

# Impact of Money on Nigerian Politics: Exploring the General Elections in the Fourth Republic

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**Abstract** - Money has been influential in determining the outcome of elections in almost all democratic regimes in the world. Developing democracies like that of Nigeria in particular witnessed the incidence of money being used openly during elections to secure victory by politicians. The problem is money politics or the excessive use of money in the electoral process leads to the emergence of selfish leaders who used the proceeds of power to enrich themselves and personalize public property for their own private advantage. This paper seeks to explore the causes and manifestations of money politics in Nigeria and also to examine the impact of money politics on General Elections in Nigeria during the Fourth Republic (1999-2015). The methodology used is qualitative method of data collection and analysis where some informants with an experience and classified information on the subject matter were consulted for interview and other primary documents in addition to secondary sources. The data obtained was interpreted for analysis and findings. The paper discovered that there was heavy use of money during General Elections and the outcome was affected by such brazen act given undue advantage to politicians who have the means to buy their way into power. Thus, the paper concludes that until the regulatory agencies responsible for monitoring of elections and sanctioning of offenders improve their efforts in minimizing excessive use of money in Nigeria's politics, it will continue to produce incompetent leaders and this will lead to bad governance and abuse of power as well as misuse of national resources for private gain.

**Keywords:** Money; Politics; Impact; Elections; Vote.

## INTRODUCTION

Democracy is a system of government which requires a periodic election as agreed and set by the national laws of a given country that operates such system to enable for a peaceful transfer of power from one legitimate government to another. In doing so,

politicians and political parties embark on an expensive venture of campaigning and other political activities which require massive cash backing and expenditure. This led to the emergence of money politics. The correlation between money and politics is very strong with influence on democratic rule specifically developing democracies like that of Nigeria. In Nigeria, sponsoring a candidate or a given political party either by the contestant himself or godfathers is a lucrative venture with a promising turnover. <sup>[1]</sup> Political parties and politicians have the sole purpose of electoral victory and winning power in a democratic contest which made them to utilize all their financial and human resources possession in achieving their goal including the excessive use of money both legally and illegally in the entire democratic process [2].

The politics of money determines who secure elective office and who have access to power in Nigeria's General Elections. A group of sponsors called godfathers financed their anointed candidates called godsons in order to have access to corridors of power indirectly and control the government in power for lucrative contracts, kickbacks, juicy appointments and nepotism. Indeed, the impact of money on Nigerian politics totally subverts the electoral process swinging the pendulum towards the highest bidder. Indeed, one cannot attempt at contesting any elective office without being wealthy enough or having the cash back off of influential rich godfathers who will sponsor his campaign and electoral activities. The scenario above made Nigerian democracy and politics a faltering one influenced and determined by money [3].

Money politics in Nigeria was caused by many factors such as desperateness to win at all cost, political competition by elites, parties and godfathers to secure victory for wealth accumulation, high level of ignorance and low level of political socialisation in addition to political culture in Nigeria which gives merit to moneybags politics instead of integrity or performance. Money politics has many implications or impacts such as vote buying, rigging of elections,

political thuggery, election malpractices and irregularities, poor service delivery in office by political office holders and poor socioeconomic and political development.

Against this background, this paper is an empirical field work research as part of PhD thesis conducted to explore from the field how money influence Nigerian politics and its impact on General Elections in the Fourth Republic. There are numerous works in this area but, this paper contributes to the existing knowledge in the field by looking at the literature gap and the methodological approach in the subject matter of study and fills it. Most of the literatures consulted in the area studied previous General Elections and how they are influenced by money using secondary method of data collection and analysis. This work used primary method of data collection sourcing of information from the field and also it updates the existing knowledge on impacts of money politics in Nigeria's Fourth Republic up to 2015 General Elections which receives less attention from scholars.

#### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The study set to explore the causes and manifestations of money politics in Nigeria and examine the impact of money politics on General Elections in Nigeria during the Fourth Republic (1999-2015).

