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mid-western Uganda



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Analysis of the quality of local council elections in Hoima city, mid-western Uganda

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Abstract

Purpose: The aim of this study was to discuss the quality of local council elections by exploring factors that influence vote buying and vote selling during electoral seasons in Uganda.

Methodology: A cross-sectional study aimed at promoting free, fair and credible local council elections in Hoima city. The study was conducted in one city ward that is part of Hoima City Cohort Study (HCCS). The HCCS is a population-based cohort that was identified for purposes of this study. A total of 28 registered voters, resident in four study areas were enrolled into the study. Data were collected on socio-econ-political related characteristics. A regression model was used to generate voting frequency as a measure of association for factors that were associated with voter bribery.

Findings: Results suggest that voter bribery was high; higher in men than in women. Less than half had participated in more than two previous local council elections while slightly more than half were taking part in the second election. After adjusting for potential and suspected confounder, the factors that were negatively associated with voter bribery were: greed, poverty, and expectations; political party/candidate influence and lack of self-control were positively associated with voter bribery. Since political party/candidate influence and lack of self-control were positively associated with voter bribery in the area of study, targeting those having exorbitant resources to tempt voters may help reduce voter bribery in this area.

Unique Contribution to Policy and Practice: The results of this study may be useful to policy and practice since they can facilitate managers of electoral management bodies as

well as political parties to evolve frameworks that can facilitate credible electoral processes.

Keywords: *Gift-taking bribery, political party, candidate, voter, expectation*

INTRODUCTION

Recent trends in electoral campaigns indicate a rise in political party and/or candidate expenditure in a number of African countries. However, countries such as Uganda continue to have a persistently high election expenditure partly attributed to strong preferences for voter-inducement. This study on voter bribery was nested in the continued demand for free, fair and credible local council elections within political party primary elections and during general local council elections. There is evidence to show that the quality of free, fair and credible local council elections is declining in the developed - and much of the developing world (Enders et al., 2021), although the trend in a number of developing countries, including those in sub-Saharan Africa, shows higher and/or increasing vote buying – and vote selling rates and other electoral-related challenges such as restricting competition, undercutting the opposition from effective mobilisation of their supporters as well as restricting election observation (Omondi, 2021). Globally, free, fair and credible local council elections declined since the 2000s to 2020s; in much of the developing world, the changes were even more dramatic over this period, from a credible election to contested election however, in SSA, the changes in the quality of local council elections were much smaller (Siegle & Cook, 2021). The quest for free, fair and credible local council elections, heavily entrenched into strong political preferences for swaying a voter together with low levels of voter education, seem to be driving forces for the high rates of vote buying in SSA. In support of this observation, a study conducted by the British broadcasting service (BBC) found that out of the 54 states in Africa, 15 are defective democracies while 16 are hard-line autocracies (Olewe, 2019).

Both defective democracies and hard-line autocracies are supposed by a crowd of legal instruments such as the public order management Act, communications Act, Preventive detention act, and stage play and entertainment rules, which have been used to arrest opposition leaders, block peaceful protests and opposition rallies, detain journalists compared to other countries, the number of court cases alleging vote buying in Africa with an average number of cases during the recent two decades. A study by Afrobarometer among 34 countries found that the number of Africans preferring to live in open and freer societies dropped from 72 percent in 2012 to 68 percent in 2019 (Olewe, 2019). A separate study by Afolabi (2017) found a dearth of interest paid to the ethical, moral and philosophical dimensions of the contribution of elections as a fundamental element of the process of democratisation given the number of uprisings and *coup de tats* witnessed in both North Africa and the Sahel region. In their study, Okolie et al., (2021) reveal that the

popular notion propagated by the western nations as regards expanding of liberal egalitarian values and principles as the remedy for economic success in the third world appears to be static for many nations. Also, the philosophy of ethno-linguistic propensity may crop in (Nkiru, Ikechukwu & Elijah, 2021). As a consequence, the practice of vote buying appear to be widespread in much of sub-Saharan Africa even though pegged on extensive poverty (Dickson, Danjuma & Juliet, 2019).

