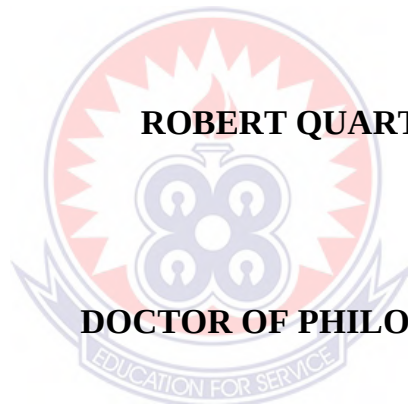


UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA



**INCENTIVES, VOTES AND DEMOCRACY: A CASE OF VOTE-
BUYING IN EFFUTU CONSTITUENCY**



ROBERT QUARTEY

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA



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IN EFFUTU CONSTITUENCY**



**ROBERT QUARTEY
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**A thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the award of the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
(Social Studies Education)**

**Department of Social Studies
Faculty of Liberal and Social Studies Education**

AUGUST, 2025

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DECLARATION

Student's Declaration

I, Robert Quartey, declare that this thesis, with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my own original work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

Signature:

Date:

Supervisors' Declaration

We hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this work was supervised in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of Thesis as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

Name: Professor Imurana, Awaisu Braimah (Principal Supervisor)

Signature:

Date:

Name: Professor Anselm Komla Abotsi (Co-Supervisor)

Signature:

Date:

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my wife, Mrs Diana Quartey, entire family, and my dear late mother, Mrs Adelaide Kwakye.



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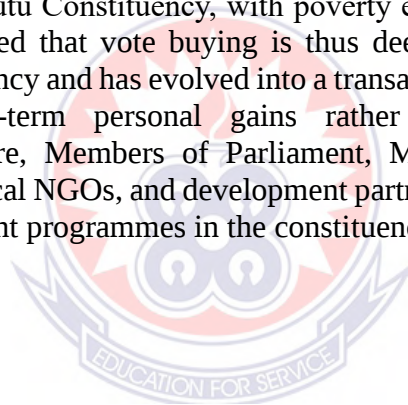
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ABSTRACT

Ghana is recognised for its stable democracy; nonetheless, the prevalent and increasing acceptance of vote-buying, particularly at the constituency level such as Effutu, remains inadequately comprehended. This compromises genuine democratic accountability and underscores the necessity of conducting a comprehensive investigation at the local level. This work examined issues of vote-buying in the Effutu Constituency in the Central Region of Ghana. A qualitative approach with a case study design was employed in this study. A total of 36 participants were selected from all 18 electoral areas in the Effutu Constituency using purposive and convenience sampling. Instruments for data collection included an interview guide and focus group discussion. The data was analysed in themes based on the research questions and the outcomes derived from the interviews and focus group discussion. The study uncovered several distinct manifestations of vote buying in the Effutu Constituency. One of the most prominent forms identified was the distribution of cash during election periods, often given openly or through intermediaries to secure votes. In addition to cash, non-monetary items such as bags of rice, cooking oil, cloth, mobile phones, and even roofing sheets were frequently mentioned as being distributed, especially close to voting day. Also, the study revealed that several interrelated factors contribute to the prevalence of vote buying in the Effutu Constituency, with poverty emerging as the most dominant driver. It was concluded that vote buying is thus deeply embedded in the political culture of the constituency and has evolved into a transactional practice where votes are exchanged for short-term personal gains rather than long-term community development. Therefore, Members of Parliament, Microfinance and Small Loans Centre (MASLOC), local NGOs, and development partners, should implement targeted economic empowerment programmes in the constituency.



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The primary advantages of democracy in practice are realised through elections, which serve as the official mechanism by which voters' preferences translate into political authority. Contemporary democratic theory prioritises elections as the principal criterion for evaluating democratic quality, rather than concentrating on theoretical democratic principles (Diamond, 2019; Norris, 2019). This shift in emphasis arises from an increasing number of individuals perceiving elections as the primary criterion. Consequently, democracy is viable only when elections are equitable, transparent, and competitive.

Elections are universally recognised as the essential mechanism for the operation of democratic political systems worldwide. These elections provide individuals the opportunity to express their political opinions, select their representatives, and hold political leaders accountable (Diamond, 2019; Norris, 2019). Elections facilitate democracy by transforming the common will into political authority. Contemporary democratic theory asserts that the integrity of elections is essential for the effectiveness and longevity of democratic institutions (Birch et al., 2020). They facilitate representation by transforming individual preferences into political demands. The second advantage is that they enhance political accountability by empowering citizens to reward or penalise politicians according to their job performance (Birch et al., 2020). The third advantage of elections is that they enhance the legitimacy of regimes, so reducing the likelihood of political violence and instability (Schedler, 2019). Elections promote political education, encouraging citizens to participate more actively in their

communities and to get a more profound comprehension of democracy (Birch et al., 2020; Norris, 2019). These responsibilities underscore the significance of elections in a democracy, particularly in nations where institutional trust is still being established.

The use of tactics such as vote-buying, intimidation, violence, and fraud to manipulate electoral outcomes renders the process profoundly inequitable. This significantly diminishes the capacity of elections to fulfil their democratic responsibilities. Recent research on electoral integrity suggests that elections can continue under specific conditions, however with a reduced democratic quality, resulting in what scholars refer to as low-quality or defective democracies (Norris, 2020; Schedler, 2019). The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) financed these projects. In such contexts, elections may devolve into futile exercises rather than effective mechanisms for individuals to make decisions. Strict adherence to norms can obscure the reality of their modification.

A critical theoretical concern in contemporary election systems is the influence of financial resources on electoral results. Although financial resources are essential for efficient campaign management, contemporary research on political finance suggests that their disproportionate influence undermines the democratic tenet of political equality (Scarrow, 2020). This is despite the necessity of financial resources for effective campaign execution. Heavily monetised elections have transformed political competitiveness from policy-oriented persuasion to resource-driven mobilisation. In these elections, candidates with greater financial resources often possess a competitive advantage. Ohman (2018) asserts that this process engenders ethical concerns regarding equity, accessibility, and equitable representation within democratic election systems.

Political funding and political power are intricately connected. This discusses the influence of politicians on voter responses and electoral outcomes. Levitsky and Ziblatt (2018) contend that contemporary theories of electoral influence indicate that the legitimacy of democratic political institutions relies on the exertion of influence through ideas, programs, and accountability procedures. The distinction between persuasion and inducement is ambiguous, leading to influence frequently operating through informal and material channels in contexts characterised by insufficient institutional governance and significant socio-economic disparity (Kitschelt, 2020).

Vote-buying is significant in the relationship of money, elections, and political power. Recent study on electoral integrity (Schedler, 2019) indicates that vote-buying constitutes a form of transactional politics. This form of politics involves providing financial incentives to individuals in return for their political allegiance, so complicating the decision-making process for voters. From this theoretical perspective, vote-buying is a distortion of electoral democracy, transforming voting from a civic obligation into a commercial exchange. Bratton (2021) asserts that experts contend these approaches diminish the necessity for public engagement in the democratic process and foster clientelistic relationships between voters and political leaders.

Vote buying is a prevalent and enduring form of electoral fraud globally, despite several concerns over the integrity of the process. Contemporary studies characterise vote-buying as the offering of material or non-material inducements for political allegiance, either directly or indirectly, intended to sway voter behaviour (Schaffer, 2021; Schedler, 2019). Nwagwu et al. (2022) contend that this conduct is progressively perceived as a manifestation of transactional politics. In this political paradigm, individuals exchange their ideological convictions for immediate benefits such as

monetary compensation, sustenance, apparel, or assurances of employment and social assistance. Consequently, voting transitions from a civic obligation rooted in democratic selection to a market-oriented exchange influenced by political rivalry and economic volatility. This significantly alters the manner in which individuals engage in politics (Stokes et al., 2021).

Vote-buying manifests in various forms throughout different political systems. Various factors, including the economics, political culture, and the enforcement of laws inside institutions, may influence these expressions. The primary aim of obtaining electoral support via inducements stays unchanged; nevertheless, the methods, timing, and actors involved in the process differ markedly according to the context. The distinctions are particularly evident in constituency-level politics, where direct interaction between politicians and constituents fosters more personalised and clientelistic connections (Bratton, 2021; Kitschelt, 2020). Recent theoretical and empirical literature highlights that these discrepancies are particularly prominent in constituency-level politics. To evaluate the influence of vote-buying on democratic systems and election integrity, it is crucial to have a thorough understanding of the contextual manifestations of vote-buying. This is particularly accurate in Ghana, where the political landscape is highly competitive.

This behaviour has profound historical roots in several locations worldwide. Prior to the 19th century, it was customary in Britain to "bribe" voters with gifts and alcohol before elections. Morgan and Vardy (2012) assert that such activities are now illegal. Seymour (1915) stated that in the early 1900s, American cities were characterised by extensive networks of patrons. These networks enable individuals to exchange their votes for employment or other advantages. Recent evidence has revealed vote-buying

in various nations, including India (Still & Dusi, 2020), Indonesia (Aspinall & Sukmajati, 2016), Nigeria (Omilusi, 2021), São Tomé and Príncipe (Vicente, 2014), and in international settings such as the United Nations General Assembly (Carter & Stone, 2015). Individuals frequently purchase votes, particularly in closely contested elections. Kramon (2017) contends that in regions where individual ballot monitoring is difficult, poverty increases voters' susceptibility to immediate influence from material incentives.

According to Van de Walle (2007), this exemplifies a broader phenomenon known as clientelism, when individuals exchange goods and services for enhanced political backing. Studies demonstrate that vote-buying is more prevalent in competitive multiparty systems than in dominant-party systems. Close elections necessitate the acquisition of swing votes (Lindberg, 2003). In Nigeria, voter inducement has transitioned from a simple monetary transaction to a complex framework incorporating political parties, local intermediaries, and state resources (Omilusi, 2021). Bratton and Kimenyi (2008) contend that vote-buying in Kenya frequently aligns with ethnic mobilisation. Candidates employ identity appeals and financial incentives to garner substantial voter support. Empirical studies repeatedly demonstrate that the ongoing prevalence of vote-buying in African democracies is marked by a convergence of structural, institutional, and socio-cultural elements operating at both individual and systemic levels.

Bratton (2008) and Keefer and Vlaicu (2008) assert that a primary factor for vote buying in Africa is the prevalence of poverty and the high demand for employment among the populace. In nations where a significant proportion of voters face severe financial difficulties, immediate tangible advantages, such as little cash disbursements,

food, or other commodities, frequently outweigh the long-term benefits of improved governance or policy reform. Electorate is increasingly amenable to accepting bribes due to the deteriorating economic conditions. This is particularly accurate when the bribes are presented as "gifts" that address immediate requirements (Kramon, 2016). For families experiencing financial difficulties, declining such assistance could prove detrimental, increasing the likelihood of their susceptibility to vote-buying tactics.

The disregard for electoral regulations will perpetuate the practice. Certain African nations, such as Ghana, have enacted legislation prohibiting the purchase of votes. Nonetheless, the enforcement of these regulations is often inadequate. The individuals responsible for conducting elections may lack the requisite technical expertise, financial resources, or political autonomy to identify and penalise lawbreakers (Bekoe, 2012). Political leaders perceive enticement strategies as low-risk, high-reward tactics in scenarios where punitive measures are poorly applied (LeBas, 2011). This affords individuals the liberty to act without apprehension of retribution. This atmosphere of lenient policing not only fosters criminal activity but also conveys to voters that accepting bribes would incur no legal repercussions.

Van de Walle (2007) and Lindberg (2010) contend that gift-giving is fundamentally anchored in the principles of reciprocity and reciprocal obligation, which are prevalent in several African political cultures. Voters may view electoral incentives as tokens or prizes for previous allegiance to a leader or party, rather than as corrupt transactions. This may alter their perspective on electoral incentives. Nicker (2014) asserts that cultural context complicates the cessation of vote-buying by obscuring the distinction between lawful and unlawful political mobilisation. In rural communities, exchanging

products for political support is typically permissible, although violating democratic principles is regarded as abhorrent.

Wantchekon (2003) asserts that the establishment of enduring patron-client ties increases the likelihood of vote-buying. This strategy involves local party operatives, community leaders, or intermediaries who engage directly with voters to assist candidates in garnering support. These intermediaries assist in identifying swing voters, providing them with incentives, and facilitating the execution of informal political agreements (Stokes et al., 2013). These brokers can leverage trust, familial connections, and local authority to influence voting behaviour due to their significant roles within their communities. Due to the robustness of these networks, vote-buying will persist as a component of elections and a significant aspect of the competition.

Numerous African nations are susceptible to vote-buying due to the interaction of structural, institutional, and socio-cultural factors that facilitate it. This facet of political contention is not only an occasional occurrence during elections; rather, it is a persistent component of political conflict. To devise solutions addressing both issues, it is essential to comprehend the interrelation between the economic challenges faced by voters and the institutional factors perpetuating the practice. Ghana is frequently regarded as one of the most stable democracies in Africa, having conducted eight consecutive competitive general elections since 1992 (Gyimah-Boadi, 2009). This is due to Ghana conducting these elections in accordance with international standards. The Electoral Commission (EC), a robust civil society, and an autonomous media are among the factors that have enhanced its democracy. At the heart of this success narrative is a political culture increasingly centred on profit generation. In Ghana, individuals are able to purchase votes during political party primaries, general elections,

and local assembly election campaigns (Kramon & Posner, 2013). Civil society monitoring organisations, such as the Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO, 2016), have compiled studies indicating that bribery is prevalent. This may manifest as monetary compensation or non-monetary contributions, such as consumer items or commitments to finance development initiatives.

In Ghana, the two principal political parties are vigorously contesting for votes, particularly in regions seen as battlegrounds. Politicians must prioritise financial incentives over campaigns addressing alternative issues due to the high costs associated with campaigning. Voters believe that mechanisms for holding politicians accountable are ineffective, prompting them to "extract what they can" during elections. Ayee (2011) asserts that certain locations perceive incentives as equitable methods to compensate individuals for their voting participation.

The Effutu Constituency, located in Ghana's Central Region, reflects numerous national patterns while also exhibiting distinct local dynamics. The majority of residents in this region derive their income from fishing, engaging in minor trade, and practicing small-scale agriculture (GSS, 2021). The area is inhabited by a diverse array of individuals. Unemployment remains a significant issue, particularly for the youth. This is why direct financial incentives are more appealing than alternative forms of political programming incentives. The elections in Effutu have consistently been very competitive, characterised by narrow margins of victory. This results in each vote carrying greater value, allowing candidates to purchase votes, so rendering it a favourable option. During the 2020 general elections and the 2023 District Assembly elections, numerous allegations arose regarding the distribution of cash and gifts. The allegations garnered significant media attention and were extensively discussed in political circles.

In Effutu, social networks based on extended family structures, fishing community associations, and religious groups facilitate the transmission of bribes to trustworthy individuals. They frequently act as intermediaries, ensuring that bribes are delivered to the appropriate individuals in return for votes. Typically, party operatives and influential community members participate in this. In reality, plans may encompass providing financial assistance, distributing items like as food or prepaid mobile credit, pledging to restore infrastructure, and proposing employment, contracts, or scholarships post-election. The constituency's size, the people' demographics, and the degree of electoral competitiveness all affect the employed makeup.

Repeated vote-buying adversely impacts electoral integrity, complicates accountability, reinforces clientelism, and skews policy in favour of politically influential parties at the expense of fairness. These impacts may diminish voter participation, erode faith in institutions, and impede the generation of innovative policy ideas over time. Bratton and van de Walle (1997) assert that politics diminishes its capacity to unite individuals for the collective benefit when it becomes transactional.

The persistent occurrence of vote-buying undermines the essential aims of Social Studies education, as outlined in Ghana's curriculum framework (MoE, 2019). This assertion is articulated from the perspective of Social Studies education. The National Council of Social Studies (2010) asserts that the objective of Social Studies is to foster responsible citizenship, critical thinking, and active engagement in democratic processes. Adolescents may develop a transactional perspective on politics when they see or participate in vote-buying. This implies that people may perceive politics as a vehicle to fulfil their desires rather than as a mechanism for addressing issues that affect the entire community. When future leaders emerge from an environment permissive to

electoral fraud, the repercussions on schooling include a diminished concern for civic engagement, a distortion in political socialisation as norms of accountability supplant norms of reciprocity, and a deterioration of democratic resilience.

