the 10 and above option. The remaining 27.5%, which remained did not respond. Most likely these respondents are single.

From the list of educational qualification provided, only seven 0.7% responded with the Primary School Leaving Certificate option. Furthermore, 26.3% ticked the Senior School Certificate option, while 40.6% indicated having attained the National Diploma or National Certificate of Education. In addition, 40.6% responded with the Higher National Diploma/Degree option. The remaining 17.9% indicated having acquired the Master's Degree or above. There were none who responded the 'others' option. The foregoing indicates that the respondents possess the minimum level of education required to be able to objectively analyse Nigerian politics in general and campaign financing in particular.

The respondents were further provided with a list of occupations to indicate where they belong. A small percentage of 8.8% indicated that they are students, while 31.3% are civil servants. The security agents were represented by 13.0%, while teachers or academics were represented by 20.7%. The political party agents had an 11.7% representation, while lastly the INEC officials were represented by 14.8%. It is deducible from the breakdown that virtually all stakeholders in Nigerian politics are duly represented in the study population.

Table 2 Responses on poverty and the electoral process

Statement	Degree of agreement				Total (%)	Chi-square (χ^2)	Statistical significance test $p = 0.05$ (95% level of confidence)	Remark
	Strongly agree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly disagree (%)				
8 There is a high level of poverty in Nigeria	511 (50.5)	325 (32.1%)	86 (8.5)	90 (8.9)	1,012 (100.0)	498.838	0.000	Significant
9 Poverty plays a major role in voter behaviour in Nigeria	599 (59.2)	318 (31.4)	43 (4.2)	52 (5.1)	1,012 (100.0)	823.881	0.000	Significant
10 Poverty obliterates the outcome of elections in Nigeria	473 (46.7)	328 (32.4)	182 (18.0)	29 (2.9)	1,012 (100.0)	430.585	0.000	Significant
11 Prevalent poverty in Nigeria enhances unregulated flow of money into the electoral process	468 (46.2)	403 (39.8)	137 (13.5)	4 (0.4)	1,012 (100.0)	569.889	0.000	Significant
12 Poverty creates an enabling environment for political corruption	471 (46.5)	403 (39.8)	117 (11.6)	21 (2.1)	1,012 (100.0)	562.625	0.000	Significant
13 Politicians reinforce poverty in Nigeria for their selfish political ends	229 (22.6)	251 (24.8)	345 (34.1)	187 (18.4)	1,012 (100.0)	51.723	0.000	Significant
14 Poverty undermines the credibility of Nigeria's electoral process	328 (32.4)	29 (2.9)	182 (18.0)	182 (18.0)	1,012 (100.0)	431.787c	0.000	Significant

Note: Degree of freedom (df) = 3

Table 3 Responses on vote buying and the electoral process

Statement	Degree of agreement				Total (%)	Chi-square (χ^2)	Statistical significance test $p = 0.05$ (95% level of confidence)	Remark
	Strongly agree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly disagree (%)				
15 Vote buying is a common practice in the Nigeria electoral process	271 (26.8)	212 (20.9)	314 (31.0)	215 (21.2)	1,012 (100.0)	28.340	0.000	Significant
16 Vote buying discredits Nigeria's electoral process and ultimately democracy	345 (34.1)	226 (22.3)	234 (23.1)	207 (20.5)	1,012 (100.0)	46.126c	0.000	Significant
17 Politicians use money to influence electoral outcomes in Nigeria	321 (31.7)	439 (43.4)	203 (20.1)	49 (4.8)	1,012 (100.0)	329.391	0.000	Significant
18 The unregulated use of money during campaigns accounts for election violence in Nigeria	492 (48.6)	337 (33.3)	116 (11.5)	67 (6.6)	1,012 (100.0)	464.593	0.000	Significant
19 The unregulated use of money by politicians in the electoral process reinforces political thuggery	492 (48.6)	337 (33.3)	116 (11.5)	67 (6.6)	1,012 (100.0)	464.593	0.000	Significant
20 Vote buying generates the legitimacy crises in Nigeria	125 (12.4)	239 (23.6)	180 (17.8)	468 (46.2)	1,012 (100.0)	267.036c	0.000	Significant

Note: Degree of freedom (df) = 3

In terms of income per annum, quite a number of the respondents 41.8% did not provide an answer. In addition, 20.1% answered the \$700–\$1,700 option, while 13.9% responded with the \$1,700–\$3,300 option. Furthermore, 15.3% ticked the \$3,300–\$5,000 option, while 7.2% answered the \$5,000–\$ 7,000 option. Only 1.7% answered the \$7,000 and above option. Even though a large number did not indicate their income status, the available data indicates that respondents are in a position to assess the state of poverty in the country vis-à-vis voting behaviour in Nigeria.