A study conducted among three countries Argentina, Brazil and Colombia, revealed that accepting a bribe was less tolerable in Argentina and most tolerable in Brazil (Hernandez & McGee, 2013). Further, females, elder people, the widowed, among others were more divergent to bribery than others. The study suggested that the less spiritual an individual was, the less opposition there was to bribery and that fit individuals were less opposed to bribery than the sickly individuals. It appears that accepting a bribe can necessitate overwhelming candid reaction and sustain the rationality of the 'honesty-humility' measure in envisaging ethical actions (Vranka & Bahnik, 2018). However, other results (such as García-Gallego et al 2020) suggest that transparency as well as answerability translate into lesser bribe exchange. From available studies, vote buying appears to be real especially given the mechanisms aimed to reinforce its agents (Eguia & Xefteris, 2021). In all these, vote buying is understood as ethically wrong (Umbers, 2018; Louis-Sidois & Musolff, 2020), as a consequence, a number of nations have moved to outlaw the practice, such as Brazil (Nichter, 2021). In the United States (Ulrich, Paolo & Michaela, 2019), vote buying has stretched beyond Federal and/or state or local council elections to the congress on legislative resolutions. In effect, the US campaign donations are observed to equate to vote buying albeit vote buying is prohibited as ambiguities in the campaign charities perpetuate vote buying (Prunty & Swatzenruber, 2017; Muñoz, 2018). In the case of Indonesia, the practice of vote buying, which allows contenders and their agents to hand out merchandises and/or cash to voters for their votes is popular (Tawakkal et al 2017).

A separate study by Kramon (2016), suggests that vote buying is largely successful in local council elections where machine politics are rare however, in recent days, countries with electronic voting have reported high incidences of vote buying. With the growing levels of technologies coupled with quest for power, politicians and parties have developed a sophisticated vote-buying scheme called Ekiti model (Amaechi & Stockemer, 2022); it allows parties to distribute money through party members to the voters at the bottom in connivance with staff at the polling stations as well as the security. In Kenya, Nigeria and Uganda, the proportion of voters who had taken a bribe was more than half of the

respondents interviewed while in Zimbabwe and Liberia, the statistics of voters had taken an election-related bribe and wanted to take more in future local council elections were not different. A study by Murugesan (2022) reveals that vote buying appears to manifest collectively, these findings suggest that bribe-taking remains high in a number of countries in SSA, thereby partly explaining the high rates of vote buying observed in these countries. This is higher compared to the continent's rating of 15% (Transparency international, 2019).

Vote buying and vote selling can be influenced by a number of factors that operate at the societal and individual levels. At the societal level, it is largely driven by the political setting in terms of how local council elections are administered and the quality of the playing field for participants (Rusinga, 2021). At the individual level, several factors have been associated with vote buying and vote selling including poverty, peer pressure, patronage, believing that a candidate will not serve the voter after local council elections and low or dearth of voter or civic education (Fitzgerald et al 2021; Manning & Edwards, 2014). However, although there is clear documentation of the factors influencing vote buying and vote selling in several countries, a number of studies have been conducted on the credibility of elections; few studies have explored vote buying and vote selling from a general perspective (Still & Dusi, 2020:103; Kakumba, 2020:2), including among voters or political parties. This presents a missed opportunity for understanding the factors that influence bribery among voters who have participated in more than one elections (Kramon, 2013:7).

Available studies indicate the latitude of the problem of vote buying and vote selling across a number of countries and some have sought practical and/or policy means to mitigating or reducing the incidence (Chen et al., 2020). In Indonesia, during the 2014 general elections, vote buying and vote selling practices involved up to 33% of the voters suggesting approximately 62 million of the 187 million registered voters were targets of vote buying thus making Indonesia the third after Uganda and Benin (Muhtadi, 2018). This study explores the determinants of vote buying and vote selling among voters or political parties in a study that was conducted in Hoima city, mid-western Uganda.

METHODOLOGY

Study design

This study was a cross-sectional study aimed at promoting free, fair and credible local council elections in Hoima city, Uganda. Details about free, fair and credible local council elections have been reported elsewhere.