#### **METHODS**

The paper used qualitative method of data collection and analysis. Qualitative data collection is the use a systematic style and a paradigm for gathering of information from both the primary and secondary sources. Qualitative data was obtained from words, information, official documents, maps, signs and other data that can be used and interpreted in a given area or subject matter of study to reflect a meaning and new knowledge.<sup>[4]</sup> Qualitative method of data collection and analysis is a paradigm of research where a little rich data is obtained from various sources and grouped into a specific means such as coding for meaning extraction, analysis, interpretations and findings.<sup>[5]</sup>

The data was collected from both primary and secondary sources for this research. The primary sources include an interview with five (5) different categories of individuals that are connected with the area of study. Category A is politician and six of them were interviewed; category B is party stakeholders where four of them were consulted; category C is three senior officials from Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC); category D is Academicians with

three of them interviewed and category E is the members of Civil Society Organisations in Abuja Nigeria. Other primary source is the documented materials from government publications and reports from international agencies such as United States Agency for International Development (USAID), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), International Federation for Electoral System (IFES), National Democratic Institute (NDI), International Republican Institute (IRI) and many others. The secondary source is the use of available sources including books, journals, reports and internet sources on the subject matter of study.

The data was collected under confidential agreement between the researcher and his informants. The informants were hinted on the nature of the research and that the data obtained is for a research of this nature and would be published in an open access journal but, their identities and personal details would be withheld for privacy purpose. However, the information provided by the participants was used verbatim where applicable without referring to the names of the informants.

Content analysis was used in the data analysis where the information obtained was grouped into themes and sub-themes for analysis, interpretations and findings. Content analysis was used to make thematic analytic interpretations of the interview to explain the data and the meaning out of it as well as the interpretation. The discussions led to findings that made the authors to reach a conclusion and suggestion for an improvement for the policymakers and scholars in the field for future endeavours.

#### **Theoretical Framework**

The Rational Choice Theory of Election was adopted and used for this work. The origin, basic assumptions, weakness and applicability of the theory within the context of this work were discussed in this section.

The Rational Choice Theory of voters originated from the field of Economic on the notion of rational choice of consumer theory or behaviour in determining how to efficiently use the scarce resources at hand for a better choice and satisfaction. Anthony Downs in 1957 coined the term "An Economic Theory of Democracy" which later became commonly known as "Rational Choice Theory of Democracy". The theory was later advanced by Kenneth Arrow in 1986.

One of the major assumptions of Rational Choice Theory is; the identification of electoral behaviour as the major determinants of rational choice among the

electorates. Economic indicators, resources allocation and goods and services distribution are related with aftermath of political choice in an election.<sup>[6]</sup> It is assumed that if rational choice can explain clearly the market in the society, then it can effectively explain the political functioning specifically the election. A similar relationship was established between the consumers of goods and services and voters and between the enterprises and political parties and politicians. The notion is; while corporations seek to maximise profits, consumers seek to maximise utility and it is the same with voters who seek to maximise the utility of their votes as the parties seek to maximise electoral benefits from power control and public resources [7].

The Rational Choice Theory is built on two major dimensions; evaluative and non-evaluative. The evaluative dimension is anchored on the premise that, voters' evaluation of regime's performance and their satisfaction determines their votes in the election. The non-evaluative is on the ground that, clientelistic considerations such as patronage, ethnic ties, family kinship and personal benefit accrued to the voter for voting a particular candidate either in cash or kind and instantly or later [8].

The major weakness of this theory is its assumption that voters are rational and that there is rationality in their choice. Most often times, in Nigerian context, they collected money or items and vote for a candidate who pays higher irrespective of the credibility of the one with less money to buy their votes. Also, the assumption that domestic political system is constant just the way the market environment in consumer theory is constant is faulty. There might be circumstances and changes that can alter the rationality or choice of a candidate by voters.

However, despite the weaknesses above, the Rational Theory of Election is a good explanation of voting behaviour and Nigerian politics particularly election. The electorates vote for their democratic leaders based on who paid his way into power with money. Issues such as vote buying, offering of food items, clothes and other material benefit tend to occur on election day and those who offered such materials and cash better than their counterparts win the election. This means the voters in Nigeria are rational with their pockets and stomach just like consumers of a product while the politicians are rational with their resources or investment just like corporations. The politicians pay while the voters sell their votes for those who will pay better.