Respondents were requested to react to the view that there is a high level of poverty in Nigeria. A percentage of 50.5% strongly agreed, while 32.1% of the respondents agreed with the assertion, 8.5% disagreed, while 8.9% strongly disagreed. The overwhelming opinion is that there is a high incidence of poverty in Nigeria. The opinion of Alfa (2013) a board member of the ruling political party who asserted that the high incidence of poverty in the land results in a situation where the electorate indirectly put pressure on politicians to embezzle public funds in order to meet the people's needs and expectations corroborates the foregoing. Furthermore, Sani (2013) a political analyst also posited that the incidence of poverty in Nigeria is such that it drives people mainly youths into anti-social activities and political violence, thereby making life for many insecure. The National Bureau of Statistics (2010) poverty profile in Nigeria described the rate of poverty in Nigerian as phenomenal. Several other interviewees such as Omojuwa, an academic, Fashakina party representative and Bode a security agent among others also consent to the high rate of poverty in Nigeria. These individuals are stakeholders in Nigeria's march towards democratic governance.

Participants were asked whether poverty plays a major role in voter behaviour in Nigeria. A total of 59.2% responded with the 'Strongly agree' option while 31.4% responded with the 'Agree' option, 4.2% responded with the 'Disagree' option, while 5.1% responded with the 'Strongly disagree' option. It is inferred from these responses that poverty is a major determinant of voter behaviour in Nigeria. Abbas (2013) an academic, posits that aspiring political office holders who do not address needs of the electorates do not have any chance of being voted into office. Similarly, Alfa (2013) a board member of the ruling political party stated that only those politicians with enough money to throw around have prospects of making it at the polls, as they are able to influence voters to support them at elections. Furthermore, Galadima (2013) an official of the country's electoral body, commented that it has become a tradition in Nigeria that politicians cash in on the poverty in the land in order to manipulate the electorate into casting votes for them.

On the view that poverty obliterates the outcomes of elections in Nigeria, 46.7% strongly agreed while 32.4% agreed, 18.0% disagreed, while 2.9% strongly disagreed. Omojuwa (2013) an academic posits that poverty not only obliterates outcomes of elections but also casts a bad image on the credibility of elections in Nigeria. In his view, an individual who was influenced into voting for a particular candidate cannot be said to have honestly exercised their franchise and such a system cannot be said to be credible. Furthermore, Gayus (2013), an official of the country's electoral body, is of the view that the high incidence of poverty in Nigeria militates against the ability and capacity of the electoral body, the INEC to conduct credible elections in Nigeria. Murtala (2013) an academic, also asserts that a democracy that is founded on such falsehood can at best be described as 'façade democracy'. The reason for this is not farfetched: majority of the voters are influenced into voting against their choices.

On the question that prevalent poverty in Nigeria enhances unregulated flow of money into the electoral process in Nigeria, 46.2% strongly agreed while 39.8% chose the 'agree' option. On the other hand, 13.5% disagreed, while only 0.4% strongly disagreed. For Bode (2013), a security personnel, whether we like it or not, the saying that who pays the piper dictates the tune holds true in Nigerian politics; politics is for the highest bidder, it is who is able to pay more that gets voted in. This, therefore, unwittingly encourages the unregulated flow of money into the process. Kwila (2013) a security agent, also adds that even security agents tend to be sympathetic to candidates with more money to give out. This situation in his position encourages others to throw money around. Therefore, a situation where the electorate themselves expect money during campaigns of necessity results in the flagrant use of money in political campaigns. It can be said that the society itself encourages the flagrant or unregulated flow of money into the campaign process.