Study site

The study was conducted in one city ward that is part of Hoima City Cohort Study (HCCS). The HCCS is a population-based cohort that was identified for purposes of this study. The cohort consisted of 28 purposely selected respondents aged between 24 and 56 years. Prior to data collection, the 28 respondents were clustered into three groups, namely; the youths (24 – 35 years), middle-aged (36-45 years) and the aging (46-56 years). Each sub-group had at least 8 respondents and everyone took part in the study. The selected ward is Kasingo.

Study context

The majority of the population in Hoima city belongs to the Banyoro ethnic group (Banyoro, n.d). Thus, the descent cultural heritage of the Banyoro is peace where communities realised that after a deliberate massacre of Banyoro population committed by the British colonialists in collaboration with Baganda leaders with the aim of bringing the then powerful king of Bunyoro Kingdom, Kabalega to his, following his refusal to cooperate with them, led to a complete demise of much of the Banyoro citizens prior to full colonialization of Bunyoro. Similar to other former colonies in Africa, in Hoima, peace ensures societal continuity and sustainable development. Citizens are expected to cooperate in choosing who their leadership should be without having to fight one another or undergoing any form of subjugation or undue influence of some sort. Without much development, compared to other regions in the country, mid-western sub-region have, since 1980s, relentlessly supported peaceful and credible local council elections that are devoid of inducement as a way of minimising cases of non-performing leaders entering into elective offices.

In Hoima, credible and peaceful local council elections are part of respective norms. In a qualitative study conducted to explore how the behaviour of candidates and/or political parties, during local council elections, shape the outcome of an election. A study by Blattman et al. (2019:2) found that vote buying and vote selling had become “an accepted norm” during elections in Uganda, in the name of “voter facilitation” in terms of transport and lunch refund. Evidence from other studies suggests that, while giving out – and/or receiving money and/or other gifts to individual – or a group of voters in political polls is considered flawed and unlawful in a number of contemporary liberal democracies, it remains exceedingly rife in several democracies and continues to affect the quality of otherwise credible elections (Mochtak, Lesschaeve & Glaurdić, 2021:1424). As a consequence, this study on inducement of voters, by candidates and/or political parties,

was conducted in an area where direct and indirect expenditure on polls is part of general expectations among those who participate in local council elections; whether as voters or as candidates.

Study population

The study was conducted among 28 active voters, who are either registered with a political party or not resident in the area of study.

Data collection procedures

Data were collected on socio-demographic aspects (highest level of education, religious affiliation, age-bracket and voting experience); bribery-related characteristics (whether one has received a bribe before and willingness to accept; initiation of the bribery process (whether the idea was initiated by the voter or candidate/political party) and attitude towards vote buying (positive, negative, moderate) were all collected from the respondents. Every respondent had their data analysed to ascertain factors influencing vote buying. Data collection took place between September 4 and October 18, 2021.

Measurement of variables

The primary outcome of the study was voter-bribery; it was defined as any form of direct or indirect inducement exchanged between the candidate/political party and the voter before or during local council elections. Initially, respondents were asked if they had received or tempted to receive any form of inducement to which they responded in the affirmative. These respondents were then asked if they took part in influencing another voter in the past or if they were willing to receive or influence a colleague to receive an election bribe. The question on whether or not individuals received a bribe to vote for a particular candidate during an election or would receive a bribe to vote in favour of a candidate in future regardless of whether that candidate was a performer or not. To determine vote bribery, we combined bribe-giving committed by those who offer bribes and bribe-taking committed by those who receive the bribe. Thus, the term vote buying and vote selling as used in this paper encompass both bribe-giving and bribe-taking. We further used the term 'permissive election expenditure' to refer to the amount of resources that candidates and political parties would need to facilitate the electoral activities – after responding to the question: 'if you could go back to the election period, how much resources would you require to facilitate the process without having to give out any form of donation to the voters?' We defined 'election expenditure' as the amount of resources that a political party and/or candidate plans to spend throughout the period of local council

elections.