## Literature Review

In this section, issues related to money politics and elections are discussed using thematic style drawing from scholastic views and existing knowledge on the subject for a proper filling of the research gap.

### Money Politics

Money politics is evidence in Nigeria today through vote buying and godfatherism are applied regularly to portray the dubious electoral behaviour of politicians, political parties, voters and electoral officials. These dubious activities involve godfathers' money bags and incumbents using security personnel to harass voters and subvert the electoral process. Money politics is fast becoming highly influential undermining the political process determining who participates and acquire power in Nigerian politics. Vote buying had been reported in all the previous elections in Nigeria's Fourth Republic from 1999 to 2015 [9].

Money is an important ingredient for democracy because much of the activities in democracy cannot simply occur without it. Political finance is one of the scandalous means of the excessive use of money for electoral purpose because money is raised and used from disreputable and other illicit means by politicians in return for contracts and other favours. Political financing can lead to criminal activities and corruption from the part of the politicians in developing democracies like that of Nigeria where the mechanisms for enforcement of legal regime is very weak [10].

Money politics escalates the cost of campaign and elections in Nigeria rendering the elections less credible and faulty in their process. This has been proven by many studies for instance, a survey conducted on 2003 General Elections in Nigeria indicated that only 9 % agreed that the election was free and fair, 41 % disagreed that the election was fair while 22 % believed that there were massive irregularities and use of money to subvert the entire process of the election. Vote buying was reported in all the elections and that phenomenon contributed influentially in weakening the confidence of the electorates in the system [3].

Political finance is influenced by, and influences, relations between parties, politicians, party membership and the electorates. Money matters for democracy because much of democratic political activity simply could not occur without it. Political finance is at the heart of debate for political corruption. It is occurring through illegal political financing which is the informal political finance system to legal contributions from disreputable sources or acceptance of money in return for favours. Political finance

scandals might initially consist of simple criminality by politicians, or may be more overtly concerned with corruption in political finance. All these corrupt practices occurred in countries like Nigeria as a result of weak enforcement of legal regime. <sup>[11]</sup>

The link between party financing and corruption are so essential to the extent that, neglecting party financing is simply to allow for corrupt practices indirectly, in addition to the betrayal of public trust and the escalating cost of politics in Nigeria. This has been proved in a survey of 2003 elections in Nigeria where only 9 % believed the elections was free and fair, 41 % believed the elections were not fair and credible with 22 % agreeing that there were much irregularities in the elections. Vote buying has been reported in all the elections held so far in the Fourth Republic. Vote buying has contributed significantly to the lack of confidence among Nigerians in the electoral system [11].

Party politics in Nigeria has been devoid of ideology as it is dominated by money politics where the sources of funding for the parties and campaign finances for the candidates and how they are spent cannot be traced. <sup>[12]</sup> Money politics creates political corruption and political corruption causes a serious development challenge for Nigeria. It subverts democracy and good governance politically; it distorts election and electoral process leading to poor representation and misgovernance. Election results do not determine the performance of electoral officers because of the influence of money politics through buying of vote. The use of money proved very effective in securing political offices for politicians making the incentive for corrupt practices higher [13].

Political parties have been found in the Fourth Republic to have spent billions of Naira during elections not specifically for campaign purposes but for outright bribery and vote buying. The electoral body; INEC is a contributory factor in money politics and subversion of elections with many of its officials engaging in corrupt malpractices where they are being bribed by politicians to connive with certain political parties and their candidates in altering the result in their favour as against the wish of the electorates [14].

Money politics sidelined women from participating actively in Nigerian elections because one needs a huge financial muscle or backing godfathers and few of them can afford such financial strength or the effrontery to secure back up from godfathers [15]. Political violence emanated from money politics with politicians sponsoring political thugs to intimidate opposition and voters in order to secure victory at all cost. <sup>[16]</sup> Thus,

money politics has many evils in Nigerian politics and elections yet; contemporarily it is so influential in determining who wins the election to the extent that it can be done away with immediately.