The respondents were requested to react to the view that poverty creates an enabling environment for political corruption, the 46.5% strongly agreed, while 39.85% agreed. On the other hand, 11.6% disagreed, while 2.1% strongly disagreed. It can be deduced from the foregoing arguments that in view of the fact that members of the electorate expect money from aspiring political office holders, the latter have no choice, but to indulge in sundry acts of corruption in order not to 'disappoint' the electorate during campaigns. Political corruption is therefore a systemic issue because those who do not engage in corruption are deemed to be fools (Fashakin, 2013).

Furthermore, respondents were requested to react to the view that politicians in Nigeria reinforce poverty for their selfish ends. A proportion of 22.6% strongly agreed, while 24.8% of the respondents chose the 'agreed' option. On the other hand, 34.1% disagreed, while 18.4% strongly disagreed. From the responses provided above, it can be deduced that there is a disagreement. This could mean that politicians may not wholly be blamed for the reinforcement of poverty in Nigeria. Kwila (2013) a security agent has stated that politicians are only elements of an already poor society, hence should not be blamed for its continued prevalence. Similarly, Omojuwa (2013) an academic posited that politicians are not to be blamed but policies and programmes of successive governments in the past have made the situation what it is today. Most of these policies and programmes were implemented by the government on the recommendation of the Bretton Woods institutions and not the politicians *per se*. In this context, Adekola and Sergi (2007b, p.70) advance "the case for distinctive, ethical commitments in less advantageous economies by which we much attach responsibilities to both national and international experts". Therefore, politicians take advantage of the already poor society; it is rather the system that reinforces poverty and not the politicians (Gayus, 2013).

On the view that poverty undermines the credibility of Nigeria's electoral process, 46.5% strongly agreed, while 39.85% agreed. On the other hand, 11.6% disagreed, while 2.1% strongly disagreed. It can be deduced from the foregoing arguments that in view of the fact that members of the electorate expect money from aspiring political office holders, the latter have no choice, but to indulge in sundry acts of corruption in order not to 'disappoint' the electorate during campaigns. Political corruption is therefore a systemic issue because those who do not engage in it are deemed to be fools (Fashakin, 2013). In Nigeria, corruption has made election results to have very little or nothing to do with the performance in office of politicians. Precisely, because performance is not a critical factor in electoral outcome, the incentive to perform is very weak. Moreover

because corruption is effective in achieving electoral victory, the incentive to resort to corrupt practices is very high. The main decisive factors in the outcome of elections have been ethnicity, intimidation massive vote buying and rigging. This research supports this view by stating that poverty is a factor which mars the validity of election result in Nigeria as most of the members of the electorate are influenced to cast votes against their preferred candidates.

Respondents' opinions as expressed in the foregoing table shows that there is prevalent poverty in Nigeria and this influences various anti-social activities, especially in the electoral process. On their part, the politicians who are desperate to win elective office take advantage of the poverty in the land to influence the electorate into voting for candidates who do not possess the democratic credentials required for political office holders.

On the question that vote buying is a common practice in the Nigerian electoral process, 26.8% strongly agreed, while 20.9% respondents chose the 'agree' option. On the other side, 31.0% disagreed, while 21.2% strongly disagreed. The foregoing means that those who agreed are more than those who disagree. While it is true that vote buying takes place in Nigeria, it cannot be said to prevalent. This means that while it is common in some areas, it is not in others. This in her opinion is a result of the poverty in the land. Similarly, Omojuwa (2013) an academic supports this view by adding that the electoral system has been heavily monetised such that vote buying becomes prevalent in some areas. Vote buying is therefore a feature of Nigerian electoral system.

Vote buying has been reported in all the elections held since 1999. For example, as many as 28% of voters were offered gifts during the 2003 campaign (Afrobarometer, 2007). Based on the public perception of the vote-buying transaction, voters are usually offered money, commodities or jobs (Afrobarometer, 2007). In the elections, voters were most commonly offered a modal inducement of US\$3.3 (Afrobarometer, 2007). Analysis of the latest survey in the literature by Afrobarometer (2007) reveals that the median price of a vote payment rose between 2003 and 2007, from US\$12 to \$16, largely because the proportion of large payments (US\$70 or more per vote) is apparently increasing over time. Among Nigerian eligible voters interviewed in a February 2007, more than one in ten eligible voters agree that even by midway through the election campaign in February 2007, a candidate or someone from a political party had offered the electorate something in return for their vote (12%). Although this level of direct experience with vote buying is slightly lower than in 2003 (16%), actual vote buying in the 2007 elections in Nigeria matched that of 2003 (Afrobarometer, 2007). No doubt that vote buying has contributed significantly to the lack of confidence among Nigerians in the electoral system. This, in turn, has disposed some people toward violence as a means of securing the removal of leaders, which highlights the relationship between violence and the abuse of money in politics.