Data analysis

A descriptive analysis was used to assess the characteristics of voters or political parties enrolled into the study and used inferential statistics to ascertain the determinants of voter-bribery in Hoima city. At the bivariate analysis, the association between voter-bribery and each of the independent correlates, namely socio-demographic, behavioural and gift-taking characteristics, and all variables with a p-value <0.05 namely sex, education, age-group, previous experience of voting, whether or not an individual received a bribe, and ever receive electoral bribes were all considered for the multivariable model. A modified Poisson regression model with a log link to assess the factors that were independently associated with voter-bribery after adjusting for clustering at community level. A p-value of less than 0.05 was considered significant at the multivariable analysis level. Analysis was conducted using STATA statistical software version 14.0.

RESULTS

Demographic characteristics of the respondents

Overall, we interviewed 28 respondents for this study; 61% (n=17) of whom were male and the rest (39%; n=11) were female. Fifty-two percent of males and 78% of women were aged between 18 and 40 years (mean age: 34.2 years (SD: ± 4.5) for males and 31.6 years (SD: ± 4.7) for females. Women were three years younger than men: (64.3%, n=18) of women had participated in at least two or more of the previous local council elections compared to (57.1%, n=16) of the men who had participated in at least two or more of the previous local council elections at that age. Forty-four percent of the respondents had been registered voters for fifteen or more years. Approximately, more than half of the respondents (53.6%, n=15) had attained elementary education; 21.4% (n=6) had attained post-primary education; 17.9% (n=5) had attained tertiary education or more while the remaining (14.3%, n=4) had no formal education at all. Majority of the respondents (89.3%, n=25) ascribed to the Christian faith (comprising Anglican protestant, catholic, seventh day Adventist, and Pentecostal) with lower proportions for non-Christians (3.6%, n=1) and freethinker (7.1%, n=2) respectively.

We found balanced proportions of men and women ascribing to each of the three faith, that is, Christian (men; 64.5%, women; 66.2%), non-Christian (men; 28.2%, women; 30.4%) and freethinker (men; 7.3%; women; 3.6%). Majority of the respondents (52.6%) were engaged in formal marriages while 38.5% were living in informal marriage and the

remaining were unmarried (8.9%). Nonetheless, women were 2.5 times more likely to report being married than men. On the other hand, about 64.3% (n=18) reported a perfect election having some form of gifts being exchanged between a candidate or political party and a voter; with a higher percentage of men 53.6%, n=15) than women (46.4%, n=13) reporting this trend. Also, the section of respondents who reported money-oriented election was higher in men (42.9%, n=12) than in women (35.7%, n=10). It was established that 64.3% (n=18) of the respondents accepted had some form of gift from candidates or political parties during past local council elections, with slightly more than one quarter of the women (28.16%, n=8) reporting that they had accepted an election-linked gift in the past local council elections. Ever asked an election-linked gift was high with 75.0% (n=21) reporting that they had ever asked for any election-linked gift during the campaign days. A higher proportion of men (96.4%, n=27) reported that they had ever asked for an election-linked gift than women (67.9%, n=19).

Vote buying-related characteristics

Of the 28 respondents, 82.1% (n=23) stated that they had received some form of election-related gift while 17.9% (n=5) reported that they had never received any from election-related gift at all. Generally, voter bribery was significantly higher among men than women (63.2% vs. 58.6%, $P=0.003$). Nonetheless, when vote buying and vote selling statuses were analysed by location, the incidence of voter-bribery was higher among rural-based voters than among the urban-based voters. For example, among peri-urban based male/female voters, 67.9% (n=19) of male voters and 64.3% (n=18) of female voters respectively would accept a bribe compared to 53.6% (n=15) of males and 53.6% (n=15) of females among urban-based voters would accept a bribe ($P < 0.0001$). Correspondingly, among Christian men/women, 78.6% (n=22) of male voter would sell accept a bribe compared to 60.7% (n=17) among Muslims ($P=0.15$). Generally, 60.7% (n=17) of both male voters and female voters would accept a bribe to cast a vote in favour of a particular candidate or political party; this bribery was higher in male (71.4%, n=20) than female (57.1%, n=16). Majority of those who desired bribe (78.6%, n=22) desired it for presidential, parliamentary and higher local government elections while the rest (21.4%, n=6) desired a bribe from whatever elective office, that is, presidential, parliamentary, and local government councils.