Understanding vote-buying in the Effutu Constituency necessitates an analysis of both overt and nuanced factors. It is essential to consider both significant and trivial elements. Key considerations encompass democratic values, electoral systems, and political economics. Factors of lesser significance including poverty, local competition, social networks, and cultural standards. This methodology examines both the supply side, wherever politicians and parties provide incentives, and the demand side, where voters receive or anticipate them. This research situates the Effutu case within a broad scholarly framework and empirical evidence, so enhancing conversations on democratic consolidation, electoral integrity, and civic education in Ghana and beyond.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The purchase of votes is not a novel issue for democracy. Historical studies illuminate its significance in nineteenth-century Britain and early American machine politics, when electoral incentives were exchanged for political backing before regulatory reforms (Schaffer & Schedler, 2007). Contemporary comparative research demonstrates that vote-buying persists in competitive electoral democracies, particularly in situations where economic vulnerability aligns with intense political competitiveness and insufficient enforcement mechanisms (Nichter, 2014; Stokes et al., 2013). The occurrence of vote-buying in Ghana does not render it exceptional. The distinguishing feature of the current Ghanaian context is the recurrent, institutionalised, and escalating acceptability of inducement methods within a democracy typically regarded as stable.

Since the inception of the Fourth Republic in 1992, Ghana has conducted eight consecutive multiparty general elections. The two principal political parties have peacefully transferred power on each occasion. These occurrences have established Ghana as a paragon of democracy in West Africa (Gyimah-Boadi, 2009; Norris, 2019). International observers routinely classify Ghana as a stable electoral democracy. However, beneath this procedural consistency lies growing concern about the commercialisation of political competition and the persistent occurrence of vote-buying over electoral cycles (Ayee, 2021; Gyampo & Debrah, 2020).

Recent elections have demonstrated that these concerns are justified. In the 2019–2020 parliamentary primaries of prominent political parties, investigative research documented allegations of monetary inducements and the provision of items to delegates within party electoral colleges (Corruption Watch, 2020; MyJoyOnline, 2020). The Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO) reported that individuals attempted to influence others to vote in the 2020 general elections by providing monetary and food incentives in certain regions (CODEO, 2021). Media investigations and civil society research highlighted allegations of inducement in parliamentary and local elections (MyNewsGh.com, 2022). The Ghana Center for Democratic Development articulated heightened apprehensions over inducement strategies at the local government tier during the 2023 District Assembly elections, emphasising trends of material assistance employed to influence voter conduct (CDD-Ghana, 2023).

The recurring occurrences of inducement during the political cycles of 2019, 2020, and 2023 reflect a trend of persistence rather than an anomaly. When incentive strategies emerge in party primaries, parliamentary elections, and district-level contests, the issue

takes on systemic characteristics. However, enforcement initiatives remain few, and prosecutions are even more uncommon (Ayee, 2021). The absence of consistent consequences renders monetised mobilisation a more prevalent political instrument (Scarrow, 2020).

This persistence is a theoretical conundrum. Liberal democratic theory asserts that voter autonomy relies on policy evaluation and retrospective accountability (Norris, 2019). In contrast, clientelism theory asserts that in contexts marked by economic instability and competitive multiparty systems, voters and politicians may engage in rational exchanges of monetary benefits for political support (Stokes et al., 2013; Wantchekon, 2003). The situation in Ghana has elements of both perspectives. Democratic consolidation is indicated by established democratic institutions, an autonomous Electoral Commission, vigorous civil society oversight, and nonviolent transitions of power. Nonetheless, recurring narratives of inducement reveal the persistent existence of transactional politics beneath the facade of formal institutional stability. The existing literature has insufficiently explored the connection between procedural consolidation and substantive democratic practices at the local level.

Methodologically, studies on vote-buying in Ghana reveal substantial deficiencies. A considerable segment of the literature relies on national survey datasets or perception-based metrics (Gyampo & Debrah, 2020; Kramon & Posner, 2013). These studies provide substantial insights on voter views and the factors associated with inducement; yet, they possess major limitations. Surveys may not reliably capture unlawful transactions due to social desirability bias and apprehension of legal repercussions (Gonzalez-Ocantos et al., 2012). Nationally aggregated evaluations obscure local discrepancies and fail to accurately represent the micro-level processes through which

incentives are structured, negotiated, and socially justified. The daily activities, intermediary networks, and evolving societal ramifications of vote-buying remain inadequately comprehended.

This difference is particularly evident at the constituency level. Much of the literature concerning Ghana examines vote-buying at a national scale or via cross-sectional studies. This indicates that our understanding of the local narratives, techniques, and rationales that render enticement practices effective in specific populations is limited. In the absence of constituency-level investigations, the methods of vote-buying in specific political and socio-economic circumstances remain inadequately clarified.

The Effutu Constituency is an excellent location to address these deficiencies. Effutu possesses a lengthy history of highly competitive elections, with narrow victory margins in legislative contests rendering swing votes increasingly significant. Competitive settings have been shown to enhance motivations for inducement-based mobilisation (Lindberg, 2003). The socio-economic conditions in the constituency, marked by youth unemployment and reliance on informal economic activities such as fishing and petty trading, may heighten vulnerability to coercive tactics (Bratton, 2008; Kramon, 2016).

Election monitors have identified issues related to inducement in contested constituencies throughout the Central Region, including Effutu (CODEO, 2021; CDD-Ghana, 2023). These investigations confirm the presence of enticement actions; nonetheless, they lack an exhaustive understanding of the processes, motivations, and long-term consequences of vote-buying at the constituency level. As a result, there is a lack of systematic evidence about the implementation of inducement strategies in Effutu and their impact on democratic participation and governance outcomes.

The ramifications of continuous inducement extend beyond election contexts. Political entities that invest substantial financial resources in inducements may prioritise recouping their investments upon attaining governmental power, thereby affecting development planning and public resource distribution (Bratton & van de Walle, 1997). If electoral success relies more on financial resources than on persuading the electorate of one's programs, political equality diminishes and accountability is compromised (Scarrow, 2020). Over time, such phenomena may fortify patron-client networks and undermine democratic principles.

The civic ramifications are as significant. The Social Studies curriculum in Ghana emphasises good citizenship, accountability in a democracy, and active participation (Ministry of Education, 2019). Nevertheless, continuous exposure to inducement-based mobilisation may affect the political socialisation patterns of young individuals, thereby normalising transactional political engagement. Despite these concerns, the relationship between vote-buying and citizenship development at the constituency level remains little explored.

The primary issue extends beyond the mere purchase of votes in Ghana. The documented persistence and apparent normalisation of inducement practices in recent electoral cycles within a democracy widely considered consolidated, along with the absence of thorough constituency-level research clarifying the mechanisms, drivers, and democratic implications of vote-buying in Effutu Constituency.

In the absence of such an evaluation, legislative solutions remain ambiguous, enforcement measures are reactive, and civic education initiatives may lack relevance to actual political circumstances. The discrepancy between Ghana's democratic image

and the persistence of transactional electoral practices is a substantial academic and civic issue that necessitates comprehensive examination at the constituency level.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to explore the phenomenon of vote-buying in the Effutu Constituency of Ghana, examining how it transpires, underlying drivers, and implications for electoral integrity, democratic representation, and community well-being. It further investigates the persistent and increasingly normalised occurrence of vote-buying in Ghana's elections, highlighting the lack of thorough constituency-level evidence that clarifies its causes, methods, and implications for democratic governance in Ghana.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The following objectives guided the study.

1. Investigate the various manifestations of vote buying in the Effutu Constituency.
2. explore the factors that contribute to vote buying in Effutu.
3. examine the effects of vote buying on elections within the Effutu.
4. assess the consequences of vote buying on the standard of living of the people of Effutu.

1.5 Research Questions

1. What are the various manifestations of vote buying in the Effutu Constituency?
2. What factors contribute to vote buying Effutu Constituency?
3. How does vote buying affect election outcomes within Effutu Constituency?
4. What are the consequences of vote buying on the standard of living of the people of Effutu Constituency?

1.6 Justification of the Study in Social Studies Education

Curricular relevance and civic competence, Social Studies education in Ghana emphasises fostering civic competence, democratic values, and responsible participation (MoE, 2019; NCSS, 2010). By empirically documenting vote-buying and its drivers in a specific Ghanaian constituency, this study produces locally grounded knowledge that teachers, curriculum developers, and civic educators can use to design experiential learning activities (e.g., simulations, debates, service-learning) that cultivate critical thinking about electoral integrity, citizenship, and public accountability (Engle & Ochoa, 2019).

The need for bridging theory and practice is also justified. A common critique of civic education is that it can be abstract, disconnected from lived political realities. The Effutu case operationalises key Social Studies concepts (citizenship, rights and responsibilities, governance, rule of law) through contemporary, relatable examples of election behaviour, allowing learners to connect norms of democracy with the incentives and constraints people actually face (Ayee, 2021; Gyampo & Debrah, 2020).

In a broader context of equity and inclusion, vote-buying disproportionately targets economically vulnerable groups, often women, youth, and the poor (Brusco et al., 2004; Yoon, 2020). A Social Studies lens brings attention to how structural inequalities shape political behaviour and outcomes, equipping learners to interrogate how economic status intersects with political voice, and to advocate inclusive policies that expand substantive citizenship.

The thesis title was also chosen to build transformative citizenship. Beyond knowledge acquisition, Social Studies aspires to produce action-oriented citizens capable of resisting manipulation and holding leaders accountable. Findings from this study can

inform anti-clientelism modules in schools, youth clubs, and tertiary institutions, embedding practical strategies for refusing inducements, reporting malpractice, and organising community oversight during elections (MoE, 2019). In short, the study supports the transformation from passive recipients of political goods to active co-producers of democratic quality.

1.7 Significance of the Study

This study will make an essential contribution to understanding the dynamics of vote buying and its implications for democratic governance in the Effutu Constituency. Additionally, scholars and researchers interested in electoral integrity, democratic governance, and political behaviour will benefit from the insights generated. The findings of this study can inform policy-making efforts aimed at strengthening electoral processes and promoting democratic principles. Identifying the drivers of vote buying, analysing its impact on democratic legitimacy, and proposing potential interventions can enable policymakers and electoral authorities to design targeted strategies to address this challenge effectively. This can contribute to enhancing the integrity and fairness of elections in Effutu and beyond. Moreover, addressing the issue of vote buying is essential for upholding the principles of democratic governance. Shedding light on the prevalence and implications of vote buying in Effutu, this study supports efforts to safeguard the integrity of electoral processes and promote free and fair elections. Enhancing democratic legitimacy in Effutu can foster greater citizen trust in the political system and contribute to the consolidation of democratic institutions at the local and national levels.

1.8 Delimitations of the Study

This study is delimited to the Effutu Constituency in Ghana's Central Region. The choice reflects Effutu's competitive electoral history, socio-economic diversity, and local reports of inducement in recent elections. Substantively, the study focuses on vote-buying, the exchange of money, goods, or favours for electoral support, rather than the broader set of electoral irregularities (e.g., intimidation, multiple voting, ballot stuffing). While money in politics encompasses campaign finance, lobbying, and advertising, the analytical lens here is narrowed to transactional exchanges linked to voting decisions.

Again, the analysis concentrates on the most recent general election cycles (e.g., 2016 and 2020) and salient local elections (e.g., 2023 District Assembly) to capture continuity and change in practices and narratives. The study focuses on registered voters, party agents, candidates/campaign teams, electoral officials, civil society actors, and community leaders within Effutu. The research adopts a qualitative orientation to capture lived experiences and narratives around vote-buying, while drawing on secondary quantitative indicators (e.g., poverty metrics) for contextualisation. These delimitations enhance depth and contextual sensitivity but also imply limited generalisability to constituencies with very different political economies.

1.9 Limitations of the Study

While this study provides valuable insights into the dynamics of money, votes, and democracy in the Effutu Constituency, it is not without limitations that must be acknowledged in order to contextualise the findings. A significant challenge was the difficulty in accessing certain segments of the population. Despite deliberate efforts to engage a cross-section of stakeholders, such as eligible voters, community leaders,

political party representatives, electoral officials, and grassroots activists, some groups remained relatively inaccessible. Factors such as time constraints, political affiliations, and personal security concerns led to refusals or non-cooperation, thereby limiting the diversity and richness of perspectives captured in the study. This could potentially create a gap in understanding the full spectrum of experiences related to vote-buying in the constituency.

Another notable limitation is the timing of the research. Data collection coincided with preparations toward Ghana's general elections scheduled for December 7th, 2024. The political climate during this period was highly charged, with parties and candidates actively strategising and mobilising support. Many participants expressed suspicion and caution, fearing that divulging certain information could be used against them or their preferred political actors. In this sense, the research risked being perceived as intrusive or politically motivated. Such contextual pressures may have influenced the openness of participants, leading to guarded responses or, in some cases, outright refusal to participate.

Additionally, there exists the risk of response bias. Because vote-buying is widely acknowledged as a sensitive and often illegal practice, some respondents may have deliberately withheld information, downplayed their involvement, or provided socially desirable answers in order to avoid legal, reputational, or political repercussions. This tendency, whether conscious or unconscious, introduces limitations to the accuracy, reliability, and depth of the collected data.

The methodological scope of the study also poses constraints. Although the use of the qualitative method provided valuable insights, the research was geographically restricted to the Effutu Constituency. While this was necessary for in-depth analysis, it

limits the generalisability of the findings to other constituencies in Ghana, where socio-political dynamics may differ significantly. Similarly, the study's focus on vote-buying within a single electoral cycle may not fully capture the longer-term evolution of this phenomenon or its historical underpinnings in Effutu.

Finally, the researcher's positionality may have influenced the process. As an external inquirer, the researcher's identity, perceived affiliations, or manner of engagement could have shaped how participants interacted, the nature of information disclosed, and the overall trustworthiness of the responses. Though reflexive strategies were employed to minimise bias, this limitation remains noteworthy. Although these limitations, relating to access, timing, response bias, methodological scope, and researcher positionality, do not invalidate the study, they instead highlight the contextual complexities of investigating sensitive political issues such as vote-buying. They also provide a foundation for future research, which could expand geographically, adopt mixed-methods approaches, and explore longitudinal trends in vote-buying practices across Ghanaian constituencies.

1.10 Operational Definition of Terms / Acronyms

Vote-buying: The exchange, explicit or implicit, of money, goods, or services by a candidate, party, or agent for electoral support during an election period (Kramon, 2017; Schaffer & Schedler, 2007).

Democracy: A political system in which citizens exercise power directly or through elected representatives under conditions of political equality, participation, competition, and protection of rights (Christiano, 2018; Dahl, 2008).

Clientelism: A reciprocal, often unequal exchange of targeted benefits (private or club goods) for political support between patrons (politicians) and clients (voters) mediated by brokers (Hicken, 2011; Stokes, 2005).

Electoral corruption/malpractice: Actions that distort fairness, transparency, and competitiveness in elections, including vote-buying, intimidation, fraud, and misuse of state resources (Birch, 2011).

Effutu Constituency: A parliamentary constituency in Ghana's Central Region with a mixed urban-peri-urban economy, competitive party politics, and diverse socio-economic conditions (GSS, 2021).

NCCE: National Commission for Civic Education, Ghana's statutory body mandated to promote constitutional democracy and civic education.

EC: Electoral Commission of Ghana, an independent constitutional body responsible for organising elections.

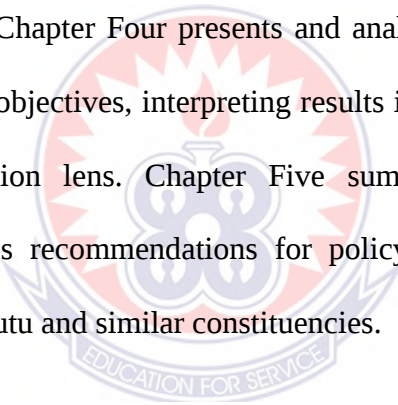
CSO: Civil Society Organisation, non-state actors engaged in advocacy, monitoring, and civic education.