On the question that the unregulated use of money during campaign accounts for election violence in Nigeria, a total of 48.6% strongly agreed, while 33.3% agreed. On the other hand, 11.5% disagreed, while 6.6% strongly disagreed. It is common in Nigeria for defeated politicians at the polls, to use money to influence thugs to foment trouble. Several cases of this abound where some young men confess to have been given as low as US\$2.00 to foment trouble (Danjibo, 2010). The post-election violence, which Nigeria continually experiences, especially in the north, is a result of this issue (Murtala, 2013).

Furthermore, Sani (2013) posited that the zero sum game nature of Nigerian politics gives politicians no choice, but to adopt various strategies aimed at ensuring their electoral victory and one of this is using money to influence or ignite trouble whenever and whenever they seem to be losing.

In addition to the above, the Human Rights Watch (HRW) in a detailed report on the 2003 elections, observed that the elections were marred by serious incidents of violence, which left scores dead and many others injured. According to the report, the scale of violence and intimidation, much of which went unreported called into question the credibility of these elections. It went further that members or supporters of the ruling party, the People's Democratic Party (PDP), perpetrated the majority of serious abuses. In a number of locations, elections simply did not take place as groups of armed thugs linked to political parties and candidates intimidated and threatened voters in order to falsify results. These claims were substantiated with detailed accounts of election malpractices in various towns and cities across the states of Nigeria (EUEOM, 2003).

The respondents were further asked to react to the question that the unregulated use of money by politicians in the electoral process reinforces the activities of political thugs. The responses were 48.65% strongly agreed, while 33.3% agreed. In contrast, 11.5% disagreed, while 6.6% strongly disagreed. It is widely held in Nigeria today that the Boko Haram crises (where a small percentage of Islamic militants are engaged in an insurgency against the government) is an offshoot of the unregulated use of money by politicians to maintain an illegal army of thugs to use to advance their careers. The cost is an estimated 10,000 lives and scared away foreign direct investment worth about US\$4 billion (Petinrin, 2012). It appears that politicians enjoy the use of such political thugs as they are always willing tools in the hands of their financiers to perpetrate violence (Abbas, 2013).

The respondents were requested to state their opinion on the view that politicians manipulate electoral laws to achieve victory at the election. A percentage 43.6% strongly agreed, while 36.8% agreed. On the other side of the divide, 11.1% disagreed, while 8.4% strongly disagreed. Fashakin (2013) a party representative states that no Nigerian leader can claim to have followed electoral laws especially on campaign financing. In this view, majority of Nigerian politicians are guilty on this aspect.

The respondents were requested to state their views on the position that vote buying discredits Nigeria's electoral process and ultimately democracy, 22.3% strongly agreed, while 34.1% agreed, a percentage of 20.5% disagreed, while 23.1% strongly disagreed. Vote buying, as noted earlier, distorts the image of Nigeria's democracy as it casts a bad image on the country's electoral image. On the view that vote buying generates legitimacy crises in Nigeria, 23.6% strongly agreed, while 12.4% agreed. On the other hand, 46.2% disagreed, while 17.8% strongly disagreed. It appears that majority of the respondents disagree with this assertion. This could mean that the legitimacy crisis, which the state experiences today, is due to other factors other than the issue of vote buying. Sani (2013) posits that the legitimacy crises in Nigeria is a result of past governments actions, inactions and policies which have no direct bearing or relevance to the peoples aspirations. Omojuwa (2013) also notes that the insensitivity of the government to the flight of the people is the major cause of the legitimacy crises in Nigeria. Therefore, vote buying cannot be said to wholly account for the legitimacy crises, which the Nigerian State is currently embroiled in.