When we asked respondents to choose between monetary election-related bribes and non-monetary election-related bribes, 64.3% (n=18) preferred monetary election-related bribes as opposed to 32.1% (n=9) who preferred non-monetary election-related bribes. Nevertheless, when the outcome were grouped according to sex, three in five females

(57.1%, n=16) reported that the election-related bribe should be monetary while three in four males (78.6%, n=22) reported that it should be monetary in nature. We further found that majority of the respondents acknowledged that they had ever talked over an election-related bribe with a candidate or candidate's agent; with a greater fraction of male (71.4%, n=20) than female (60.7%, n=17) acknowledging that they did it. A great number of those who ever discussed bribe-taking issues did so with a candidate's agent (92.8%, n=26). Males (89.3%, n=25) were less likely to acknowledge arguing election-related bribe issues with a candidate or a candidate's agent than women (82.1%, n=23); $P=0.0001$). When inquired about the result of the dialogue, 71.4% (n=20) noted that they reached an informal agreement on the amount of bribe they wanted; with a higher fraction of males (89.3%, n=25) than female (71.4%, n=20) acknowledging that they ever agreed on the amount of bribe to be offered.

Effect of local poverty prevalence on voter bribery

We established that voter bribery was significantly lower among voters who earn higher incomes (42.8%, n=12) compared to those earning low incomes (85.7%, n=24; $P=0.02$). Though, when the outcomes were adjusted for potential confounder, it was established that a significant difference existed in voter bribery between low income earners (adjusted prevalence ratio =1.01, 95% CI).

Factors promoting vote buying in local councils

At the bivariate analysis, the factors that were negatively associated with vote buying or vote selling were recurrent level of income, tightness of an election, degree of competition, partisan status, and level of education achievement. To the contrary, we found that the factors that were positively associated with vote buying or vote selling were defaulting on campaign assurances, resilient electoral rivalry, extraordinary policy issues, level of prominence put on democracy, and voter expectations. After adjusting for potential and suspected confounders, the factors that were negatively associated with voter bribery were level of income (aPR = 0.83, 95% CI: 0.76, 0.87); level of education (aPR = 0.64, 95% CI: 0.61, 0.72); age (aPR = 0.87, 95% CI: 0.79, 0.98) and degree of civic awareness (aPR = 0.85, 95% CI: 0.76, 0.96). Nonetheless, other studies (such as Canare, Mendoza & Lopez, 2018) show that voter bribery is universal among both rich and the poor where the poor are offered less money and goods while the rich are offered more money and goods. Even so, the low income and the unemployed are seen to be more economically vulnerable (Schaffer, 2002) to receive offers than their counterparts.

On the contrary, the factors that were positively associated with voter bribery were: not being interested in voting (aPR =4.33, 95% CI: 3.49, 5.39); being detached from the campaign excitement (aPR = 1.19, 95% CI: 1.06, 1.34); and being too busy to be affected by the campaign fever (aPR = 1.20, 95% CI: 1.10, 1.45). There was no significant difference in voter bribery between those who participated in the past local council elections (aPR = 0.96, 95% CI: 0.86, 1.09) and those who were participating in local council elections for the first time (aPR = 1.08, 95% CI: 0.97, 1.42). Similarly, there was no significant difference in voter bribery between registered voters and non-registered voters (aPR = 1.09, 95% CI: 0.96, 1.24).

Impact of vote buying

First, obtainable studies (such as Ezeador & Ezeani, 2021) suggest that giving out money, merchandises or amenities to persuade voters to choose a specific nominee relegates the voting public to voting for wrong candidates whose agenda is not for the collective benefit of all citizens save for misappropriating community resources for their self-seeking benefit. Second, choosing a candidate because he/she has offered money is a sign of irresponsibility, is morally inappropriate since it is comparable to marketing one's right to choose or marketing one's values or being forcefully required to choose in a certain manner (Schaffer, 2002). Third, election gifts appear to be positive in yielding high voter turn-ups seeing the significant statistical association between vote buying and voter turnouts (Muhtadi, 2019). Fourth, vote buying yields election backing for the party or candidate giving out gifts even if its consequence appears to be narrow to approximately 10% of the overall voting group. Fifth, whilst the consequence of vote buying on election results appears inconsequential, we found a slight swing in ballots can create an enormous change for a party or contestant, this can be the variance between victory and losing in a reasonable vote.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