NCSS: National Council for the Social Studies (U.S.), referenced for widely used definitions of Social Studies aims.

MoE/NaCCA: Ghana's Ministry of Education/National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, agencies responsible for curricula, including Social Studies.

1.11 Organisation of the Study

The thesis is organised into five chapters: Chapter One introduces the study, detailing the background, statement of the problem, purpose, objectives, research questions, justification in Social Studies Education, significance, delimitation, operational definitions, and organisation. Chapter Two reviews theoretical and empirical literature on money in politics, vote-buying, and democratic governance, situating Ghana's experience within African and global debates and articulating the conceptual framework guiding the study. Chapter Three outlines the methodology, including research philosophy and approach, study area, population, sampling, data collection instruments and procedures, data analysis strategies, trustworthiness/validity, and ethical considerations. Chapter Four presents and analyses findings aligned with the research questions and objectives, interpreting results in light of the literature and the Social Studies Education lens. Chapter Five summarises key findings, draws conclusions, and makes recommendations for policy, civic education, and future research relevant to Effutu and similar constituencies.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

Vote buying stands as a critical issue in democratic societies, profoundly influencing electoral processes and democratic legitimacy. This review delves into theoretical perspectives and the intricate dynamics of vote buying, focusing on Effutu as a case study to dissect its manifestations, implications, and underlying factors, as well as its impact on democratic principles and practices.

2.1 Theoretical Perspectives

The study uses rational choice theory and reciprocal determinism as its theoretical foundation for analysing the phenomena. According to the theory of reciprocal determinism, an individual's behaviour is shaped by their interactions with both personal traits and environmental influences. On the other hand, rational choice theory places a strong emphasis on making decisions by balancing costs and benefits to maximise utility. When combined, these theories provide a thorough lens that helps comprehend the dynamics and decision-making procedures that underlie the phenomena being studied.

2.1.1 Reciprocal Determinism

Reciprocal determinism refers to the concept that the environment influences individual characteristics. Cherry and Mattiuzzi (2010) emphasise that the physical surroundings of an individual, including people who may be present or absent, contain potentially reinforcing stimuli. As much as the behaviour itself can affect the environment, the environment also affects the frequency and intensity of the behaviour. On the contrary, the individual component comprises all the traits that have previously earned rewards.

A variety of cognitive and psychological factors, including expectations, beliefs, and distinctive personality traits, influence a person's behaviour. Vote buying is one of the reasons for electoral irregularities in Ghana because it stimulates voters' emotions before, during, and after elections. Vote selling is a reaction to this environmental stimulus. Vote buying, according to the theory of reciprocal determinism, is a sign of a severe lack of leadership and poor governance. In contrast, vote-selling is a response from voters to their surroundings. A critical paradigm shift from the behavioural perspective to a social-cognitive approach to understanding behaviour has been demonstrated by Bandura's theory.

While behaviourists held that an individual's behaviour is entirely determined by their environment, Bandura recognised the importance of the reciprocal relationship that exists between an individual's behaviour and their surroundings. It demonstrates, in large part, that although people are influenced by their individual experiences in their surroundings, they also possess the ability to alter their circumstances as a group by making sacrifices and engaging in problem-solving behaviours (Cherry & Mattiuzzi, 2010). According to the theory of reciprocal determinism, a person's behaviour both influences and is influenced by their social environment and personal traits. The environment, the person, and the behaviour are the three main determinants of behaviour that form the basis of the theory. The interwoven nature of the three factors, which caused them to cooperate interdependently to generate reflective responses, is explained by the model. The environment influences individual behaviour, and personal responses also have an impact on the environment.

Therefore, the theory examines how our actions impact the environment. Albert Bandura, a psychologist, first proposed this theory (Nwagwu et al., 2022; Singh, 2018). Additional proponents of the hypothesis who elaborated on it were Akoul (1998). This theory is based on the premise that there is a relationship between people's behaviour and their environment, wherein people's behaviour is influenced by their environment. Stated differently, the environment that results in deplorable behaviour from elected public office holders, the government's appalling performance in delivering good governance, the lack of infrastructure and the public's welfare, which is crucial to governance, the incompetence of government employees, the bad legislation that harms the people, and the unique experiences of voters fuelled their sense of judgment to respond in a way that they thought would be advantageous. For example, voters' mindset was shaped by the absence of genuine electoral processes, transparency, and accountability in governance, which led to them selling their votes for cash or materials in response to environmental changes.

2.1.1.1 Relevance of Reciprocal Determinism to the Study

The study of human behaviour within social, political, and economic contexts has consistently underscored the importance of theoretical frameworks that explain how individuals interact with their environment. One of the most influential of such frameworks is Albert Bandura's concept of reciprocal determinism, which was developed within his broader Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) (Bandura, 1986; 2001). The central tenet of reciprocal determinism is that behaviour is neither driven solely by environmental factors nor entirely by individual volition, but instead emerges through a continuous, dynamic interplay between personal attributes, behavioural patterns, and the surrounding environment. This theoretical lens has been applied across fields such

as education, health promotion, criminology, organisational behaviour, and more recently, political science (Grusec, 1992; Pajares, 2002; Singh, 2018).

In political behaviour studies, especially in developing democracies, reciprocal determinism provides a robust framework for understanding electoral choices, clientelism, and vote-buying. Electoral behaviour is not only influenced by rational calculation of policy alternatives but also shaped by environmental stimuli such as poverty, weak institutions, and political clientelist traditions (Bob-Milliar, 2012; Nugent, 2001). In Ghana, despite democratic progress since the 1992 Fourth Republic, vote-buying has remained a recurrent electoral phenomenon (Asunka, 2016; Gyimah-Boadi, 2007). The Effutu Constituency in the Central Region is a critical microcosm of this dynamic, where material inducements, socio-economic grievances, and perceptions of governance quality have often influenced electoral outcomes.

The relevance of reciprocal determinism lies in its explanatory power: voters' decisions to sell their votes (behaviour) are influenced by poverty, institutional weaknesses, and political mobilisation strategies (environment), but these decisions are also mediated by their beliefs, expectations, and political identities (personal factors). At the same time, these actions reinforce political actors' strategies of distributing money and goods, thereby reproducing the cycle of clientelism and undermining democratic consolidation (Lindberg, 2003; Sacchi & Salih, 2020).

This section, therefore, pursues two objectives. First, it examines the relevance of reciprocal determinism in understanding political behaviour, with particular focus on vote-buying. Second, it applies reciprocal determinism to the case of Effutu Constituency in Ghana, exploring how the interaction of environment, personal factors, and behaviour sustains vote-buying and its implications for democracy. This dual focus

advances both theoretical and empirical scholarship by bridging psychology and political science in the analysis of electoral irregularities.

Reciprocal determinism was introduced by Albert Bandura in the 1970s as part of his Social Learning Theory, later reframed as Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1977; 1986). The concept emerged in critique of the behaviourist assumption, championed by scholars such as B.F. Skinner, that human behaviour is entirely shaped by environmental conditioning through reinforcement and punishment (Skinner, 1953). Bandura (1978) argued that such a deterministic model failed to account for the active role of human agency. Instead, he proposed a triadic reciprocal causation model whereby (i) personal cognitive and affective factors, (ii) behavioural patterns, and (iii) environmental influences interact dynamically to shape human behaviour.

Reciprocal determinism, therefore, refers to the mutual bidirectional influence among these three factors. As Cherry and Mattiuzzi (2010) explain, behaviour not only responds to environmental stimuli but also reshapes the environment. For example, a voter who accepts monetary inducements contributes to an environment where political elites perceive clientelism as an effective strategy. At the same time, the voter's personal beliefs about governance, morality, and self-interest mediate whether they accept or reject inducements.

Bandura's triadic model is frequently illustrated as a triangle in which Person (P), Environment (E), and Behaviour (B) mutually influence one another (Bandura, 1986).

- Person (Cognitive/Personal Factors): This includes traits such as beliefs, expectations, self-efficacy, moral standards, and prior experiences. In electoral contexts, this may translate into political attitudes, partisan identity, and perceptions of governance quality.

- Environment: This refers to the external social and physical context that provides opportunities, reinforcements, or constraints. In Ghanaian elections, this includes poverty levels, institutional capacity of the Electoral Commission, political party networks, and community norms regarding clientelism.
- Behaviour: These are the observable actions taken by individuals, such as casting a vote, attending rallies, or accepting inducements. Behaviour both shapes and is shaped by personal and environmental factors.

The continuous interaction of these determinants explains why behaviours are dynamic rather than static. A voter's decision to sell a vote is not merely a function of poverty (environment), but also a reflection of their beliefs about governance (personal factor) and their prior participation in elections (behaviour).

A key contribution of reciprocal determinism is its departure from radical behaviourism, which held that human action is entirely conditioned by external reinforcement. Instead, Bandura (2001) introduced the concept of human agency, recognising that individuals are proactive rather than reactive agents. This is particularly important in political contexts, where citizens are not merely passive recipients of political clientelism but also strategic actors who negotiate, resist, or exploit inducements depending on their beliefs and expectations (Kramon, 2016).

While originally a psychological concept, reciprocal determinism has found increasing relevance in sociological and political analysis. For example, Grusec (1992) applied it to family socialisation processes, while Pajares (2002) demonstrated its utility in educational contexts. In political science, the concept illuminates how citizens' political participation is co-constructed by environmental pressures, cognitive factors, and behavioural feedback loops.

In the African context, scholars such as Lindberg (2003) and Bob-Milliar (2012) highlight that vote-buying is not simply a top-down imposition by elites but also a negotiated process shaped by voters' perceptions and community norms. This aligns closely with Bandura's argument that individuals are active participants who shape their environment even as they are shaped by it.

Despite its explanatory richness, reciprocal determinism has attracted some criticisms. First, critics argue that the theory risks being overly broad and complex to operationalise empirically (Mischel, 1999). Measuring the precise weight of personal, environmental, and behavioural determinants in a given action can be challenging. Second, in political contexts, the theory may underplay structural and institutional forces such as electoral systems, legal frameworks, and international influences. Nevertheless, its strength lies in capturing the micro-level dynamics of political behaviour, particularly in contexts where individual agency interacts with weak institutional environments, such as Ghanaian elections.

There is a distinct relevance of reciprocal determinism in social and political behaviour which determines human behaviour in socio-political contexts. Reciprocal determinism highlights the interdependence of personal cognition, environment, and behaviour in shaping human conduct. This is particularly relevant in politics, where voting behaviour cannot be explained solely by rational choice models or structural determinism. Instead, individuals' electoral choices are shaped by their lived experiences, community norms, and perceptions of governance. Political behaviour, therefore, represents a synthesis of structural determinants (such as poverty and institutional weakness), cognitive filters (beliefs, morality, and self-interest), and behavioural precedents (such as habitual voting or past inducements).

In democratising societies like Ghana, where governance is mediated through patron-client relations, reciprocal determinism offers a nuanced lens for understanding why vote-buying persists despite public awareness of its corrosive effects. It explains why some voters rationalise selling their votes as compensation for unfulfilled political promises, while others resist inducements based on personal convictions.

Several empirical studies have demonstrated the relevance of reciprocal determinism beyond psychology. In health sciences, McAlister et al. (2008) applied the theory to explain health promotion behaviours, emphasising how environmental cues (access to facilities), personal motivation (belief in self-efficacy), and behaviour (exercise routines) interact. Similarly, in education, Pajares (2002) used the theory to explain student motivation, highlighting the triadic relationship among beliefs, learning environment, and academic performance.

In political science, clientelism and vote-buying fit well within this paradigm. Kramon (2016), in his study of Kenya, observed that citizens' acceptance of money during elections was influenced by socio-economic vulnerabilities (environment), their beliefs about whether politicians would deliver public goods (personal), and their historical engagement with elections (behaviour). Bob-Milliar (2012) noted similar patterns in Ghana, where vote-buying persisted not merely because of party elites' strategies, but because voters perceived inducements as legitimate entitlements. This supports Bandura's notion that individuals are not passive recipients of their environment but active interpreters and contributors to it.

From a psychological standpoint, reciprocal determinism is crucial in explaining the cognitive dissonance voters experience when selling their votes. Voters may be aware that accepting inducements undermines democratic accountability, but environmental

pressures (poverty, unemployment) compel them to act otherwise. Their beliefs (personal factor) may then be adjusted to reduce dissonance, rationalising vote-selling as a temporary survival strategy. This interplay of cognition and environment demonstrates why vote-buying cannot be eradicated solely through legal prohibitions but requires shifts in socio-economic and cultural conditions.

It has relevance to democratic development. In democratic consolidation, reciprocal determinism highlights the cyclical relationship between governance quality and citizen behaviour. Poor governance (environment) shapes citizens' beliefs that politics is transactional (personal), leading them to sell votes (behaviour). This, in turn, entrenches poor governance as leaders prioritise personal gain over accountability. Conversely, environments that foster transparency and civic education can enhance personal commitment to democratic norms, thereby promoting behaviours that resist vote-buying. Thus, reciprocal determinism underscores the interactive, non-linear dynamics of democratic development.

2.1.1.2 Application of Reciprocal Determinism to the Study

The crux of applying reciprocal determinism to vote-buying in the Ghanaian environment lies here. Since the reintroduction of multiparty democracy in 1992, Ghana has been celebrated as a beacon of democracy in Africa (Gyimah-Boadi, 2007; Lindberg, 2010). However, democratic progress has been consistently undermined by clientelism and vote-buying. Election observation reports (CODEO, 2016; EU EOM, 2020) highlight widespread distribution of money, food, and gifts by political parties during campaigns. This environment reflects structural challenges: poverty, weak enforcement of electoral laws, limited voter education, and high-stakes winner-takes-all politics.

The persistence of vote-buying in Ghana is significantly shaped by environmental factors:

1. Socio-economic deprivation: In constituencies like Effutu, high youth unemployment and income inequality heighten susceptibility to inducements (Asunka, 2016).
2. Institutional weaknesses: Limited enforcement of electoral laws by the Electoral Commission and the Police Service creates a permissive environment for illicit practices.
3. Cultural norms of reciprocity: Traditional expectations that leaders must provide immediate material support reinforce the legitimacy of vote-buying (Nugent, 2001).

These environmental realities reinforce Bandura's claim that surroundings contain "potentially reinforcing stimuli" (Cherry & Mattiuzzi, 2010), which condition behaviour.

Also, voters' attributes mediate their responses to inducements. These include:

- i. Beliefs and expectations: Many voters believe that political promises will not be fulfilled, and therefore view pre-election gifts as their "share" of national resources.
- ii. Political socialisation: Historical experiences with patronage shape individuals' perceptions of politics as transactional.
- iii. Moral reasoning: Some voters resist inducements on ethical grounds, reflecting self-regulation and agency (Bandura, 2001).

These cognitive elements demonstrate how personal factors interact with the environment to produce different behavioural outcomes. There are also behavioural determinants. The behavioural component is the observable act of selling votes or accepting inducements. This behaviour feeds back into the environment, normalising

vote-buying and encouraging parties to invest more resources in clientelist strategies. Over time, this creates a feedback loop where behaviour reproduces the very environment that sustains it.

In sum, reciprocal determinism explains the cyclical and self-reinforcing nature of vote-buying in Ghana:

- i. Environment (poverty, weak institutions) → shapes Personal beliefs (cynicism, entitlement) → produces Behaviour (vote-selling).
- ii. Behaviour (vote-selling) → reinforces Environment (clientelist politics, poor governance).

This triadic interplay underscores why vote-buying persists despite widespread condemnation. In historical context, the Effutu Constituency, located in the Central Region, has been one of Ghana's most competitive swing constituencies. Since 2008, parliamentary contests in Effutu have oscillated between the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC). Allegations of vote-buying, gift distribution, and material inducements have often accompanied the intense competition.

In 2008, the NDC candidate Mike Hammah won the Effutu seat with 16,743 votes against the NPP's Samuel Owusu Agyei, who polled 15,142 (Electoral Commission of Ghana, 2008). Media reports at the time noted the prevalence of cash inducements and distribution of items such as cloth and rice, which influenced voter turnout (Daily Graphic, 2008). The environment of poverty and political competition created fertile ground for inducements, which voters rationalised as compensation for previous government neglect.