Table 4 Respondent views on electoral laws and the electoral process

Statement	Degree of agreement				Total (%)	Chi-square (χ^2)	Statistical significance test $P = 0.05$ (95% level of confidence)	Remark
	Strongly agree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly disagree (%)				
21 There are electoral laws to regulate the use of money during campaigns	511 (50.5)	349 (34.2)	12 (1.2)	7 (0.7)	1,012 (100.0)	939.138 ^a	0.000	Significant
22 Electoral laws are weakly enforced during elections hence the indiscriminate use of money by politicians to advance their selfish interests	459 (45.4)	372 (36.8)	101 (10.0)	106 (10.5)	1,012 (100.0)	384.411 ^c	0.000	Significant
23 Politicians manipulate electoral laws to ensure their victory at elections	441 (43.6)	281 (27.8)	112 (11.1)	85 (8.4)	1,012 (100.0)	383.170 ^a	0.000	Significant
24 Electoral laws contain ambiguities which make implementation difficult	342 (33.8)	346 (34.2)	235 (23.2)	154 (15.2)	1,012 (100.0)	74.427 ^c	0.000	Significant
25 The political leadership covertly supports the poor enforcement of electoral laws	459 (45.4)	296 (29.2)	101 (9.9)	106 (10.5)	1,012 (100.0)	378.648 ^a	0.000	Significant
26 Electoral officers and party agents are influenced by the politicians to manipulate electoral outcomes in their favour	309 (30.5)	229 (22.6)	178 (17.6)	178 (17.6)	1,012 (100.0)	44.213 ^c	0.000	Significant

Note: Degree of freedom (df) = 3

Source: Field survey 2013

Table 5 Respondent views on the possible way forward in and the electoral process

Statement	Degree of agreement				Total (%)	Chi-square (χ^2)	Statistical significance test $p = 0.05$ (95% level of confidence)	Remark
	Strongly agree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly disagree (%)				
21 Strict enforcement of electoral laws will eliminate the indiscriminate use of money by politicians during electoral campaigns	501 (49.5)	343 (34.3)	131 (13.3)	25 (3.3)	1,012 (100.0)	614.838 ^a	0.000	Significant
22 There is need for purposive poverty alleviation measures in Nigeria to reduce voter's vulnerability to manipulation	501 (49.5)	373 (36.9)	114 (11.3)	24 (2.4)	1,012 (100.0)	583.660 ^c	0.000	Significant
23 Offenders or violators of the electoral laws should be brought to book to serve as deterrent to others	183 (18.1)	192 (19.0)	317 (31.3)	320 (31.6)	1,012 (100.0)	68.008 ^a	0.000	Significant

Note: Degree of freedom (df) = 3

Source: Field survey 2013

On the view that there are electoral laws to regulate the use of money during campaigns, 50.5% strongly agreed, while 47.6% agreed. On the other hand, 1.2% disagreed, while 0.7% strongly disagreed. In spite of this number, it is true that there are electoral laws in place to regulate the use of money in Nigerian politics especially during election campaigns. The electoral Act of 2006 in Nigeria's document regulating the conduct of election finance but this law is rarely strictly enforced.

Furthermore, on the view that electoral laws are weakly enforced during elections, here the indiscriminate use of money by politicians to advance their selfish interests: 45.4% strongly agreed, while 34.2% agreed. On the other hand, 10.0% disagreed, while 10.5% strongly disagreed. It may be stating the obvious that even those in power do not favour a strict implementation of electoral laws as this can militate against their success at the polls. They invariably support a weak implementation of electoral laws regarding campaign financing (Sani, 2013; Alfa, 2013; Omojuwa, 2013).

The respondents were requested to state their opinion on the view that politicians manipulate electoral laws to encourage their victory at election. A percentage of 43.6% strongly agreed while 36.8% agreed. On the other side of the divide, 11.1% disagreed, while 8.4% strongly disagreed. No Nigerian leader can honestly claim to have honestly been guided electoral laws especially on campaign financing (Fashakin, 2013). In this view, majority of Nigerian politicians are guilty on this aspect.

On the suggestion that strict enforcement of electoral laws will eliminate the indiscriminate use of money politicians during electoral campaign, 46.2% strongly agreed while 42.6% agreed. There were 7.0% which disagreed and 4.2%, which strongly disagreed. It may, however, be asserted that if electoral laws are strictly enforced especially aspects dealing with campaign financing will greatly be minimised and regulated.