Political parties have spent billions of Naira not merely on campaigns but in outright bribery and buying of votes. The electoral body is contributory in this aspect as the INEC is found to have conducted elections that were marred in shambles and series of litigations in previous years because of lack of financial independence and corruption from parts of some of the INEC officials who accept bribes from politicians and manipulate the elections results. All these are; of course, the influence of the massive and unregulated use of money in Nigerian politics [16].

### **Causes of Money Politics in Nigeria**

Political parties and politicians sometimes or most of the times seek to acquire power as their ultimate aim of venturing into politics and therefore, they can employ all their available financial materials and other logistics such as human resources and political strategy in order to achieve their set target. In the process, money politics occur because they incessantly spend in order to win against their opponents. <sup>[2]</sup> The above scenario is quite obtainable in Nigerian context where it has been witnessed in the Fourth Republic the naked unprecedented use of money during elections by politicians and their parties in order to win.

The purpose of establishing political parties is to recruit, articulate and aggregate interest in addition to the promotion of ideology but, in Nigeria, parties pay much attention to capturing power at all cost without any presentable ideology. The ideology, manifesto and role of parties especially in the Fourth Republic are all about the personal ambition of godfathers and founding fathers of political parties who sponsor politicians with their money in order to repatriate profit after acquiring power. This led to the emergence of money politics because only those who are financially buoyant could establish parties and sponsor candidates for elective offices [17].

One of the major causes of money politics in Nigeria is the nature of Nigeria's political arrangement. Nigeria is a Federal state with three tiers of governments including Federal, State and Local governments. Thus, the Federal Government emerged stronger at the centre and wields enormous powers against the other tiers. This, made competitive politics for securing control at the centre heavily expensive and costly turning Nigerian politics into a monetary venture [18].

The inability of the electoral body; INEC to monitor political parties and politicians in terms of their campaign expenditure is another reason why money politics emanated and grow stronger in Nigeria where today money influences and determines who contest for a given position or who win a given position during election.<sup>[19]</sup>

### **Impact of Money on Nigerian Politics**

Money politics gives undue advantage to some politicians who have access to power or corridors of power because they can siphon from the public funds and buy their way back to power irrespective of their performances in offices. The sponsorship of candidates turned out to be a huge business investment for profit as a result of the powers and roles of godfathers and the chronic poverty, illiteracy and pervasive poor economic condition in Nigeria.<sup>[1]</sup> Money politics slowed democratisation process in the country through election irregularities and violation of campaign rules in terms of political financing turning the entire process into an avenue for corrupt practices. This phenomenon prevented fair play among the contestants and a freedom of choice of candidate for the electorates. It also by implication indicating that good governance will remain elusive provided the political process and elections are manipulated and influenced by corruption [20].

A survey conducted in 2001 in an attempt to determine the level of corruption disclosed that, 80 % of the respondents agreed that corruption is pervasive in Nigeria and the most corrupt organisation is Nigerian political parties especially during elections where they are engaged in vote buying, illegal campaign financing, excessive spending in violation of electoral rules and bribing of electoral officials in addition to conniving with security personnel and political bandits towards rigging the elections. Money political going by the above is thus, rapidly obliterating the Nigerian political system determining who will contest for an elective office and who will not and influencing the outcome of the election negatively. Money attracts votes and influence in Nigeria through godfatherism [3].

Money politics saves corrupt officials and shield them from facing the wrath of the law through a recycle of investment in politics. This simply means corrupt public office holders whether politicians or technocrats or business moguls can simply jump into the ship of politics directly or indirectly; directly by contesting for an elective office and buy their way into power or indirectly through godfatherism by sponsoring godsons who will control power on their behalf. Through

accessing power and immunity, they protect their ill-gotten wealth and their crimes with impunity [21].

Money politics breeds criminal politics in Nigeria through large scale political violence, cults, political gangsterism, corruption and poverty [22]. Money politics has been identified by a study to have preserve power for certain class of politicians through electoral corruption, political patronage and judicial corruption [23].