The 2012 elections saw Mike Hammah (NDC) narrowly defeated by Alexander Afenyo-Markin (NPP), who polled 19,017 votes against Hammah's 18,139 (EC, 2012). Campaigns were heavily monetised, with allegations of vote-buying during rallies and on election day (Joy News, 2012). Here, voters' behaviour was influenced by both the environment of inducements and their personal disappointment with Hammah's performance as incumbent.

In 2016, Afenyo-Markin (NPP) consolidated his position, winning with 24,484 votes against the NDC's Eric Don-Arthur, who polled 17,427 (EC, 2016). His campaign combined clientelist strategies with promises of development projects. Voters, shaped by expectations of immediate benefits and environmental deprivation, were receptive to inducements. This demonstrates reciprocal determinism at work: environment (economic hardship) interacted with personal beliefs (development promises) to produce behavioural outcomes (vote-selling and partisan support).

The 2020 elections further entrenched Afenyo-Markin's dominance, as he polled 33,532 votes against the NDC's James Kofi Annan, who garnered 21,921 (EC, 2020). Again, reports highlighted widespread distribution of money and materials (Citi News, 2020). Voters' acceptance of inducements reflected both environmental realities (COVID-19 economic hardship) and personal rationalisation that politicians' promises were unreliable.

The Effutu case illustrates reciprocal determinism vividly:

- i. Environment: High poverty, weak enforcement, and competitive elections created inducement-friendly conditions.
- ii. Personal factors: Voters' beliefs about governance, political socialisation, and expectations of clientelism shaped their responses.

- iii. Behaviour: Consistent acceptance of inducements reinforced politicians' reliance on vote-buying.

This cyclical dynamic demonstrates that vote-buying is not an isolated act of corruption but an embedded socio-political practice sustained through reciprocal interactions. One of the central implications of reciprocal determinism for democracy is the manner in which vote-buying undermines accountability. When citizens exchange votes for money or material inducements, they weaken their ability to hold elected officials accountable. This shift in accountability dynamics is explained by the reciprocal feedback loop: voters' behaviour (accepting inducements) reinforces an environment in which politicians prioritise patronage rather than policy delivery. In return, this fosters personal beliefs among voters that elections are merely opportunities to reap short-term benefits (Lindberg, 2003; Sacchi & Salih, 2020).

In Effutu, repeated cycles of inducements between 2008 and 2020 illustrate how accountability deficits are entrenched. Politicians have increasingly invested in short-term electoral “handouts” rather than long-term development, rationalising that inducements guarantee votes more reliably than policy commitments. Voters, conditioned by this environment, respond accordingly, thus demonstrating the interdependence of behaviour, personal cognition, and environmental context.

Another implication concerns the weakening of democratic institutions such as the Electoral Commission, political parties, and civic associations. Bandura's model emphasises that environmental conditions shape and reinforce behaviour. In Ghana, institutional weaknesses such as limited enforcement of anti-vote-buying provisions under the Representation of the People's Law create an environment in which illicit

electoral practices flourish (Asunka, 2016). This not only erodes public trust in institutions but also alters citizens' personal beliefs about their role in democracy.

The case of Effutu demonstrates this vividly. Despite repeated allegations of vote-buying, few prosecutions or sanctions have occurred, thereby reinforcing voters' perceptions that the practice is normalised. This reflects reciprocal determinism's principle that environments which tolerate corruption reinforce behaviours that perpetuate it. Reciprocal determinism also underscores how behaviour can reshape environments by reproducing clientelist systems. In Ghana, vote-buying strengthens a clientelist political culture where politicians are viewed as patrons and voters as clients (Nugent, 2001; Bob-Milliar, 2012). This arrangement redefines citizenship from a relationship based on rights and accountability to one based on transactions and material exchanges.

In Effutu, this dynamic has been reinforced over successive electoral cycles. Voters' acceptance of inducements legitimises clientelist strategies, thereby shaping the environment in which future elections are contested. Politicians respond to this environment by allocating campaign resources disproportionately to inducements rather than civic education or programmatic appeals.

The governance implications of this cycle are profound. Reciprocal determinism suggests that environments and behaviours mutually reinforce one another, which in the context of vote-buying results in poor governance outcomes. Politicians elected through clientelist strategies may prioritise private accumulation and partisan loyalty over broad-based development. Citizens, in turn, rationalise poor governance as inevitable, reinforcing their inclination to seek short-term material benefits during elections (Kramon, 2016).

In Effutu, despite repeated campaign promises, long-standing issues such as unemployment and infrastructural deficits persist. This aligns with the theoretical expectation that environments shaped by clientelism perpetuate underdevelopment and governance failure.

Reciprocal determinism also offers insights into potential pathways for reform. Because the model recognises the interplay between environment, personal factors, and behaviour, interventions must address all three determinants:

- i. Environment: Strengthening electoral laws, improving socio-economic conditions, and fostering transparency.
- ii. Personal: Enhancing civic education to reshape beliefs about citizenship, rights, and accountability.
- iii. Behaviour: Promoting role models and collective action campaigns that normalise resistance to inducements.

By altering one determinant, reciprocal determinism suggests that feedback loops can eventually shift the entire system towards more democratic practices. This multidimensional approach is more sustainable than reforms that focus narrowly on institutional enforcement or voter education alone.

This section has examined the relevance of reciprocal determinism and its application to the study of vote-buying in Effutu Constituency, Ghana. Building on Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, reciprocal determinism was shown to provide a robust framework for understanding the dynamic interplay between environment, personal cognition, and behaviour. Unlike deterministic models that reduce human action to either structural or volitional factors, reciprocal determinism captures the mutual feedback processes that sustain complex phenomena such as vote-buying.

The relevance of the theory lies in its explanatory breadth. It highlights how environmental conditions such as poverty and weak institutions create stimuli for vote-selling, how personal beliefs and expectations shape voters' responses to inducements, and how these behaviours feed back into the political environment by reinforcing clientelism. Applied to the Ghanaian context, the theory clarifies why vote-buying persists despite democratic progress: it is not simply an act of corruption imposed by elites but a reciprocal process sustained through voter rationalisation, party strategies, and institutional weaknesses.

The Effutu Constituency micro-case illustrates these dynamics empirically. Across the 2008, 2012, 2016, and 2020 elections, competitive contests between the NDC and NPP were consistently marked by allegations and evidence of inducements. Voters responded to these inducements not merely out of ignorance but as rational actors navigating environments of deprivation and governance failure. Their behaviours, in turn, reinforced a political culture where vote-buying became a normalised electoral strategy. This feedback loop exemplifies the triadic interaction of environment, personal factors, and behaviour that Bandura theorised.

The implications for democracy and governance are significant. Vote-buying undermines accountability, weakens institutions, entrenches clientelism, and perpetuates poor governance. However, reciprocal determinism also provides hope: by altering one element of the triadic system, whether through socio-economic reforms, civic education, or stricter enforcement of electoral laws, societies can trigger feedback loops that gradually transform electoral behaviour.

In conclusion, reciprocal determinism provides a robust theoretical and analytical framework for studying vote-buying in Ghana. Its emphasis on reciprocal influences ensures that explanations are neither overly structural nor overly individualistic. By applying this lens, scholars and policymakers can better understand the persistence of vote-buying and design interventions that address its root causes at multiple levels. For Ghana's democracy to consolidate, the cycle of environment, cognition, and behaviour that sustains vote-buying must be disrupted, beginning in constituencies like Effutu where the problem is most acute.

2.1.2 Rational Choice

Rational Choice Theory (RCT) has been one of the most influential frameworks for understanding individual and collective behaviour in economics, sociology, and political science. Rooted in the utilitarian philosophy of Jeremy Bentham and later expanded by economists and political scientists such as Anthony Downs, James Buchanan, Gordon Tullock, and Mancur Olson, the theory posits that individuals act in ways that maximise their utility, given available information, constraints, and preferences (Burns & Roszkowska, 2016; Smart, 2020).

In the context of politics, rational choice provides a lens through which to explain why voters may choose to participate in elections, abstain, or engage in transactional electoral practices such as vote-buying. For politicians, it clarifies why they invest scarce resources in patronage rather than policy-driven campaigns. In Ghana, where competitive elections have increasingly become monetised, RCT is highly relevant to analysing why money and vote-buying dominate democratic processes. The Effutu Constituency provides a compelling micro-case for applying RCT, given its history of tight electoral competition and recurring allegations of inducements during campaigns.

This section first examines the relevance of rational choice theory to understanding human behaviour and democratic politics before turning to its application to vote-buying in Effutu Constituency, Ghana.

Rational Choice Theory finds its intellectual roots in utilitarian philosophy and classical economics. Jeremy Bentham (1789/1988) argued that human beings are motivated to maximise pleasure and minimise pain a utilitarian principle later echoed in rational choice theory. Rationality, in this sense, is not merely logical reasoning but the pursuit of self-interest within constraints. Bentham's insights laid the foundation for linking morality, decision-making, and governance. John Stuart Mill (1863/1998) refined utilitarianism by introducing qualitative distinctions between pleasures, emphasising the complexity of human preferences. These ideas became embedded in economic models of decision-making, where individuals are assumed to weigh costs and benefits when making choices.

The formalisation of rational choice came with neoclassical economics, which modelled individuals as *homo economicus*, seeking to maximise utility. In political science, Anthony Downs' (1957) *Economic Theory of Democracy* introduced rational choice into electoral studies. Downs argued that citizens vote if the expected benefits outweigh the costs, but given the negligible probability of one vote deciding an election, abstention or transactional participation may be rational.

Downs also recognised the phenomenon of "rational ignorance", voters' decision not to acquire costly political information, since one vote rarely changes an outcome. This framework opened the way for explaining why citizens might rationally trade votes for material incentives when immediate benefits outweigh abstract democratic ideals. Buchanan and Tullock's (1962) *The Calculus of Consent* extended rational choice

principles to collective decision-making. They posited that political institutions reflect the aggregation of self-interested choices rather than altruistic public service. This perspective is crucial for understanding patronage politics, where leaders see vote-buying as a rational investment to secure office and its associated rents.

Olson's (1965) *Logic of Collective Action* further argued that individuals have little rational incentive to contribute to public goods such as democratic accountability when they can "free ride" on others' efforts. This helps explain why voters in Ghana may not resist vote-buying; the private benefits of selling one's vote outweigh the uncertain and diffuse benefits of good governance.

2.1.2.1 Relevance of Rational Choice Theory to the Study

Rational Choice Theory posits a principle of utility, suggesting that individuals seek to maximise pleasure and minimise pain, which forms the intellectual roots of later economic models of human behaviour (Smart, 2020). In economics, rational choice provided the foundation for neoclassical utility theory, which emphasises the consistency of individual preferences and decision-making under constraints (Elster, 1986).

In political science, Rational Choice Theory gained prominence with Anthony Downs' (1957) *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, which applied economic reasoning to voting behaviour. Downs argued that individuals vote based on a rational calculation of expected benefits, including policy outcomes, personal gains, and the satisfaction derived from participation. His "rational voter theory" illuminated the paradox of voting, suggesting that when costs of voting outweigh the perceived benefits, rational actors may abstain, a dilemma central to understanding voter turnout.

This theoretical transition signalled a shift from behaviouralism, which emphasised psychological factors, to a model of political actors as utility-maximising agents (Green & Shapiro, 1994). Over time, RCT influenced diverse subfields, including public choice theory, collective action, institutional analysis, and corruption studies.

Rational Choice Theory revolutionised political science by positing that politics is an arena of strategic interaction where actors pursue self-interest under institutional constraints. Its relevance can be seen in four key contributions:

1. Voting and Electoral Behaviour – Rational Choice provides insights into why individuals vote, abstain, or sell votes. It suggests that voters evaluate trade-offs between immediate private gains and longer-term public goods (Downs, 1957; Blais, 2000).
2. Political Elites and Party Competition – Politicians, as rational actors, weigh the costs and benefits of strategies such as campaigning, policy promises, or engaging in illicit practices like vote-buying (Stokes, 2005; Keefer & Vlaicu, 2008).
3. Institutions and Governance – Public choice theory, advanced by Buchanan and Tullock (1962), applied rational choice to government decision-making, portraying politicians and bureaucrats as actors motivated by private interests.
4. Collective Action and Free-Rider Problems – Olson's (1965) Logic of Collective Action highlighted the difficulty of mobilising citizens for public goods when individuals can free-ride on others' efforts, a concept highly relevant to understanding why voters may prioritise personal inducements over democratic ideals.

Thus, Rational Choice remains relevant for analysing individual decision-making, elite strategies, and systemic distortions in democratic governance.

Despite its strengths, Rational Choice has attracted significant criticism. Green and Shapiro (1994) argued that the theory suffers from “overstretching,” as it often relies on unfalsifiable assumptions about preferences. Critics highlight the following limitations:

- i. Reductionism: Reduces complex social, cultural, and moral motivations into simplistic cost-benefit calculations.
- ii. Overemphasis on Self-Interest: Ignores altruism, ideology, and identity politics (Sen, 1977; Ostrom, 1998).
- iii. Context Neglect: Rationality is socially and culturally bounded; what is “rational” in one context may not hold in another (Granovetter, 1985).
- iv. Paradox of Voting: The model struggles to fully explain why millions vote despite the infinitesimal probability of one vote changing outcomes.

Nevertheless, scholars such as Ostrom (1998) and Levi (1997) argue for “bounded rationality” and “contingent consent,” recognising that rationality is shaped by norms, institutions, and incomplete information.

Despite criticisms, Rational Choice remains a vital analytical lens, particularly in contexts of weak institutions, clientelism, and rent-seeking politics. Its focus on incentives, payoffs, and constraints aligns with empirical realities in many developing democracies where voters and politicians make decisions that prioritise short-term survival or gains over long-term democratic ideals (Wantchekon, 2003; Vicente, 2014).

In sum, Rational Choice Theory is not exhaustive but provides a powerful framework for examining the micro-foundations of political behaviour. Its relevance to vote-buying in Ghana lies in explaining both why politicians offer inducements and why voters accept them within the rational calculus of costs and benefits.

2.1.2.2 Application of Rational Choice to the Study

Ghana's Fourth Republic has witnessed intensifying monetisation of politics, with vote-buying becoming a common strategy during campaigns (Ayee, 2014; Bofo-Arthur, 2008). Ghana is often celebrated as one of Africa's stable democracies, yet elections are not free from irregularities, particularly vote-buying. Studies by Lindberg (2010), Ichino and Nathan (2013), and Asunka et al. (2019) document widespread inducements in Ghanaian elections, ranging from direct cash transfers to distribution of goods, services, or promises of jobs. Politicians distribute cash, goods, and promises of employment in exchange for votes. The Electoral Commission and civil society organisations such as the Centre for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana) have repeatedly raised concerns about the corrosive impact of such practices on democratic accountability (CDD-Ghana, 2020). Vote-buying thrives where:

- i. Voters face economic hardship and prioritise immediate needs.
- ii. Politicians perceive high electoral competition and thin margins.
- iii. Institutional oversight and enforcement mechanisms are weak.
- iv. Norms of reciprocity and clientelism shape political interactions.

The Effutu Constituency in Ghana's Central Region is a microcosm of these dynamics. Electoral contests there, especially from 2008 to 2020, have been intensely competitive, with slim margins motivating political actors to adopt aggressive campaign strategies, including monetary inducements.

From a Rational Choice perspective, voters in Effutu will engage in utility-maximising calculations when there are any of the following:

1. Immediate Material Gain vs. Uncertain Policy Benefits Given widespread poverty and unemployment, many voters place greater value on immediate benefits (cash, food, clothing) offered by candidates than on abstract promises of policy improvements (Bratton, 2008). Also, Rational Choice explains this as discounting the future voters value immediate consumption more highly than uncertain, long-term governance outcomes.
2. Low Probability of Vote Impact - Individual voters recognise that one ballot has little effect on overall outcomes. Accepting inducements, therefore, is seen as a rational way to extract value from an otherwise negligible act (Khemani, 2015).
3. Clientelism and Reciprocity - In Ghanaian political culture, accepting gifts is rationalised as part of reciprocal relationships. Rational Choice can incorporate this by viewing “reciprocity” itself as part of the utility function (Nugent, 2001).
4. Risk Minimisation - Voters who fear exclusion from future benefits or reprisals may rationally accept inducements even if they privately oppose the candidate.