Another suggestion is that there is need for purposive poverty alleviation measures in Nigeria to reduce voters' vulnerability to manipulation: 49.5% strongly agreed while 36.9% agreed with this suggestion. On the other hand 11.3% disagreed, while 2.45 strongly disagreed. Alfa (2013), Omojuwa (2013), and Sani (2013) all consent that purposive poverty alleviation measures are needed in order to correct the ugly trend in Nigerian politics.

On the suggestion that offenders or violators of the electoral laws should be brought to justice to serve as deterrent to others, 18.15 strongly agreed while 19.0% agreed. On the other hand, 31.3% disagreed, while 31.6% strongly disagreed. The opposition to this suggestion can be explained by the fact that such measures cannot discourage the practice in Nigeria, as Nigerian politicians are fearless and daring. This is why such a measure may not be effective in Nigeria. However, its implementation is not totally discarded.

5 Conclusions and policy recommendations

It is an indisputable fact that money plays a central role in the political process. It is critical to campaign financing and without money, an aspiring office holder may not go far in realising their goal. In view of this fact, every political system has clearly specified the limit to which aspiring political leaders can use money. While in the advanced democracies of the world, political laws in their campaign financing regulate aspirants, the situation in Nigeria appears to be in the contrary. While the country's electoral laws

clearly specify the amount of money that politicians can use in the campaign process, in practice however, politicians exceed their limits and expend far beyond what the electoral laws allows (Adetula, 2005; Esey, 2005)

This study has identified causal factors for the over bearing role of money in Nigerian politics like poverty, political money and money laundering. Candidates were not seen as being above the party. Abuse of office became noticeable with what politicians do with public funds. The African Continental Bank scandal and the indictment of some politicians by the Coker Commission of Inquiry signalled danger, as political leaders saw nothing wrong in diverting public funds for party financing (Kurfi, 2005). The 1964 federal election further confirmed the abuse of public office for party enrichment. All the parties in government misused their mandates.

During the Second Republic, virtually all the political parties used patronage to raise fund for their parties. Nigerians saw public officers jailed by the military tribunals that were set up in 1984. The Babangida/Abacha era introduced a new dimension to party funding. Individual candidates now operate parallel campaign office. The consequence is divided loyalty. Non-party card members now work in campaign offices of individual candidates, while party secretariats hold little or no influence in electioneering campaigns. Those who work in campaign offices are often rewarded well than party members, after the election. Non-implementation of party programme now characterised party politics, as candidates owe their elections and re-elections to factors other than their respective parties.

The trend today where sources of funding for parties and candidates campaigns cannot be tracked or recorded because of abuse and misuse has implications for election-related conflicts that may escalate into serious violence and threaten national security. The absence of party discipline in virtually all the existing political parties can be linked to the influence of money in party politics. Consider for instance the upsurge of campaign organisations for candidates spread across the country running parallel structures with political parties. This development has weakened party discipline as candidates see themselves as financers of their election, who just used the party as a platform to contest election.

The study of this paper presented the result of three research questions:

- 1 Can the use of money in politics and by politicians affect the credibility of elections and the electoral process in Nigeria?
- 2 Can the unregulated flow of money into the campaign process generate political violence in Nigeria?
- 3 Is vote buying a common practice in Nigerian electoral system?

First it was found out that the use of money by politicians to influence the outcomes of elections in their favour undermines the entire electoral process thereby making Nigeria's democracy a façade. It was also found out that the unregulated flow of money into the electoral process has in the recent past generated series of political violence in the country prominent among which is the ongoing Boko Haram crisis. Lastly, it was also pointed out that vote buying is a common practice in Nigeria today during elections, as politicians who are not sure of their chances of getting elected will go to extremes to bribe their way through.

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are suggested to be adopted in Nigerian Political system: the electoral process must be reformed to make access and participation possible for a broader spectrum of society and the use of political money must be controlled as unregulated flow and application of such money is a sign of irregularity, instability and insecurity, which pose serious risks for the overall development of the society. A corollary of this process of enhancing and enforcing the legal system would have noticeable impact to the effectiveness of foreign aid in countries with British legal systems, such as Nigeria (Wamboye et al., 2013).