This study of voter bribery in Hoima city, Uganda, established that seventy percent of the candidates bribed voters. The observed voter bribery appeared higher than what has been reported in a number of studies but closer to voter reports on voter bribery reported in Uganda. The higher voter bribery in this population could be, in part, described by the fact that a good number of respondents (58% of male and 61% of female were below the age of 45 years) and were as a consequence prone to exploitation through bribery) and in part resulting from the fact that a good number of voters (especially the youths below 35years) were voting on the basis of unemployment and dearth of economic opportunities.

Nonetheless, high voter bribery linked to recurrent defaulting on campaign assurances, resilient electoral rivalry, as well as extraordinary policy issues postulated by Keefer and Vlaicu (2017) did not appear to be central in the area of study. Instead, the recurrent defaulting and stumpy party aptitude, which would have lessened campaign assurances did not translate into vote buying neither was there any indication of being bankrolled using public funds as one of the incumbents decided not to offer himself for candidature.

The factors that were significantly associated with an increased level of voter bribery were: level of income, level of education and degree of civic awareness. Not being interested in voting, being detached from the campaign excitement, and being too busy to be affected by the campaign fever were linked to less voter bribery. The outcome that being poor was positively linked with vote bribery is in direct consonance with previous findings on this subject (Canera, Mendoza, & Lopez, 2018; Jensen & Justesen, 2014) and is consistent with the belief expressed by 45% of the respondents, that low income earners are prone to vote bribery. Studies suggest that vote buying among the poor is very common though with variations regarding the type of vote buying it is also predominant in tight local council elections but vote buying using non-monetary offers is more common when there is a clear winner even before the local council elections are held. Also, studies suggest that poor electorates are considerably more probable to be besieged for vote buying than are their more affluent counterparts; also when local council elections are highly competitive, the magnitude of vote buying increases proportionately. This notion was in support of a survey-based evidence from Africa which suggested that poor electorates were more probable to be besieged for vote buying than are their more affluent counterparts (Jensen & Justesen, 2014).

Likewise, studies show that males tend to be bribed more to have their vote casted in favour of a particular candidate or political party which corresponds with the conclusion that males were significantly more likely to be bribed to have their vote than females. In addition, a study by Canera, Mendoza and Lopez (2018) explicitly noted that vote buying among the poor was very common in spite of some notable variations regarding the type of vote buying; and the vice was found to be predominant in tight local council elections but vote buying using non-monetary offers is more common when there is a clear winner even before the local council elections are held. Nevertheless, since having a partner who received a bribe can raise the odds of having an affiliation to the decision made by the bribed taker, this study suggests a need for partners to disassociate each other when taking the ultimate decision over who to cast a vote in favour.

The idea that voters who have never had the opportunity of being bribed were not prone to vote bribery compared to their counterparts, was not surprising given that there is data suggesting the behaviour of a voter during election times. The link between a real and a bribed voter can be an honest one: if the real voter desired to take an election-related bribe, it means that vote bribery can rise to equal with the greater number of valid candidates. In consequence, the outcomes yields inferences for voter bribery practices and advocates a need to focus on the voter who has not reached the voting age as well as the unregistered individuals of voting age so as to guarantee that those who have never received a bribe cannot be bribed and do not accept election-related bribes. Connected to the real voter is the actual prospect of voters coupled with higher youth unemployment. Studies (such as Oueghlissi & Derbali, 2021:19) have suggested an increasing level of voter bribery among the unemployed youths. For example, findings from previous studies (e.g. Mkombe et al., 2021) appear to suggest that the proportion of youths who are not engaged in gainful employment, in regions such as Southern African development community, increased sporadically.

It was established that having participated in more than two local council elections and having received an election-related bribe in each of them was considerably linked with less probability to repel a bribe in future local council elections. Nonetheless, there was no substantial variance in voter bribery between those who had received a bribe in previous three or more local council elections equated to those who had partaken in one or two local council elections and received a bribe during each. This outcome was, perhaps, expounded by the observation that, in the study area, approximately four in five (48.6%) of the respondents received a bribe as a consequence of shortage of means to survive. In order to mitigate voter bribery, this study advocates for programmes that encourage wealth creation among communities lacking visibly defined means of subsistence thus concurring with the findings of Jensen and Justesen (2014) who found that when local council elections are highly competitive, the magnitude of vote buying increases proportionately.