Thus, Rational Choice explains why vote-selling is not irrational behaviour but a calculated strategy under conditions of poverty, weak institutions, and competitive elections.

For political elites, engaging in vote-buying is also a rational strategy where the following are witnessed:

1. Maximising Electoral Chances - In competitive constituencies like Effutu, where elections have been won by margins as low as a few hundred votes, the marginal payoff of buying votes is high (Fridy, 2007).

2. Cost-Benefit Logic- The cost of distributing cash or goods is outweighed by the expected benefits of political office, including salaries, rents, patronage opportunities, and control over state resources (Gyimah-Boadi, 2007).
3. Weak Enforcement and Low Risk - Laws against electoral malpractice exist but enforcement is inconsistent. The low probability of punishment lowers the perceived cost of engaging in vote-buying (Asunka et al., 2019).
4. Strategic Targeting- Rational Choice explains why politicians target swing voters, youth, and vulnerable populations who are more responsive to inducements. This is a strategic allocation of limited campaign resources.

Hence, vote-buying in Effutu can be understood as a rational investment by politicians seeking office in a high-stakes environment.

Vote-buying illustrates collective action problems predicted by Rational Choice: (1) If all voters resist inducements, politicians would be forced to compete on policies; (2) However, each individual voter has an incentive to accept inducements because the cost of resistance is borne individually, while the benefits of clean governance are collective; and (3) This creates a “prisoner’s dilemma” where rational individual choices (accepting inducements) lead to collectively suboptimal outcomes (weaker democracy, poor governance). In Effutu, therefore, Rational Choice highlights the tension between individual rationality and collective welfare, explaining why vote-buying persists despite widespread recognition of its harmful effects.

Applying Rational Choice to Effutu constituency reveals profound implications:

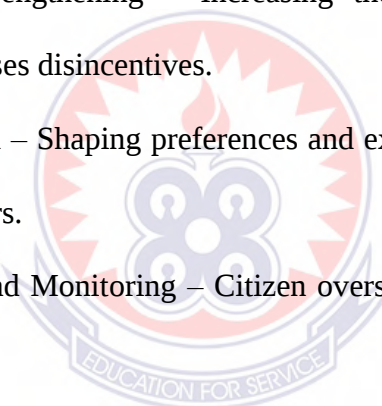
1. Erosion of Accountability – Politicians who “buy” votes may feel less compelled to deliver on policy promises once elected.
2. Short-Termism in Politics – Voters’ preference for immediate gains undermines long-term democratic consolidation.

3. Entrenchment of Clientelism – Rational strategies reinforce patron-client networks, weakening institutionalised party competition.
4. Policy Distortions – Politicians allocate resources to vote-buying rather than policy programmes, diverting state funds.

Thus, Rational Choice demonstrates that vote-buying is not merely a moral failing but a logical outcome of incentive structures within Ghanaian electoral politics

If vote-buying is rational, solutions must change the incentive structures:

- i. Economic Empowerment – Poverty reduction reduces the attractiveness of inducements.
- ii. Institutional Strengthening – Increasing the cost of malpractice through enforcement raises disincentives.
- iii. Voter Education – Shaping preferences and expectations can alter the rational calculus of voters.
- iv. Transparency and Monitoring – Citizen oversight can raise reputational costs for politicians.



These strategies reflect the Rational Choice insight that behaviour changes when payoffs and constraints change. Rational Choice Theory provides a compelling lens for analysing the dynamics of vote-buying in Ghana, particularly in competitive constituencies such as Effutu. By highlighting the strategic calculations of both voters and politicians, the theory demonstrates that vote-buying is not irrational but rather a logical response to prevailing constraints and opportunities. The relevance of RCT lies in its ability to link individual decision-making with systemic political outcomes, showing how private rationality can produce collectively undesirable consequences for democracy. Its application to Effutu constituency underscores the urgent need for

reforms that alter the incentive structures sustaining vote-buying. Ultimately, addressing vote-buying in Ghana requires restructuring the cost-benefit calculus of political actors and citizens alike, ensuring that democratic participation becomes not only rational but also conducive to collective welfare.

2.1.3 The Theory of Civic Ideals and Practices

The theory of civic ideals and practices emphasises the principles and behaviours necessary for active participation in a democratic society. It is rooted in the understanding that democracy thrives when citizens are informed, engaged, and committed to the common good. Civic ideals refer to the values and principles that guide democratic governance, such as equality, justice, freedom, and the rule of law. Civic practices, on the other hand, are the actions and behaviours through which individuals and communities uphold and advance these ideals. Together, they form the foundation of participatory democracy, fostering accountability, inclusion, and collective decision-making.

Central to the theory is the idea that civic ideals provide a moral and ethical framework for political and social engagement. These ideals emphasise the importance of respecting individual rights while promoting collective responsibilities. For example, the principle of equality requires that all citizens have equal access to political, social, and economic opportunities, ensuring their voices are heard in public decision-making processes (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Similarly, the ideal of justice calls for fairness in the distribution of resources and the administration of laws, addressing systemic inequalities and protecting vulnerable populations. Civic practices operationalise these ideals through actions such as voting, advocacy, community service, and public

deliberation. These practices enable citizens to influence policies, hold leaders accountable, and contribute to societal progress.

2.1.3.1 Relevance of the Theory of Civic Ideals and Practices to the Study

The theory of civic ideals and practices provides a crucial lens for analysing democratic participation, citizen engagement, and the moral underpinnings of governance. At its core, the theory posits that democracy cannot be sustained by institutions alone; it requires the active involvement of informed, responsible, and empowered citizens (Barber, 1984; Schudson, 2006). Civic ideals embody the normative values of democracy, equality, liberty, justice, accountability, and the rule of law. In contrast, civic practices constitute the tangible behaviours through which these ideals are enacted, such as voting, deliberation, advocacy, and volunteering (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Together, these ideals and practices create a symbiotic relationship that sustains participatory democracy, making the theory highly relevant for contexts where democratic institutions face challenges, such as Ghana's evolving electoral environment.

One significant relevance of the theory lies in its emphasis on the interdependence between values and behaviours. Civic ideals are abstract unless operationalised through practices; conversely, practices devoid of ideals risk becoming empty rituals. In democratic societies, this linkage ensures that political processes are not reduced to mere formalities but are infused with ethical meaning. For instance, the act of voting gains democratic significance only when grounded in the ideals of equality and justice (Dahl, 2020). Without this connection, voting could simply reflect transactional exchanges, as seen in cases of vote-buying. Hence, the theory underscores that civic

engagement must always be anchored in principles that promote the collective good, rather than narrow, individualistic benefits.

The theory is also relevant because it underscores the role of citizens as custodians of democracy. Modern democratic governance often privileges institutions and leaders, yet the theory redirects attention to the responsibilities of citizens. Democracy is not merely about being governed but about governing oneself in concert with others (Barber, 1984). This resonates strongly with deliberative democratic traditions, which stress that informed, active citizens are essential for ensuring government accountability, protecting rights, and addressing social injustices (Gutmann & Thompson, 2004). Such a focus is particularly relevant in societies where electoral participation is undermined by apathy, corruption, or clientelism, because it reminds scholars and practitioners that sustainable democracy requires cultivating civic virtues among the populace.

Moreover, the theory is relevant in addressing the growing disillusionment with democracy globally. Scholars such as Dalton (2008) and Norris (2011) have documented a decline in trust in democratic institutions, especially among younger generations. The theory of civic ideals and practices provides a counter-narrative by highlighting pathways to revitalise democracy through education, civic literacy, and grassroots engagement. By linking ideals such as equality and justice with tangible practices like community activism and social accountability, the theory provides a roadmap for deepening democratic culture, even when institutions falter.

The theory is equally pertinent in exploring structural inequalities and marginalisation within democracies. While democracy promises political equality, systemic barriers such as poverty, illiteracy, and exclusionary cultural practices often prevent meaningful

participation. The theory of civic ideals and practices draws attention to these contradictions by emphasising that ideals like equality and justice cannot remain rhetorical but must be realised through inclusive practices (Putnam, 2000). For instance, unequal access to political platforms or resources undermines the fairness of elections, thereby contradicting civic ideals. In this sense, the theory is a normative and practical framework for assessing whether democracies live up to their promises.

Another dimension of relevance is its insistence on education and civic literacy. Civic education equips citizens with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to engage responsibly in public life (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). It enables individuals to critically evaluate political messages, resist manipulation, and participate constructively in governance. In contexts where vote-buying thrives, the absence of robust civic education often leaves citizens vulnerable to exploitation. The theory, therefore, highlights education as a critical tool for strengthening democracy by bridging the gap between ideals and practices.

Finally, the theory is relevant for understanding the erosion of civic trust and social capital in democratic systems. Social capital, the networks, norms, and trust that enable collective action, is a key ingredient of democracy (Putnam, 2000). However, practices such as vote-buying weaken trust between citizens and leaders, as well as among citizens themselves, by reducing democratic engagement to monetary transactions. The theory of civic ideals and practices provides both an analytical and prescriptive framework to address this erosion by promoting participatory and accountable civic practices that restore trust and legitimacy.

2.1.3.2 Application of the Theory of Civic Ideals and Practices to the Study

The thesis titled “incentives, votes and democracy: A case of vote-buying in Effutu Constituency in Ghana” can also be productively examined through the lens of the theory of civic ideals and practices. Vote-buying, as a practice, directly contradicts the ideals of democracy, distorts citizen participation, and undermines accountability in governance. Applying this theory allows for a critical analysis of how financial inducements disrupt the balance between civic ideals and practices, thereby weakening the quality of democracy in Effutu Constituency and, by extension, Ghana.

One of the central civic ideals in democracy is political equality, which implies that every citizen’s vote should carry equal weight regardless of socio-economic status (Dahl, 2020). However, in the Effutu Constituency, as in other parts of Ghana, vote-buying undermines this ideal by privileging wealthier candidates who can afford to dispense financial inducements. This creates an uneven playing field where electoral outcomes are less reflective of the public’s authentic preferences and more determined by financial power. By examining this through the theory of civic ideals and practices, it becomes evident that vote-buying represents not just a moral failing but a structural distortion of democratic equality.

The practice also corrupts the civic responsibility of voting. Instead of being an expression of informed judgment, voting becomes transactional, driven by immediate personal benefits rather than collective welfare. As Schaffer (2007) argues, vote-buying commodifies political participation, reducing citizens to consumers in an electoral marketplace. From the perspective of the theory, this undermines both the ideals of democracy and the civic practices that sustain them, weakening the foundations of participatory governance.

Civic ideals demand that elected leaders be accountable to the electorate, deriving their legitimacy from the genuine consent of the governed (Barber, 1984). However, vote-buying erodes this accountability. Leaders who secure office through financial inducements may perceive their mandate as purchased rather than earned, reducing their sense of obligation to serve constituents effectively. In Effutu, this dynamic risks entrenching patron-client relationships, where leaders focus on rewarding loyalists rather than pursuing broad-based development (Gyimah-Boadi, 2007).

From the lens of the theory, this practice diminishes civic trust. Citizens may grow cynical, believing that political outcomes are manipulated rather than freely chosen. Putnam (2000) warns that such erosion of social capital has long-term consequences, as citizens disengage from meaningful political practices, reducing the vibrancy of democracy. Thus, the application of the theory reveals how vote-buying not only compromises electoral fairness but also corrodes the social bonds that sustain democratic governance.

The theory of civic ideals and practices also highlights the role of structural inequalities in shaping civic behaviour. Poverty and economic insecurity make citizens in Effutu particularly susceptible to vote-buying, as immediate material gains often outweigh abstract democratic ideals (Lindberg, 2010). In this sense, vote-buying is not merely a failure of civic virtue but a symptom of broader socio-economic vulnerabilities. Applying the theory allows the study to situate vote-buying within Ghana's socio-economic realities, showing that strengthening democracy requires addressing the root causes of voter susceptibility.

Furthermore, weak civic education in Effutu exacerbates the problem. Without adequate civic literacy, voters may not fully appreciate the long-term consequences of exchanging their votes for money. Westheimer and Kahne (2004) stress that robust civic education is vital for empowering citizens to resist manipulation and act by democratic ideals. Applying the theory thus points to policy interventions, such as civic education programmes, youth engagement initiatives, and economic empowerment schemes as necessary complements to legal reforms targeting electoral malpractice.

The theory also underscores the importance of collective civic practices such as activism, advocacy, and public deliberation in advancing democratic ideals. In Effutu, civil society organisations, religious groups, and youth associations have periodically mobilised to denounce electoral malpractice and promote peaceful, issue-based campaigns (CDD-Ghana, 2020). These practices embody the civic ideals of justice and accountability by seeking to hold politicians accountable and educate citizens about the dangers of vote-buying. Applying the theory in this context highlights the potential of grassroots initiatives to counterbalance the corrosive effects of money in politics. Schudson (2006) argues that informal civic practices like neighbourhood discussions and community meetings are as significant as formal participation. By fostering a culture of deliberation and mutual accountability, these practices can help inoculate citizens against the lure of monetary inducements, thereby restoring democratic integrity in Effutu.

The application of the theory further reveals broader implications for Ghana's democracy. Vote-buying in Effutu is not an isolated phenomenon but reflects systemic challenges across constituencies. By highlighting the disjuncture between civic ideals

(equality, accountability, justice) and corrupted civic practices (vote-buying), the theory directs attention to reforms that can strengthen democracy. These include:

1. Enhancing civic education to foster informed citizenship.
2. Promoting economic empowerment to reduce vulnerability to inducements.
3. Strengthening institutional accountability mechanisms such as independent electoral commissions and anti-corruption bodies.
4. Encouraging grassroots civic practices that build trust and social capital.

Through these applications, the theory of civic ideals and practices provides both a diagnostic and prescriptive framework for addressing the corrosive influence of money on Ghana's democracy.

The theory of civic ideals and practices is highly relevant for understanding the relationship between money, votes, and democracy. Its emphasis on values such as equality, justice, and accountability, coupled with practices such as voting, deliberation, and civic education, provides a comprehensive framework for analysing the challenges posed by vote-buying in Ghana. Applied to the Effutu Constituency, the theory reveals how financial inducements distort democratic equality, erode accountability, weaken civic trust, and exploit socio-economic vulnerabilities. At the same time, it points to practical solutions strengthening civic education, promoting economic empowerment, and fostering collective action that can restore the balance between civic ideals and practices. Ultimately, the theory provides a normative and analytical lens for both diagnosing democratic weaknesses and charting pathways for renewal, making it indispensable for the present study. The succeeding section is the conceptual review of the literature related to the study. The literature was reviewed based on the thematic areas of the objectives for the study.

2.1.4 Linking Theories to Research Objectives and Justifications

Theory	Description	Linked Objective(s)	Justification / Application in the Study	APA Citation
Reciprocal Determinism	A concept from Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, which emphasises the dynamic interaction between individual behaviour, personal factors (cognitive, affective), and environmental influences.	Objective 2: Explore the factors that contribute to vote buying in Effutu.	Explains how voters' susceptibility to vote-buying is shaped by personal motivations (financial need, political awareness), social influences (peers, family, local leaders), and environmental factors (campaigns, community norms). Helps the researcher understand the complex interplay of individual, social, and environmental determinants of vote-buying.	Bandura, A. (1986). <i>Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory</i> . Prentice-Hall.
Theory of Civic Ideals and Practices	Developed by Almond & Verba, this theory emphasises citizen behaviour, political participation, and adherence to civic norms as key determinants of democratic functioning.	Objective 3: Examine the effects of vote buying on elections within Effutu.	Provides a framework to assess how vote-buying undermines civic ideals, such as informed voting and accountability, and affects the integrity and outcomes of elections. It helps the researcher evaluate the impact of clientelistic practices on local democratic processes.	Almond, G. A., & Verba, S. (1963). <i>The civic culture: Political attitudes and democracy in five nations</i> . Princeton University Press.
Rational Choice Theory	Posits that individuals make decisions by weighing costs and benefits to maximise personal utility.	Objective 1: Investigate the various manifestations of vote buying in Effutu. Objective 4: Assess the consequences of vote buying on the standard of living of the people of Effutu.	Explains why voters accept inducements (to improve immediate welfare) and why politicians engage in vote-buying (to secure votes). This theory helps categorise the different forms of vote-buying, understand behavioural motivations, and link these actions to socioeconomic consequences for the local population.	Downs, A. (1957). <i>An economic theory of democracy</i> . Harper.