Money politics leads to violence in the electoral process. The political process requires financing in order to survive, resulting from this, money is mandatory in any election that is to be successful. In developing democracies like Nigeria, the institutional legal framework for the monitoring, regulating and sanctioning of political financing are very weak. The use of money in financing politics created gangsters who were paid in order to assassinate their opponents and intimidate opposition. If the polity is devoid of the excessive use of money, such violence might not occur. This is the interpretation of the above author's analysis [16].

Money politics permeated all scopes of political activities and also all levels of political position. It is argued that, political finance and political corruption have a very thin line. Investment in electoral politics saves the loot gotten from ill sources. For example, former members of armed forces, public servants, contractors, treasury looters, drug barons and gangsters used to venture into active politics. One of the areas sharply affected in this process is Local Government. Political corruption via political financing became palpable as a result of godfathers sponsorship of politicians at the local level [20].

Vote buying, is the major problem of financing political activities and electoral process in Nigeria. It impedes free and fair election in Nigeria. The incumbents have the advantage of buying votes from the electorates using the public resources that they have unlimited access to. The political process is bastardised in this regard [20].

The Human Right Watch 2007 reported that, political financing in Nigeria is anchored around criminal politics. The leaders were dictators who used money unregulated in the process of campaign and election and even went to the extent of rigging the election against the popular will of the people. The Report further disclosed that, the money politics in Nigeria leads to a large scale of political violence, cults and political gangsters, corruption and poverty. The Report also discovered that, Godfathers played a vital role in swaying the process of political financing and

campaign activities. In addition, the Report further revealed that there are impunities in governance resulting from illicit political financing, rewarding abuse and corruption, manipulation of electoral process and selective use of anti-corruption process [21].

### **General Elections in the Fourth Republic**

Nigeria's Fourth Republic is the longest surviving democratic regime in the history of the country stretching into straight seventeen years of democratic rule and it was the first time that successive civilian presidents were handing over power to another democratically elected government peacefully. Nigeria experienced three Republics and one Aborted Third Republic. The First Republic was from 1960-1966, Second Republic 1979-1984, Aborted Third Republic from 1991-1992 and the current Fourth Republic 1999 to date.

General Elections in the Fourth Republic took place five times in 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011 and 2015 and all the elections with the exception of that of 2015 share similar characteristics in terms of the nature, process and the conduct of the elections. Elections faced many challenges in Nigeria's Fourth Republic starting from the transition programme. The transition to democratic rule in 1999 was perceived as faulty and a fake one which was not designed along democratic process but rather quickly organised, prepared, conducted and supervised by military and that made the entire process a faltering one which set the foundation for violation of electoral process and democratic governance. Such faulty starting point was seen as the origin of problems and impediments to free, fair, credible and acceptable elections in the Fourth Republic. Indeed, transition to democratic rule in the Fourth Republic was militaristic in nature and not democratic. The military carefully handpicked candidates for electoral position, financed them and handed over power to them [24].

General Elections are carried out in the Fourth Republic by the independent electoral body established in 1999 shortly before the transition under the military Decree. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) is supposed to be transparent, independent, neutral and accountable. There were however, evidences of compromises and complicity towards electoral rigging and malpractices with politicians through the manipulation of electoral process the electoral officials in terms of collection of bribes and corrupt practices, intimidation of voters, ballot stuffing, alteration of results and political thuggery [24].

One great issue of concern in elections in particular in the Fourth Republic is the politics of ethno-religious and regional sentiments. Majority of the electorates voted in an election for a candidate who belongs to their ethnic group, religious affiliation and regional belonging. Campaign for elections are undertaken based on these primordial sentiments by politicians instead of issue-based and performance such as corruption, poverty, unemployment, security, education, health etc. Thus, the results of General Elections are always predicted and determined even before the election resulting from the voting pattern and political behaviour of the electorates [25].