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Appendix

Questionnaire

Section A: bio data

- 1 Sex: Male Female
- 2 Age: 18–23 24–29 30–35 36–40 40 and above
- 3 Marital status: Married Single Widowed
- 4 Number of children (if any): 1–5 6–10 10 and above
- 5 Educational qualification: Primary school leaving certificate
Senior school certificate Diploma/National certificate education
Higher national diploma/degree Masters and above
Others (indicate) _____
- 6 Occupation: Student Civil servant Security agent
Teacher Party agent INEC official
Businessman/woman Others (indicate) _____
- 7 Income per annum(in US dollars): \$700–\$1,700 \$1,701–\$3,300
\$3,301–\$5,000 \$5,001–\$7,000 \$7,001 and above

Section B: Poverty and the electoral process

- 8 There is a high level of poverty in Nigeria.
Agree Strongly agree Disagree Strongly disagree
- 9 Poverty plays a major role in voter behaviour in Nigeria.
Agree Strongly agree Disagree Strongly disagree
- 10 Poverty obliterates the outcomes of elections in Nigeria.
Agree Strongly agree Disagree Strongly disagree
- 11 Prevalent poverty in Nigeria enhances unregulated flow of money into the electoral process in Nigeria.
Agree Strongly agree Disagree Strongly disagree
- 12 Poverty creates an enabling environment for political corruption.
Agree Strongly agree Disagree Strongly disagree
- 13 Politicians reinforce poverty in Nigeria for their selfish political ends.
Agree Strongly agree Disagree Strongly disagree
- 14 Poverty undermines the credibility of Nigeria's electoral process.
Agree Strongly agree Disagree Strongly disagree

Section C: Vote buying and the electoral process

- 15 Vote buying is a common practice in the Nigerian electoral process.
Agree Strongly agree Disagree Strongly disagree
- 16 Vote buying discredits Nigeria's electoral process and ultimately democracy.
Agree Strongly agree Disagree Strongly disagree
- 17 Politicians use money to influence electoral outcomes in Nigeria.
Agree Strongly agree Disagree Strongly disagree

- 18 The unregulated use of money during campaigns accounts for election violence in Nigeria.
 Agree [] Strongly agree [] Disagree [] Strongly disagree []
- 19 The unregulated use of money by politicians in the electoral process reinforces political thuggery
 Agree [] Strongly agree [] Disagree [] Strongly disagree []
- 20 Vote buying generates the legitimacy crises in Nigeria.
 Agree [] Strongly agree [] Disagree [] Strongly disagree []

Section D: Electoral laws and the electoral process

- 21 There are electoral laws to regulate the use of money during campaigns.
 Agree [] Strongly agree [] Disagree [] Strongly disagree []
- 22 Electoral laws are weakly enforced during elections hence the indiscriminate use of money by politicians to advance their selfish interests:
 Agree [] Strongly agree [] Disagree [] Strongly disagree []
- 23 Politicians manipulate electoral laws to ensure their victory at elections:
 Agree [] Strongly agree [] Disagree [] Strongly disagree []
- 24 Electoral laws contain ambiguities, which make implementation difficult: Agree []
 Agree [] Strongly agree [] Disagree [] Strongly disagree []
- 25 The political leadership covertly supports the poor enforcement of electoral laws: Agree []
 Agree [] Strongly agree [] Disagree [] Strongly disagree []
- 26 Electoral officers and party agents are influenced by the politicians to manipulate electoral outcomes in their favour: Agree []
 Agree [] Strongly agree [] Disagree [] Strongly disagree []

Section E: The way forward

- 27 Strict enforcement of electoral laws will eliminate the indiscriminate use of money by politicians during electoral campaigns.
 Agree [] Strongly agree [] Disagree [] Strongly disagree []
- 28 There is need for purposive poverty alleviation measures in Nigeria to reduce voter's vulnerability to manipulation.
 Agree [] Strongly agree [] Disagree [] Strongly disagree []
- 29 Offenders or violators of the electoral laws should be brought to book to serve as deterrent to others.
 Agree [] Strongly agree [] Disagree [] Strongly disagree []
- 30 Freely suggest other measures which can be adopted to reduce the influence of money by Nigerian electoral process