Source: Researcher's Construct (2025).

This study employs three complementary theoretical frameworks—Reciprocal Determinism, the Theory of Civic Ideals and Practices, and Rational Choice Theory—to clarify the dynamics of vote-buying in the Effutu Constituency. Reciprocal Determinism (Bandura, 1986) provides a paradigm for examining the interaction between human behaviour, personal characteristics, and environmental factors, particularly in relation to Objective 2, which seeks to explore the drivers of vote buying. This theory allows the researcher to examine how voters' susceptibility is affected by personal motivations, such as financial necessity or political awareness, as well as by social factors, including peers, family, and local community leaders, along with environmental elements like electoral campaigns and local political networks.

The Theory of Civic Ideals and Practices (Almond & Verba, 1963) supports Objective 3, which examines the influence of vote buying on elections. This theory examines citizen behaviour, political engagement, and compliance with civic norms, enabling the analysis of how clientelistic practices undermine democratic principles, threaten electoral integrity, and affect voting results in Effutu. Rational Choice Theory (Downs, 1957) underpins Objectives 1 and 4 by offering a conceptual framework that clarifies why voters accept inducements and politicians engage in vote-buying. It clarifies the economic and strategic factors that influence various methods of vote-buying and their effects on the local population's quality of life. These theories combined provide a robust conceptual framework for the study, ensuring that the research clarifies the interplay among individual motives, socio-cultural influences, civic expectations, and economic incentives in affecting vote-buying behaviour in Effutu.

2.2 Manifestations of Vote-Buying in Elections

Etzion-Halevy is credited with one of the most cited definitions of vote buying/selling. According to him, vote buying or vote selling is the exchange of private material for political support. Agyepong, et al. (2021) drew from the definition above, by holding that “voters are given gifts, incentives or items for their private use and are expected to reciprocate the gestures of the candidates by giving them their votes. Neeman and Orosel (2006) identify three types of arguments that are usually made against the practice. First, they argue that because vote buying gives wealthier individuals an unfair advantage, it violates the principle of equality. Second, they say that votes belong to the community as a whole and should therefore not be alienable by individual voters. Third, there is a concern that vote buying may promote inefficiency.

This is because parties may buy the interests of some voters before the election, and political representatives may therefore ignore their needs or interests after the election. Politicians provide money and goods to voters, drive likely supporters to the polls, and target gifts to voters who are likely to reciprocate with their vote (Neeman & Orosel, 2006). These practices undermine democratic elections because individuals who sell their votes are unlikely to be able to demand public services from the candidates to whom they sold their votes. Vote buying, a practice deeply entrenched in many political systems, poses a significant challenge to democratic governance worldwide. This phenomenon involves the exchange of material incentives or benefits for political support during election campaigns. Nichter (2014) defines vote buying as a form of clientelistic relationship wherein political elites, often associated with clientelist parties or political machines, provide tangible rewards to individuals or small groups in return for their electoral allegiance. This practice, observed across various socio-political settings, has historical roots dating back to ancient civilisations like Athens (Pritchard,

2015). The persistence of patronage politics and the use of material incentives for electoral gain have been documented throughout history, from colonial to post-colonial environments (Baland & Robinson, 2007).

Nwagwu et al. (2022) emphasise that vote buying has been a prevalent campaign strategy in diverse countries, including the Philippines, Britain, Pakistan, India, the United States, and several European and African nations. They explain that the methods employed in vote buying vary, ranging from direct cash transactions to the distribution of goods and favours. Historical examples illustrate the diverse manifestations of vote buying. Before the reforms of 1925 in Chile, political parties openly purchased votes from voters with cash (Oppenheim, 2018). Similarly, during the 1970s, Italy's Christian Democratic Party was known to have offered free commodities and employment opportunities in return for votes. In 19th-century Brazil, landholders similarly influenced agricultural labourers' voting through material rewards and directives. In the U.S., urban "political machines" like Tammany Hall employed patronage systems and tangible incentives to mobilise voters and maintain dominance (Golway, 2014). Likewise, Latin American caudillo systems often operated through structured distributions of goods and favours to secure political loyalty. During Nicaragua's municipal elections in 2008, there were reports of vote-buying, where eligible voters were given food stamps, rice, beans, and vouchers for 25,000 stores in exchange for their votes (Gonzalez-Ocantos et al., 2010).

Similarly, voting was invalidated in a constituency in Tamil Nadu after authorities seized 100 million rupees intended for vote-buying during India's 2019 general elections. It was estimated that the amount of vote-buying per family ranged from \$75 to \$100 (Bari, 2018). The evolution of technology has introduced new avenues for vote

buying, such as the manipulation of social media or electronic transfers to distribute funds directly to voters. Despite advancements, traditional methods persist. For instance, in Ghana, cash and other forms of handouts, known as “chop money,” are commonly employed in political campaigns (Kramon & Posner, 2013). This practice remains pervasive in Ghanaian elections, highlighting the resilience of vote buying even in the presence of relatively institutionalised party systems (Baidoo et al., 2018). Elements of election irregularities such as clientelist tendencies (vote buying, treating) were found by civil society organisations. A survey conducted by the CDD showed that 51% and 32% of Ghanaians believed that both the NDC and NPP were found guilty of such occurrences, respectively (CDD, 2016; Achel, 2023). In CODEO’s pre-election environment observation statement, they found that both the NDC and NPP parliamentary candidates were seen giving money to people and some women’s groups in communities in the Tolon Constituency of the Northern Region.

On 14 October 2016, an aspiring MP in Sefwi Akontobra gave money to the parents of some senior high school students and university students to settle their school fees (CODEO 2016, p.3). The NDC organised a political rally in Jirapa on 17 Sunday July 2016, for their parliamentary candidate, Francis Dakurah. He distributed ten new motorcycles to party officials and was also captured on camera distributing two Ghana Cedi bills to the crowd (GII Report 2016, p. 4). On 16 August 2016, outboard motors and pans were distributed to fishermen in Sekondi by the NDC during their four-day campaign tour of the Western Region (CODEO 2016, p. 6). Also, Rebecca Akuffo Addo, wife of Akuffo Addo, together with officials of the NPP, donated several items and an undisclosed amount of cash to the chief and people of Lantze Dzan at Ga Mashie in Accra ahead of the 7 December polls (Graphic Online, 2016). Political parties wait

days, weeks and months until elections before dispensing such material incentives to voters, which indicates a clientelist approach.

2.2.1 Conceptualising Vote-Buying

Vote-buying has emerged as one of the most salient forms of electoral malpractice in contemporary democracies. Scholars broadly conceptualise it as the distribution of private material benefits to voters in exchange for electoral support (Schaffer, 2007; Stokes, 2005). The practice constitutes a subset of clientelistic politics in which political actors exchange material inducements for political loyalty, often in contexts where programmatic linkages between politicians and voters are weak (Kitschelt & Wilkinson, 2007). While definitions vary, a common denominator is the intention of influencing electoral choice through material inducement, whether through direct payments, gifts, services, or promises of patronage (Nichter, 2014).

Some scholars highlight the difficulty of drawing a sharp line between vote-buying and other forms of electoral campaigning. Lindberg (2010) argues that gift-giving can be construed as an extension of culturally embedded practices of reciprocity, thus blurring the boundary between legitimate mobilisation and illicit inducement. Nonetheless, legal and normative frameworks in most democracies treat vote-buying as a corrupt practice that undermines the principle of free and fair elections (Birch, 2011; Transparency International, 2019). Conceptually, vote-buying manifests not merely as the exchange of cash but as a broader repertoire of inducements tailored to local cultural, economic, and political contexts.

2.2.2 Historical Roots and Global Perspectives

Historically, vote-buying is not a new phenomenon. Studies of 19th-century Britain and the United States reveal entrenched practices of cash payments, liquor distribution, and favours for electoral support (Allen, 2017; Cox & Kousser, 1981). In Britain, electoral corruption was so widespread that it prompted reforms such as the 1872 Ballot Act, which sought to curb bribery through secret balloting. Similarly, in the United States, the “machine politics” of Tammany Hall relied heavily on patronage and cash inducements to secure votes among immigrant communities (Banerjee & Pande, 2007).

In contemporary times, vote-buying persists in many young democracies across Latin America, Asia, and Africa. In Mexico, politicians have distributed food baskets, cement, and cash transfers during election campaigns (Magar, 2018). In the Philippines, candidates are known to hand out envelopes of money, often euphemistically called “gifts” or “transportation allowance” (Hicken, 2007). Across sub-Saharan Africa, vote-buying manifests in forms ranging from the provision of household goods to promises of local development projects (Bratton, 2008; van de Walle, 2007). These historical and cross-regional perspectives demonstrate that vote-buying is not unique to any single political system but reflects broader patterns of electoral mobilisation where poverty, weak institutions, and clientelistic traditions intersect.

2.2.3 Cash-for-Votes Practices

The most direct manifestation of vote-buying is the distribution of cash to individual voters. This practice is widespread and constitutes the archetype of vote-buying. Cash-for-vote transactions often occur in highly clandestine ways, especially in contexts with robust monitoring institutions (Gonzalez-Ocantos et al., 2012). Candidates or their

agents may distribute money before election day, sometimes at night or in private residences, to avoid detection.

In Nigeria, for example, political parties have been reported to distribute cash at polling stations under the guise of “transport money” or “feeding allowance” (Onapajo, 2014). Similar practices exist in Kenya, where voters often expect small sums of money in exchange for attending rallies or voting (Kramon, 2016). In Ghana, cash inducements have been documented at both the constituency and polling station levels, often mediated by party activists and local opinion leaders (Asante, 2012; Gyampo, 2014). Such payments can range from token sums (e.g., GH¢5–20) to substantial amounts depending on the competitiveness of the race and the socioeconomic status of the voters. The anonymity of cash makes it a preferred medium of vote-buying, but it also complicates enforcement. While many voters perceive it as an opportunity to “benefit” from politicians, critics argue that it reduces electoral politics to transactional exchange and entrenches corruption (Birch, 2011).

2.2.4 Material Gifts and In-Kind Inducements

Beyond direct cash payments, vote-buying often manifests through material gifts and in-kind inducements. Candidates distribute items such as foodstuffs (rice, sugar, cooking oil), clothing (T-shirts, caps), household goods (soap, cutlasses, roofing sheets), or even alcohol. In some Latin American contexts, household appliances and construction materials are distributed as inducements (Stokes et al., 2013).

In sub-Saharan Africa, the distribution of consumables such as bags of rice or livestock is common during election campaigns (Bratton & van de Walle, 1997). In Ghana, voters have reported receiving items such as cloth, bicycles, and mobile phones from candidates (Lindberg, 2010). These material inducements are often culturally framed

as gifts, aligning with local traditions of generosity and reciprocity. Voters may not perceive accepting such items as corrupt but rather as reciprocating a relationship with patrons who are expected to share their resources (Nugent, 2001).

Material inducements also serve symbolic purposes: campaign-branded T-shirts or caps function both as gifts and as instruments of political visibility, reinforcing candidate identity and presence in local communities. Such inducements, though seemingly trivial, accumulate into powerful mechanisms of mobilisation, especially in rural areas where poverty heightens their appeal (Kramon, 2016).

2.2.5 Provision of Services and Development Promises

Vote-buying is not limited to individual-level transactions. It often manifests through the provision of collective goods and services, or the promise thereof, timed strategically around elections. Politicians may initiate or complete infrastructure projects such as roads, schools, clinics, or water systems shortly before elections to signal their capacity and willingness to reward constituencies with development (Wantchekon, 2003). This practice, sometimes termed “developmental clientelism,” blurs the boundary between legitimate governance and electoral inducement (Keefer & Vlaicu, 2008).

In Ghana, promises of jobs, scholarships, and community development projects are frequent features of campaign strategies (Boafo-Arthur, 2008). In Nigeria, politicians often drill boreholes or donate generators during campaigns (Ibrahim, 2019). These services create a sense of obligation among beneficiaries, even if they fall short of direct quid pro quo arrangements. The timing of such projects, however, often reveals their electoral logic: they are more likely to be launched in swing constituencies where electoral competition is tight (Kramon & Posner, 2013).

The provision of services highlights the blurred distinction between programmatic politics and clientelism. While infrastructure development is a legitimate function of governance, its strategic deployment as an electoral inducement reflects the clientelistic underpinnings of vote-buying.

2.2.6 Vote-Buying through Patronage and Clientelism

Another manifestation of vote-buying lies in patronage networks, where politicians offer jobs, contracts, or other forms of political favour in exchange for electoral support. This form of inducement operates at the elite and organisational level, rather than at the individual voter level. In many African states, public sector jobs, contracts, and promotions are distributed to loyalists and supporters as rewards for political loyalty (van de Walle, 2007).

In Ghana, successive governments have been accused of politicising public sector appointments to reward party loyalists (Whitfield, 2009). Similarly, in Kenya and Nigeria, access to state contracts and resources is closely linked to political patronage (Barkan, 2009). While such practices may not involve direct payments on election day, they constitute systemic manifestations of vote-buying insofar as they link material rewards to political loyalty.

Patronage-based vote-buying is particularly entrenched in contexts with weak institutional checks and where access to state resources is highly centralised. It reinforces a cycle of clientelism in which voters and political elites perceive politics as primarily transactional.

2.2.7 Symbolic and Religious Dimensions of Vote-Buying

Vote-buying also manifests in symbolic and religious forms. Candidates may donate to churches, mosques, traditional authorities, or community festivals during election campaigns. These donations are framed as benevolent contributions but often carry implicit expectations of political loyalty (Lindberg, 2010). In Ghana, for instance, candidates frequently make contributions during church harvests or to traditional chiefs, which indirectly mobilize support from congregations or communities (Gyampo, 2015).

Similarly, in Nigeria, political actors donate generously during religious events, knowing that religious leaders wield significant influence over their followers' voting decisions (Omilusi, 2016). These forms of vote-buying are subtle, often couched in cultural or religious legitimacy, making them harder to regulate or denounce publicly. They highlight the multifaceted nature of electoral inducements, which extend beyond materiality into the symbolic domain.

2.2.8 Media, Technology, and Digital Vote-Buying

In the digital age, vote-buying has evolved into new forms facilitated by technology. Candidates may distribute mobile phone credit, data bundles, or electronic transfers to voters. In Kenya and Nigeria, mobile money platforms have been used to discreetly transfer inducements to targeted voters (Nanfosso, 2020; Abayomi et al, 2020). Social media platforms also serve as tools for digital patronage, with candidates sponsoring online influencers to mobilise or manipulate voter behaviour.

Furthermore, disinformation campaigns and targeted digital advertisements can function as indirect forms of vote-buying, offering voters promises of benefits or creating expectations of rewards. The digitalisation of vote-buying presents new

challenges for electoral commissions, which often lack the technical capacity to monitor and regulate such practices effectively.

2.2.9 Regional Manifestations: Latin America, Asia, and Africa

Comparative studies highlight regional variations in the manifestations of vote-buying. In Latin America, politicians commonly distribute food packages and household items, reflecting urban poverty and the centrality of party machines (Stokes et al., 2013). In Asia, particularly the Philippines and Indonesia, direct cash payments dominate, facilitated by local brokers (Hicken, 2007; Aspinall, 2014). In sub-Saharan Africa, vote-buying takes more diverse forms, including cash, gifts, development promises, and symbolic gestures (Bratton, 2008). These regional differences reflect variations in socio-economic conditions, cultural norms, and political institutions. However, the common thread is the strategic use of inducements to mobilise electoral support in contexts where programmatic competition is weak and voter poverty heightens susceptibility to material inducements.