We further established that individuals lacking awareness about their rights, as voters, were more likely to receive a bribe an issue that was consistent with other studies that found high voter bribery among voters with low civic awareness. But it appears that stakeholders focus more on civic education packages and structures as activities premeditated to encourage citizen participation in electoral programmes. On the contrary, the outcomes show a sharp disparity with outcomes of other studies that have established higher voter bribery among voters with low voter education, predominantly those lacking access to the key mass media

(Wijaya, Sukarddani & Okyariyanda, 2021). This is so because, voter education empowers the voters with essential info that facilitates them to choose the candidate or political party of their interest (Oduola, Hassan & Sawaneh, 2020). These conflicting outcomes appear to advocate that other elements outside a voter's level of civic awareness or the conviction that a voter would necessitate an election-related bribe. Consequently, involvements designed to mitigate voter bribery should incorporate elements that emphasise some of these determinants to back voters to make cognisant, reasonable electoral choices.

We established that having elementary education was positively linked to voter bribery at the bivariate scrutiny, signifying that greater levels of education were linked to lower levels of voter bribery. These outcomes diverge from earlier results on this question that higher education is linked to lower voter bribery. When these outcomes were adjusted for possible muddlers, we found that having post-primary instead of elementary education was positively linked to lesser voter bribery. Having lower levels of voter bribery amongst individuals with post-primary education than those with elementary or no formal education was indicative of the fact that levels of education were positively associated with voter bribery. We noted that voter bribers did not vary between those with elementary education and/or no formal education and those with post-primary education. In spite of this, a study conducted in Vietnam by Anh Nguyen and Canh Le (2022:42) found the highly educated people, the deprived, and the jobless being unlikely to offer bribes.

CONCLUSION

Our study on vote buying and vote selling among voters and candidates revealed that seven in every ten voters bribed to be willing to buy or sell a vote in future local council elections. Having not partaken a bribe, being male or female and having primary level of education were positively associated with vote buying or vote selling in the study area. However, greed, poverty, and expectations; political party/candidate influence and lack of self-control were positively associated with voter bribery. Our findings suggest that since political party/candidate influence and lack of self-control were positively associated with voter bribery in the area of study, there is need to target those candidates and/or political parties having exorbitant resources to tempt voters may help reduce voter bribery in this area.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From this study, we encourage:

- a) Espousal of a just political playing field for all candidates and/or political parties be guaranteed at each poll and at all levels.

- b) Widening both the community and partisan conditions with a view of guaranteeing meaningful community participation.
- c) Encouraging both respect to permissive laws as well as answerability for any form of election abuse.
- d) Guaranteeing that every electoral data situation remains exposed while encouraging appropriate means to handling deception and propaganda.
- e) Encouraging strategies to shape national institutions especially the Courts of law and the Electoral management body.
- f) Enhance the openings for vigorous citizen involvement through both the civil society and poll observers in the entire election process. And
- g) Maintain backing for activities at local, regional and international poll observation.

Limitations of the Study

This study had a number of limitations. While voter bribery can be stimulated by a number of factors, and there is proof that the stimulants are swelling in Hoima city, this study did not gather information on every stimulant of voter bribery; consequently, mitigating the consequence of all factors on voter bribery. But, ever since the study population involved several groups of voters, the outcomes can offer a broad consideration on voter bribery at the local level. The additional limitation was that elements were not appraised as a percentage of the target group but depended on a lesser fraction that was obtainable to the authors. To end with, the researcher's dearth of ability to gather statistics on existing approaches of voter bribery was a central constraint, seeing that these approaches appear to become more sophisticated each subsequent election season. Nevertheless, seeing the low levels of information science technologies in Uganda, and the fact that voter confidence tends to reduce with increased voter bribery, we decided that voter bribery witnessed in the area of study mirrors a representative image of levels of voter bribery in this urbanising population.

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