General Elections in the Fourth Republic are characterized with violence as a result of make or mar where politicians are determined at all cost to win the election where their chances of winning are against all odds. Ethnic and regional militias were recruited and sponsored by politicians across the six geo-political zones in the country in order to harass voters, intimidate opposition, rig elections and sometimes assassinate perceived hostile political enemies [26]. The politics of money in the electoral process is another major determinant or factor in the electoral process in Nigeria in the Fourth Republic as examined above. Those who can afford to pay higher and buy votes always win or those who can secure sponsorship from godfathers have their way as against the wish and will of the electorates.

### **DISCUSSION**

In this section the data obtained from the consulted informants are presented and discussed. It has been discovered from what has been existing on ground in the previous researches in this field and from the information sourced from the field that money is highly influential in Nigerian politics and it determines the direction of the politics and the voting thereby undermining the electoral process from being credible and fair. Money politics has many impacts on General Elections in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. Some of the identified impacts are presented below in thematic forms.

#### **Impacts of Money Politics on Nigerian Electoral Process: The Case of Fourth Republic (1999-2015).**

Money has many impacts on Nigerian politics and elections as observed above by many scholars. Below are discussed some of the discovered impacts from the information obtained in the field and the existing literature.

**Vote Buying:** vote buying is one of the major evils of money politics in Nigerian Fourth Republic during elections. On many occasions, many scholars and international observer monitoring groups such as European Union, IFES, NDI, IRI, UNDP, AU, Commonwealth Group etc stressed that votes were openly bought and sold in the polling stations most especially in 2003 and 2007 General Elections with politicians giving a small token of money for the electorates to vote for them. Sometimes it comes in form of kind such as food items and other utilities shared in the polling units. The politicians demanded that you vote for them snap your vote with your mobile present to them and receive your token. One of the informants revealed that: *"I have seen with my own naked eyes how politicians on election day display money physically demanding for the voters to vote for them and get N500 (\$1.3 dollar) or at maximum N1000 (\$2.7 dollar). Initially, it was N500 but when they sensed defeat they raised the bid to N1000 on the spot. Voters were asked to go and vote and then present the evidence from their smart phones and get their pay"*. This act of vote buying gave the impetus for incompetent, selfish and corrupt politicians to emerge at the local, state and national level as representatives of the people in which they represent their personal interest and accumulate wealth at the expenses of the general public. This cause misgovernance and poor service delivery which in overall impedes the general public from enjoying the dividend of democracy. Many scholars agreed that vote buying is a major problem in Nigerian politics and electoral process as exhibited in the writings of [3, 12, 2 & 1]. These scholars also supported the above views of one of the informants that votes were bought and sold during elections in Nigeria leading to a faltering elections and strangulation of proper democratisation in Nigeria. This is one of the arguments or propositions of the Rational Choice Theory of Election that sometimes voters are rational in choosing their leaders based on performance but, often times, they tend to seek for the rationality of their personal benefits in terms of money and other material benefit they can get from them in order to vote for them irrespective of their performance.

**Malpractices and Election Rigging:** money politics leads to subversion of democratic process and affects electoral processes and outcome because it causes rigging of elections and other malpractices. Corrupt politicians bribe officials of the electoral body and other agencies and stakeholders that are related to the conduct of elections in order to rig and alter the results. Often times, such malpractices came in form of

multiple voting, ballot stuffing, ballot boxes stealing, disenfranchisement of voters, intimidation of opposition, harassment of opposition, alteration of results and other crimes. All these emanated as a result of the influence of money politics. For instance, one of the informants narrated that: *"The massive unchecked use of illicit money in the electoral process has significantly affected our elections, outcome, politics and entire Nigerian democratic process. Losers are emerging as winners through dubious means using their money to bulldoze their way bribing all the stakeholders involved in the electoral process"*. This has been supported by a study in 2007 that Nigeria's elections in the Fourth Republic are marred with riggings and other malpractices. [26] Furthermore, other studies attested to the fact that use of money in Nigerian politics has caused the elections to be devoid of credibility and fairness [2, 3, 22, 18 & 23]. The Rational Choice Theory here explained clearly that, just like the corporations in the business sector who seek to maximise their profits, the politicians seek to secure power at all cost for their own personal benefit and private gain and therefore, can go to any extent to achieve their ambition including the use of money excessively to buy their way into power from the electorates and bribe the electoral officials all for the purpose of achieving their goal.