2.2.10 Manifestations of Vote-Buying in Ghana

Ghana offers a rich case for examining the manifestations of vote-buying. Although the country is lauded for its democratic consolidation, vote-buying remains pervasive. Studies reveal that Ghanaian politicians employ a mix of cash inducements, material gifts, and development promises to secure votes (Lindberg, 2010; Gyampo, 2014; Akwetey, 2016).

During election campaigns, it is common to witness the distribution of T-shirts, cloth, bicycles, cutlasses, and even roofing sheets (Asante, 2012). Candidates also distribute cash at rallies or to community leaders, who then mobilise their networks. Promises of jobs and infrastructure projects are integral parts of campaign strategies, especially in

competitive constituencies. Contributions to churches, mosques, and festivals are widespread, reflecting the symbolic and religious dimensions of vote-buying.

Empirical surveys confirm that many voters in Ghana consider such inducements as legitimate entitlements rather than corruption. According to the Afrobarometer (2021), a significant percentage of Ghanaians admit to receiving gifts or inducements during elections, though many insist that it does not necessarily determine their vote. Nevertheless, the persistence of such practices underscores their embeddedness in Ghana's political culture.

2.2.10.1 Political Parties and Vote Buying in Ghana

Cheeseman, Lynch and Willis (2016) argue that democracy seems to be consolidating in Ghana relative to other African states. This is mainly because Ghana has witnessed at least three peaceful power alternations since 1992, and in particular, the 2016 elections, which resulted in a historic loss of power by a sitting president (John Mahama of the NDC) who had not served his second term as had happened in all the previous cases in the country's Fourth Republic. However, Cheeseman and his colleagues also observe that an apparent increase in voter education, plus a burgeoning middle class in Ghana, does not have a significant effect on the reduction or eradication of vote buying, as the practice remains a primary characteristic of Ghana's electoral democracy. This view is shared by other scholars (Linberg, 2003; Frempong, 2008; Cheeseman et al., 2016; Gadjanova, 2017). Yet, these studies mainly focus on national elections, with little attention to vote-buying dynamics in intra-party polls, and why party elites seem to develop a penchant for (re)distributive politics. Perhaps the most critical and lucid work on vote buying in intra-party elections in Ghana is by Nahomi Ichino and Noah

Nathan. Ichino and Nathan (2013) stress that pervasive clientelism and patronage, rather than policy-centred competition, characterise -party elections in Ghana.

Election of political party executives is among the topics that create enormous controversies across the country. In the early days of Ghana's Fourth Republic (from 1992), the choice of party executives and aspirants was characterised by hand-picking of some contestants ahead of others by political 'godfathers', ethnicity and tribalism, ballot snatching, physical violence and vote rigging, amongst others (Carbone, 2003). While most of these issues remain relevant as they still influence interparty and intra-party leadership elections to various degrees (Osei, 2012), the phenomenon of intra-party vote buying has instead gained more attention from stakeholders and political commentators who protest through multiple media outlets. Like other multi-party contexts in Africa (Lindberg, 2003; Robinson, 2013), Gyampo (2018, page 11) notes that vote buying is not a new phenomenon in Ghana:

Since 1992, elections in Ghana, particularly internal party elections and national ones, have been saddled with vote-buying in a manner that confers legitimacy on corrupt practices after elections, undermines the sovereign will of the people, and hinders the selection of competent people to lead political parties.

One of the several measures to tackle party electoral fraud in Ghana was to expand the Electoral College to increase the scope of the electorate (from national executives to include constituency and zonal or community-level executives), who partake in the elections of national, regional, and constituency party executives. This decision was mainly made to minimise the influence of influential party individuals who could, as it were, easily 'buy' delegates' votes or dictate the choice of a particular candidate to the few privileged party members who took part in party elections (Carbone, 2003). Thus, expanding the Electoral College was to tackle issues such as in-party electoral clientelism (Apreku-Danquah, 2017).

The expansion of the Electoral College, however, appears not to address concerns of voter inducement in party delegates' elections. As Asante (2018) notes, the expansion of the franchise comes with corresponding expansion and innovation in the dimension of vote buying. Asante indicates that during Rawlings' time (1993-2000), vote-buying materials were mainly T-shirts and, in some cases, flat-screen TVs. To Asante, even the expansion of the Electoral College, which can take up to 6,000 or more delegates at a single party leadership election, has not weakened the ability of contestants to distribute materials to all or target delegates to solicit their votes. As Stokes et al. (2013, p. 290) aptly contend, "democratisation lies not in the expansion of the franchise but in its increasingly free exercise". Therefore, the expansion of the party voters' register does not correlate with free and fair elections.

A survey conducted by the Africa Elections Project (AEP) shows that all political parties in Ghana are guilty of vote buying. The majority of party supporters and, by extension, Ghanaians engage in the act either directly or indirectly, which depicts the perverse nature of the phenomenon in society (AEP, 2016). However, the study singles out the two largest political parties that have alternated power at least twice in Ghana's Fourth Republic, the ruling NPP and the most considerable opposition NDC, as being the guiltiest of perpetual electoral clientelism at their respective party delegates' elections, particularly when in power. This resonates with scholars such as Linberg (2003) who have argued that incumbent parties or parties that control state coffers tend to display opulence in distributive politics, especially in Africa, where state laws and constitutions, as well as party guidelines and structures could be, and in many cases have been, hijacked by some 'big men'. As the NPP and NDC have had access to state resources in turns, politicians' quest to control power or get their close associates to handle party positions for the continued flow of trusted networks, incentivises active

vote buying. The 2018 party executive elections in the NPP and the 2018-2019 executives and flagbearer elections in the NDC revealed widespread vote buying as defined in the literature.

The NPP national delegates' congress at Koforidua Technical University in the eastern region of Ghana was not without copious cases of alleged vote buying. The exercise, which was to elect party national executives to steer the party's agenda for 'victory 2020', witnessed various kinds of voter inducement, including direct distribution of cash to delegate voters. The most significant occurrence involved a candidate for the party's national chairmanship, who acquired and pledged to distribute buses to all 275 constituencies supposedly for party purposes. Around the elections, Freddie Blay had displayed a queue of buses, promising to hand over one bus to each constituency after the delegates' voting. Though this decision could aid party business, as Blay and his close networks had argued, the gesture raised concerns about the timing of the buses – re-echoing the views of Stokes et al. (2013) and Nichter and Hidalgo (2016). The timing of the buses suggests a clear move to materially induce constituency executives to vote for the then acting national chairman, against a four-time loser, Stephen Ntim. According to Gyampo (2018, paras. 2-3), the timing of such a gesture was meant to sway voters:

...although Freddie Blay's ongoing process to procure 275 buses for the party is 'not a big deal', the gesture could well be construed as vote-buying because the delivery of the buses has started too close to the party's conference to elect national officers, scheduled for July 7... if someone means well for their party and decides to procure vehicles to help the party ... it shouldn't be a big deal. Still, the timing is what really would raise qualms and eyebrows.

Like many other political analysts and commentators, Gyampo stresses that if the buses had come in 2014, 2015, 2016 or any time before or after the elections, or even had not been withheld from beneficiaries until after the delegates' elections, one would have conceived Blay's gesture as a move in genuine support of the party's growth.

The main opposition NDC also exhibited an open display of vote buying during its constituency, regional and national elections, as delegate voters were being given cash and other packages (e.g. parcels of food and handkerchiefs) branded with candidates' images just before or while voting was taking place. For instance, a candidate for the Greater Accra regional chairmanship, Emmanuel Ashie Moore, started his campaign with the distribution of free computers, scanners and printers to constituencies. According to Moore (2018), the move was to equip constituency offices for effective communications. However, in line with the previous views, the timing of such items could qualify Moore's gesture as a vote-buying attempt.

While there exists vote buying in each of the parties' delegates' congresses, the practice becomes more pronounced when one is in power (AEP, 2016), mainly for two reasons. First, incumbent parties in Africa mostly use expected government service delivery as a conduit to seek voter support. Thus, government appointees, in their mandates to perform state-sanctioned duties, appear to citizens as though it is out of the former's benevolence, and hence should be rewarded with votes (Linberg, 2003). At the party level, therefore, networks of party clienteles usually acquire wealth and cash, amongst others, through awards of contracts and committee allowances, with which they attempt to lure party delegates to vote for them or their favourites in party elections to ensure a continuum in their wealth acquisition. Second, once a party wins power, it is often believed that a particular crop of party executives did an efficient job in barring any

inefficiencies in the opposition's camp. Thus, some party 'big men' favour some candidates for party leadership and would usually pump in resources in support of such candidates' campaign to retain them in office (AEP, 2016). This support usually tilts the field of competition in favour of the preferred candidate, which generally generates conflicts and apathy. It sometimes leads to defection of losers and their support base.

Asare (2018) blames the proliferation of intra-party and, by extension, national elections on the non-regulation of party funding. Although Section 33 of the Representation of the People Law of the 1992 constitution of Ghana criminalises vote buying and other instances of electoral misconduct, two political parties (NPP and NDC) do not follow the directive in most cases. Part III of the Political Parties Law (Act 574 of 2000) also sought to control party funding but appears rather vague, as it does not put a ceiling on party spending but instead focuses on who has the right to sponsor party activities, in which case only citizens of Ghana do (Political Parties Law, Act 574, 2000). Consequently, Asare's proposition does not apply and cannot be used under the current dispensation. After all, if the law does not concretely hold one accountable in matters of vote buying in national elections, little change is expected concerning the same or similar acts at party levels. Asare opines that unchecked party funding is the predominant channel for the pervasiveness of vote buying, as individuals and groups can spend any number of resources without any restrictions. According to him, the constitution should put a ceiling on funds and the value of materials being donated for party activities, as is being done in some mature democracies. This, in his view, would cripple the upsurge of "political entrepreneurship" in the country. Citing the US as an example, Asare (2018, para.7) reveals:

I spent years of my life in the United States, where I was very active in politics. However, there is a ceiling on how much an individual can contribute to a party. I supported Obama in 2008, but I was only able to contribute 2400 dollars to his campaign, which is the maximum. Even if I wanted to contribute more, I could not.

Although it is often challenging to conclude, and researchers have failed to provide concrete evidence that material inducements directly influence vote outcomes, the vastly uneven and opaque grounds created by party electoral fraud have negative implications for democratic consolidation. While legal reforms and corresponding strict adherence to electoral laws would sanitise intra-party democratic processes, as happens elsewhere (Stokes et al., 2013), we suggest that elite consensus against ‘electoral entrepreneurship’ is also crucially needed to address electoral clientelism (Osei, 2015). According to Kyei-Mensah-Bonsu (2018), the success, effectiveness and prestige of any institution rest on its orderly functioning and the extent to which it adheres to standards of discipline, dignity and decorum. He acknowledges that it takes time to build credible and durable political institutions and a credible democratic attitude. Still, he believes that after more than 25 years of Ghana’s Fourth Republic, the quality and credibility of institutions should manifest more positively than they presently appear.

2.2.11 Overview of Effutu’s Political Landscape and Electoral History

The Effutu Constituency, located in the Central Region of Ghana, has a rich political landscape shaped by its historical background, demographic composition, and electoral dynamics. The constituency, with its administrative capital in Winneba, is known for its diverse population, comprising various ethnic groups, including the Effutus, Fantes, and migrants from other regions of Ghana. This demographic diversity contributes to the constituency’s vibrant political scene, characterised by competition among multiple political parties seeking to represent the interests of different socio-cultural groups (Gyimah-Boadi, 2013). The constituency’s electoral history reflects a pattern of

competitive elections and political mobilisation, with alternating victories between the major political parties, particularly the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP). Effutu has been a battleground constituency, with both parties vying for electoral dominance through vigorous campaigning, grassroots mobilisation, and appeals to specific voter constituencies (Bratton & Gyimah-Boadi, 2015).

The political landscape of the Effutu Constituency has mainly been dominated by two well-known politicians, each representing one of the country's two major political parties. Both individuals have served as Members of Parliament for the constituency on at least three separate occasions. As the constituency MP during the early years of the Fourth Republic, Mike Allen Hammah of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) held the position for three terms. With 55% of the vote, he defeated Brigadier Joseph Nunoo-Mensah (Rtd) of the New Patriotic Party (NPP 34.30%), Emma H. Tandoh of the Convention People's Party (CPP 0.00%), and Kingsley Arko-Sam of the Independence Party (0.00%) to win the seat in 1996. In the 2000 parliamentary elections, he triumphed once more (48.10%), narrowly defeating Oheneba Akyeampong of the NPP (46%), Frank Ebo Sam of the Independent Party (2.00%), Kingsley Arko Sam of the Convention People's Party (CPP 1.40%), Ebenezer Newman-Acquah of the People's National Convention (PNC 0.90%), Benjamin K. Abbiw of the National Reform Party (NRP 0.70%) and Alex Kweku Aidoo of the Great Consolidated Popular Party (GCPP 0.00%). After receiving 51% of the vote, a fresh NPP candidate, Samuel Owusu-Adjei, defeated Mike Hammah of the NDC (46.60%), Sunu-Nuquaye Stephen of the CPP (1.40%), Isaac Arthur Aidoo (Independent 0.40%), Adelina Dennis (GCPP 0.30%) and Frank Ebo Sam (Independent 0.20%) in 2004, while his party was in power.

However, with 55% of the vote cast in 2008, Samuel Owusu Agyei (43.43%), Henry Kweku Bortsie (CPP 2.09%), and Mike Hammah mounted a formidable comeback to win back the seat. With 19,334 votes, or 53.6 percent of the total, a young Alexander Afenyo-Markin entered the race in 2012, fought hard, and defeated Mike Hammah (44.36%), Nana Ofori Owusu of Progressive People's Party (PPP 1.72%), Abdulrahim Mohammed Sanni (PNC 0.12%), Kofi Bondzie Baidoo (CPP 0.11%) and Kojo Bassan National Democratic Party (NDP 0.00%). At that point, he began his three-year rule as the legislative representative for the Effutu Constituency. The following election saw Afenyo-Markin widen the margin even more, receiving 62% of the vote compared to 34% for NDC candidate Eric Don Arthur, 3.84% for Nana Ofori Owusu PPP, 0.22% for Ebenezer Rolance Akumbea-Sam CPP and 0.06% for Murtala Muhammed Umar PNC in 2016. Afenyo-Markin garnered 63.96 %, James Kofi Annan 35.85% and Murtala Muhammed Umar 0.19% to be re-elected in 2020, becoming the first Member of Parliament to be elected to the Effutu Constituency three times in a row. It has witnessed significant political developments and electoral contests over the years, with notable campaigns and personalities shaping its electoral history. The political landscape of the constituency is also influenced by local dynamics, including traditional leadership structures, religious affiliations, and socio-economic conditions, which play a crucial role in shaping voter preferences and electoral outcomes. It reflects broader trends in Ghanaian politics, including issues of governance, development, and democratic consolidation.

2.2.11.1 The Effutu Constituency Case: Micro-Level Manifestations

The Effutu Constituency, in Ghana's Central Region, provides a micro-level lens for understanding vote-buying. Electoral contests in Effutu have been highly competitive, particularly between the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic

Congress (NDC). Media reports and scholarly accounts document extensive use of cash, gifts, and development promises in Effutu (Daily Graphic, 2016; Joy News, 2020).

During the 2008 elections, candidates were reported to distribute food items, cloth, and cash to mobilise support, particularly among fisherfolk and market women. In 2012, the intensity increased, with reports of bicycles and scholarships being offered to influential community leaders. The 2016 elections witnessed the strategic distribution of roofing sheets, outboard motors, and direct cash inducements, reflecting the constituency's economic reliance on fishing. By 2020, mobile transfers and cash distributions were widely reported, alongside contributions to churches and festivals.

Effutu exemplifies the multifaceted nature of vote-buying in Ghana, combining direct cash, material gifts, community development promises, and symbolic donations. The local economic context, dominated by fishing and petty trading, shapes the forms of inducements, while the competitiveness of elections intensifies the prevalence of such practices.