**Corruption:** money politics is perceived as one of the corrupt practices that is bedeviling Nigerian democracy and it is impeding good governance. Corruption has permeated all the scopes of governance and indeed, political and socioeconomic aspects of Nigeria's life. Bribery, violation of due process, stealing of public funds, vote buying, contracts kickbacks, nepotism, clientalism etc are all corrupt practices that are taking place in Nigeria. The use of money in Nigerian politics led to corrupting the electorates and allow for corrupt politicians to secure and maintain power. This is because those who are wealthy enough use their money to buy power and manipulate the elections towards their advantage for personal gain. It is opined that: *"Corruption in the Nigeria's electoral process is high and it is resulting from the excessive use of money in the politics especially during elections. It is evident that, without using of a huge sum of money, one cannot dare contest for an elective office In Nigeria and all forms of corrupt practices ranging buying of votes, bribing of electoral officials and security personnel, pocketing of party agents, delaying of justice in tribunal trial after the elections and looting of public funds"*. Again, here, one can see practically the effects of money politics on

Nigerian democracy and the role of the Rational Choice Theory of Election in explaining the subject matter because all the actors that are revealed to have been involved in corruption and corrupt practices are doing so because of the perceived rational benefit they expect to enjoy either on the spot during the election or after.

**Godfatherism Clientalism and Nepotism:** money politics is carried out through some agents and the process is called clientalism with the actors known as godfathers and the outcome of their activities known as nepotism, parochialism and cronyism. This cycle or process is the origin of money politics, cause of money politics and the effect of money politics all together. It is a scenario of a powerful wealthy cabals forming a small cycle of power brokers who anointed candidates and sponsor them for an elective political office in return for contract kickbacks, lucrative appointments and sharing of the spoils of public treasury looting in some agreed percentage. One of the informants consulted from the section of academicians stressed that:” *Godfatherism is the root cause of money politics because we have a group of powerful cabals from political side and business moguls from the other side conniving in sponsoring politicians who by themselves cannot acquire the means of an expensive electoral process in Nigeria but rely on these godfathers who spent massively and excessively for them bribing their way and buying votes for them from the electorates. They entered into an unofficial political contract on one hand with the electorates through securing their votes with money and kind and with politicians on the other hand through securing power for them and then manipulate them to get return on their investment and profits in the process of doing that. This entire process is called clientalism and the outcome of it is nepotism where appointments and contracts are awarded not base on merit or due process but, based on those deem fit by the godfathers*”. The above view revealed that money politics has totally obliterated the political process and it is the godfatherism and clientalism that caused it and the impact is the cronyism attached to it. This view is also supported by many scholars <sup>[27 &28]</sup> in their work.

**Misgovernance and Abuse of Power:** money politics leads to misgovernance and abuse of political office because the political office holders used their money to get into the offices not their integrity or performance or any track record of their social services. Their ultimate aim is personal interest and private accumulation of resources indeed, politics in Nigeria is synonymous with business investment. According to an informant:”*Nigerian election is a business and*

*money matter as politics is seen as synonymous with investment for return in profit because the politicians engaged with the electorates through the use of money to influence their votes and by bribing the stakeholders in the electoral process. The resultant effect is they tend to embark on misuse of the power entrusted on them by looting of public treasury and misplacement of priority as well as abuse of power in serving their personal desire*”. The above assertion by the informant is what is exactly obtainable in Nigerian politics where politicians who lack moral integrity and leadership qualities emerged onto the helm of affairs and used their personal ego to enrich themselves and divert public fund for private gain. This is the rationality for the politicians in terms of Rational Choice Theory of Election where the purpose is maximizing personal benefit as against the common public good. This is also supported by many works <sup>[10, 11, 12, 13 & 14]</sup> in their submission and findings that money politics gave undue advantage for the weak selfish leaders which lead to misgovernance and abuse of public trust.

**Impediment to Socioeconomic and Political Development:** sequel to the above, money politics has the impact of impeding political and socioeconomic development in Nigeria through misplacement of priorities, lack of transparency and accountability, bad governance as well as siphoning of the meager societal resources that are meant for social service delivery towards personal gain by politicians and their cronies. This is so because the voters collect money from politicians inconsiderately and voted for them while the politicians used their money dubiously to secure the electorates votes. In this perspective, the voters lack the moral right and political, prowess to ask for transparency and accountability from the part of the politicians and the politicians do not feel obliged to deliver infrastructural development and social services to the society. This is one of the opinions expressed by some of the informants interviewed in the research work.

## CONCLUSION

The work concludes that, there was a clear evidence of money politics in Nigeria’s Fourth Republic which have negative impacts on General Elections. Evidences revealed massive use of money during campaign process spending above the legal benchmark, vote buying, bribing the electoral officials, bribing of security personnel, rigging of election results. The use of money has many impacts on Nigeria’s democracy and election including ballot stuffing, ballot snatching, alteration of results, rigging, manipulation of the



electoral process, emergence of incompetent weak selfish leaders, clientalism, nepotism, cronyism and poor service delivery and low socioeconomic and political development. Thus, there must be panaceas for these political malaises before they get out of hand and collapse the democratic system in the country. Such cases were recorded to a minimal level in the Second Republic politics and the Aborted Third Republic and they have affected the political process leading to the demise of the democratic rule during those period. If such issues are not arrested now, they might also lead to the demise of the Fourth Republic.

The theory used which is Rational Choice Theory of Election is visible here from both the part of the politicians and voters. From the politicians' part, it is assumed that, just like manufacturers of goods and services who targetted consumers for profit, politicians target voters with their moneybags to secure victory at all cost which is to them rational. From the voters aspects, just like consumers of goods and services who seek for maximum utility, they tend to vote for those who pay them in anticipation of rational material benefit so that even if they didn't work in office or deliver according to expectations they have already gained from the inception and satisfied their immediate utility during the election. This Theory has not been used by previous researches in the area of study based on what the researcher was able to lay his hands on which makes a theoretical contribution in the study.

Thus, the study discovered that while the voters are collecting money from politicians to vote for them as a result of anticipation of personal benefit of self-help and wealth accumulation that the politicians will embark on on assumption of office, even the most credible candidates must pay for votes before they are elected by voters in Nigeria as it happened in the case of Muhammadu Buhari's All Progress Congress (APC) in the 2015 Presidential Election where despite the perceived integrity and credibility as well as incorruptibility of the candidate, money was heavily used to financed his election buying votes in some instances and places making the election the most expensive in the history of Nigeria.

The study has practical implication for many groups especially the electoral body INEC which should identify the means of excessive money politics and vote buying and address it to minimise the trend to a lower level. The study is also important to the civil societies who should use the findings to create awareness among the voters to desist from selling their votes. It is also practically important for policy makers in designing a means and policies that will drastically curb money

politics and vote buying through political willingness. It is also beneficial to the electorates who are ignorantly selling their votes to the corrupt politicians to know the implication of their actions which includes socioeconomic and political backwardness and misgovernance arising from poor leadership.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

Thus, as a result of the above, the following are recommended for a proper means of curbing the evil of money politics in Nigeria:

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) should banned all politicians found in the act of vote buying and bribing the electoral officials while the officials that are found in the corrupt act should be sanctioned accordingly.

Political parties that violate the electoral process in terms of spending above the maximum limit and buying votes and other corrupt practices should be deregistered as a national party.

Civil societies should intensify their role of civic activities and monitoring by engaging the general public especially voters in political awareness and sensitization on the evil of money politics.

INEC should liaise with religious clerics in moral preaching for the electorates to desist from collecting money to vote for politicians as an act of corruption that is obliterating the society.

The act of vote buying and vote selling should be constitutionally criminalised with severe punishment by policy makers for both the buyers and the sellers.

International observer monitoring groups should liaise with local civil societies in reporting cases of illicit money spending either above the campaign limits by contestants or vote buying on the spot of the electoral conduct through electronic and printed media in order to expose the culprits for the general public.

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