2.2.12 Theoretical Interpretations of Manifestations

The manifestations of vote-buying can be interpreted through various theoretical lenses. Rational choice theory posits that voters accept inducements as part of a cost-benefit calculation, particularly in contexts of poverty where immediate material gains outweigh the uncertain benefits of policy-based politics (Schaffer, 2007). The theory of reciprocity emphasises that voters may interpret gifts not as bribes but as culturally legitimate expressions of generosity that warrant reciprocation through votes (Lindberg, 2010).

Clientelism theory situates vote-buying within broader networks of patron-client relations, where political loyalty is exchanged for material benefits (Kitschelt & Wilkinson, 2007). Moral economy perspectives highlight how voters interpret inducements within ethical frameworks that differentiate between acceptable generosity and illicit corruption (Scott, 1976). These theories underscore the fact that manifestations of vote-buying are not merely mechanical transactions but are embedded in socio-cultural and political logics.

2.2.13 Implications for Democracy and Electoral Integrity

Democracy, in this regard, is the best practice of leadership selection because it requires the participation of every citizen (Farrell & Suiter, 2019). Lioba and Abdulahi (2005) define democracy as “a system of government that allows citizens of a country to choose freely their leaders”. Odionye (2016) defines democracy as any system of government that is rooted in the notion that ultimate authority in the government of the people rightly belongs to the people, that everyone is entitled to an equitable participation and share in the equal rights and equitable social and economic justice as the birthright of everyone in the society. The basic characteristics of democracy include the existence of the mechanisms for political and economic choice, a balanced political structure and a stable political system. The concept of democracy has evolved, shaped by historical experiences, cultural contexts, and normative debates (Morison, 2007). It remains a dynamic and contested notion, subject to interpretation and debate among scholars, policymakers, and citizens worldwide. It is a political system characterised by principles of popular sovereignty, political equality, and majority rule. It entails the participation of citizens in decision-making processes, either directly or through elected representatives, and the protection of individual rights and freedoms (Christiano, 2018).

The essence of a democratic political system lies in its promise to benefit the entirety of society rather than privileging a select few individuals or groups.

However, the manifestations of vote-buying carry significant implications for democracy. They erode the principle of free choice, distort electoral competition, and undermine accountability (Birch, 2011). Politicians who rely on inducements may prioritise short-term transactional politics over long-term policy commitments. Voters, in turn, may become habituated to expecting inducements, entrenching a cycle of clientelism.

In Ghana, despite the country's democratic reputation, the persistence of vote-buying raises concerns about the quality of representation and governance (Gyampo, 2015). In Effutu, for instance, the prevalence of inducements suggests that electoral outcomes may be influenced more by transactional exchanges than by policy debates. This undermines the democratic ideal of programmatic competition and risks perpetuating a culture of corruption. This practice affects electoral integrity.

Hussien (2018) defines electoral integrity as the degree to which elections are conducted fairly, transparently, and by democratic principles and standards. It encompasses various dimensions, including the legal framework governing elections, the impartiality and independence of electoral authorities, the integrity of voter registration and ballot counting processes, and the absence of fraud, coercion, or undue influence. Electoral integrity is essential for upholding the legitimacy of electoral outcomes and maintaining public trust in the democratic process (Hussien, 2018). It requires not only the presence of formal rules and procedures but also effective enforcement mechanisms and a culture of compliance with democratic norms. The concept of electoral integrity has gained increasing attention in academic research and

policy discussions, particularly in the context of global efforts to promote democracy and good governance. The Electoral Integrity Project (EIP), led by Norris, Frank, and Coma (2014), developed a comprehensive index of electoral integrity based on expert assessments and statistical analysis of election data from around the world. The EIP index evaluates elections on multiple criteria, including electoral laws and procedures, voter registration, campaign finance, media coverage, and the conduct of political parties and candidates.

Ferran, Martinez, Coma and Staffan (2013) proposed alternative frameworks for measuring electoral integrity, emphasising different dimensions such as electoral competitiveness and the independence of the judiciary. However, the prevalence of vote buying, electoral fraud, and manipulation, as well as issues related to political polarisation, media manipulation, and the influence of money in politics, undermines efforts to promote electoral integrity. Jimoh (2021) emphasises that vote buying in particular undermines the integrity of elections by subverting the free and informed expression of the electorate's will. Voters may be swayed by their immediate personal gain through the giving of cash, or by coercion instead of making choices based on their genuine preferences. This distorts the democratic mandate and weakens public trust in the electoral process and the legitimacy of elected officials.

2.2.14 Money

Money is a necessary component of any democracy, which enables political participation and representation (Christiano, 2012). However, if not effectively regulated, it can undermine the integrity of political processes and institutions and jeopardise the quality of democracy. Regulations related to the funding of political parties and election campaigns and lobbying are critical to promote integrity,

transparency and accountability in any democracy. One of the most evident intersections of money and democracy lies in campaign finance. Money serves as a critical resource in political campaigns and governance. It facilitates advertising, campaign events, and other activities aimed at influencing voter perceptions and preferences. The ability to raise funds for political campaigns often determines candidates' viability and access to resources for disseminating their message.

In many democracies, the influence of money in politics raises concerns about the fairness of elections and the extent to which elected officials represent the interests of their constituents versus the interests of their financial backers (Cagé, 2020). Economic inequality distorts democratic processes when wealth is concentrated in the hands of a few, as those individuals may wield disproportionate influence over policymaking and political decision-making. This provides policies that favour the affluent at the expense of the broader population, potentially undermining the democratic principle of equal representation (Baker, 2010). While lobbying itself is a legitimate form of political participation, concerns arise when it leads to policies that benefit narrow interests over the common good. Money plays a significant role in shaping public discourse and influencing voter perceptions.

2.2.15 Power

Roscigno (2011) defines power as a key idea in political science, which is understood to mean the capacity of individuals or organisations to direct or affect the decisions, behaviours, and actions of others. It is a universal force in political systems which influences how actors and institutions interact and how power, privileges, and resources are distributed in society. Wrong (2017) explains three dimensions of power: overt power, covert power, and structural power. Overt power, according to him, is the

direct and obvious forms of influence, such as the use of force by state authorities or decision-making authority by elected officials. Conversely, covert power functions through less obvious means like agenda-setting, framing, and information manipulation, which mould opinions and limit decisions without using overt force. The ability of dominant social groups to mould the fundamental institutions and structures of society, affecting the way opportunities, resources, and norms are distributed to serve their interests, is known as structural power (Allen, 2004). Barnett and Finnemore (2005) identify legal authority, financial resources, social standing, specialised knowledge, and public support as sources from which power can arise.

According to Max Weber (1978), legitimate norms and processes created by legal institutions, such as laws, constitutions, and administrative regulations, form the foundation of legal-rational authority. Control over material resources, wealth, and means of production is the foundation of economic power, which enables people or organisations to impose their will through trade, investment, and market activity. Social networks, connections, and affiliations are the sources of social power that allow people to use their prestige, social capital, and influence in their communities or social circles. Power dynamics within societies are shaped and mediated by political institutions. According to Dahl (2012), democratic institutions like legislatures, courts, and elections are made to share power both vertically and horizontally to guarantee representation, accountability, and the rule of law. Power imbalances, however, could continue both within and between institutions since some individuals or groups have disproportionate influence because of things like organisational capability, wealth, or status (Haas, 2018).

Moreover, the structure and operation of political institutions may mirror and maintain current power disparities, limiting the chances that marginalised groups will be able to engage in and have an impact on decision-making processes (Gaventa & Cornwall, 2015). Within democratic systems, political parties play a pivotal role in the contestation and utilisation of power. They function as platforms for bringing people together, rallying support, and vying for electoral mandates to rule (Cheeseman et al., 2021). Political parties' ability to affect public opinion, control government institutions, and influence policy outcomes is shaped by their organisational structure, leadership style, and ideological stance (Dalton, 2013). Furthermore, the distribution and competition for power within the political sphere are influenced by the relationships that political parties have with other social actors like interest groups, media outlets, and civil society organisations (Berry & Wilcox, 2018). Wealthy individuals and organisations may have greater access to media platforms, enabling them to shape the narrative around political issues and candidates. Skewing public opinion and limit the diversity of voices in the political arena, undermining the democratic ideal of an informed electorate.

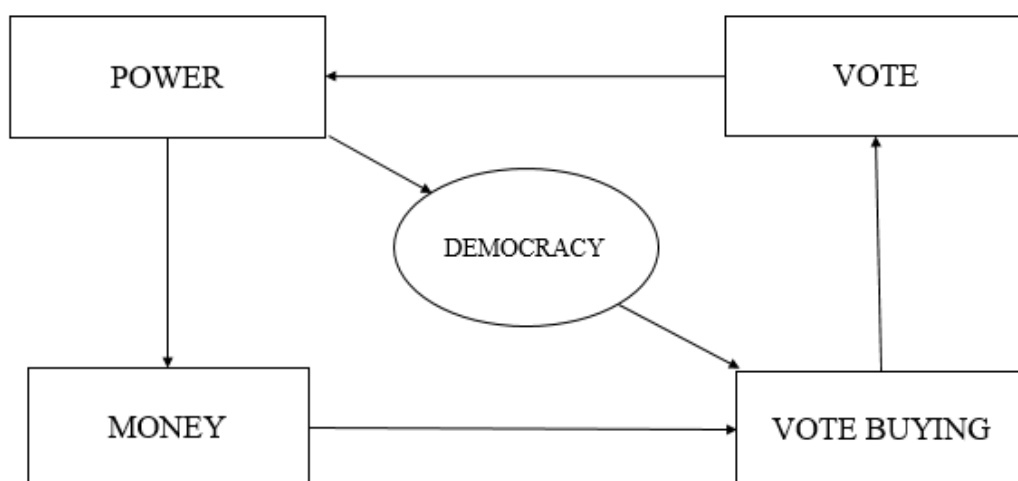


Figure 1: Conceptual framework on incentives, votes and democracy: The habits of vote buying in Effutu

Source: Author's construct

The practice of vote buying is not merely an isolated action but is deeply embedded in larger political power struggles and dynamics. This conceptual framework aims to examine the interplay of these variables, shedding light on their connections and implications for democratic governance. The intricate link between money and votes is inherently tied to power dynamics within political systems. As Karol and Yoshinaka (2015) elucidate, financial resources shape electoral outcomes, as candidates and parties with access to greater funds have the ability to amplify their messages, mobilise supporters, and sway voter perceptions. Money in politics again, influences policymaking processes where wealthy individuals or interest groups exert influence through campaign contributions and lobbying efforts, which increases disparities in political power. The disproportionate influence of wealth in politics undermines the principle of equal representation. Bonica et al. (2013) explores this topic, looking at how money affects American politics and how it affects democracy more broadly. Their study emphasises how important it is to strike a balance between the influence of money in politics and democratic norms like accountability and fairness.

The fundamental significance of free and fair elections in democratic governance is based on the relationship between democracy and votes (Goodwin-Gill, 2006). This is seen by the way people express their preferences and hold elected officials responsible through voting. However, elements like respect for civil liberties, political involvement, and electoral integrity can all have an impact on how good a democracy is. The offering of material incentives in exchange for votes distorts the will of the electorate and perpetuates corruption, which undermines the principles of free and fair elections. Money, votes, democracy, and vote buying are closely related and significantly impact democratic governance and election procedures. A thorough understanding of the intricate dynamics at work, as well as the larger institutional and

societal contexts in which they take place, is necessary to comprehend these relationships.

This section has demonstrated that vote-buying manifests in multiple forms: direct cash payments, material gifts, provision of services, patronage networks, symbolic donations, and digital inducements. These manifestations vary across regions but share standard logics of exploiting poverty, reciprocity norms, and weak institutional enforcement. In Ghana, vote-buying is entrenched across constituencies, including Effutu, where it takes highly localised forms shaped by economic and cultural contexts.

Despite extensive research, gaps remain. Few studies offer longitudinal analysis of how manifestations evolve across election cycles. The rise of digital vote-buying also requires more scholarly attention. Additionally, micro-level constituency studies, such as Effutu, remain underexplored in the literature, creating opportunities for in-depth empirical research that links manifestations to voter perceptions and electoral outcomes. The researcher focuses on this gap, examining other parameters, including voter behaviour and the factors influencing vote buying.

2.3 Factors Influencing Vote Buying

Vote buying is propelled by numerous factors extending beyond electoral dynamics. These influences impact either the supply side, involving political actors' choices to partake in such practices, or the demand side, reflecting voters' inclination towards participating in vote buying, as highlighted by Kramon (2016). Politicians' efforts to cultivate a clientelist relationship with their constituents by offering exclusive benefits in exchange for political loyalty are among the supply-side drivers of vote buying. Aidt and Jensen (2017) contend that the electoral system may enable vote buying, particularly if it has single-member districts or promotes intraparty competition

between candidates from the same party in the same electoral constituency, which may incentivise candidates to pursue personal electoral strategies. Voters may also drive vote buying through an expectation to receive money, gifts or other handouts from candidates standing for election to public office, which such voters may regard as a source of revenue.

Voters' willingness to accept benefits in exchange for their vote is principally a consequence of poverty and social exclusion (Gonzalez-Ocantos et al. 2012; Primus, 2021). Since the same financial incentive is likely more valuable to poorer voters than to their wealthier counterparts, it costs less for political actors to buy the votes of the poor (Stokes, 2007). Such voters may also be more politically marginalised and therefore more inclined to discount future benefits on which programmatic election campaigns are fought. Unemployment, inequality, and poverty make communities vulnerable to manipulation by political players trying to sway election results by exchanging tangible goods for votes.

Khan et al. (2016) emphasise that socioeconomic variables shape the occurrence of vote buying and that vulnerabilities caused by poverty, inequality, and unemployment may be taken advantage of by political players. Hicken (2011: 299) provides an explanation of this, stating that "clientelism appears to be more prevalent in developing countries, and within nations, noting that poorer voters appear to be more susceptible to clientelist offers. Explaining that poor people are risk-averse and hence value more highly a bag of goodies in hand today than the promise of redistributive public policy tomorrow. Ghana Centre for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana) and Coalition of Domestic Election Observers report that, some electorates are influenced by vote buying because of poverty, as the practice seem 'good' since it has the potential to solve short-term

financial problems (Nsiah, 2020). In a similar vein, Beramendi et al. (2022) argues that differences in income and wealth might intensify election manipulation trends.

The prospect of material gains or immediate financial relief might be more appealing than longer-term political ramifications or more comprehensive considerations of democratic values. Income disparities and sense of marginalization make individuals more receptive to offers of material incentives in exchange for their votes, particularly if they perceive that traditional avenues for political participation are inaccessible or ineffective. In contexts where job opportunities are scarce and economic prospects are limited, individuals may feel compelled to accept offers of financial assistance or employment opportunities from political actors in exchange for their electoral support (Gutmann & Moe, 2018). This phenomenon is particularly pronounced among youth populations and marginalised communities that face disproportionately high rates of unemployment and underemployment. Individuals with lower socio-economic status may perceive vote buying differently from those with higher socio-economic status as those with higher socio-economic status may perceive it as unethical or coercive (Stokes et al., 2013).

Beyond socioeconomic factors, acceptance of vote buying may also be rooted in cultural norms, such as the social norm of gift giving, in which an item of value is given without an explicit agreement regarding immediate rewards, but with some expectation of reciprocity (Blais & Indridason, 2007). Consequently, the act of providing benefits to voters without explicit agreements aligns with prevailing social norms, blurring the ethical boundaries surrounding electoral integrity. In societies where patron-client relationships are deeply ingrained and reciprocity is valued, the exchange of favours, including votes for material incentives, may be seen as a legitimate practice (Hicken,

2011). Norms that prioritise loyalty to kinship networks or local leaders over abstract notions of civic duty can also contribute to the acceptance of vote buying as a customary aspect of political engagement. Ethnic appeals and politicisation were minimised as the civil debate of policy issues took precedence at the macro-level of politics in the 2016 general election. The 2016 general election campaign also revealed the breach of a constitutional provision which specifically prohibits chiefs from engaging in partisan politics (1992 Constitution [article 276]). Some chiefs endorsed political parties, preferably presidential candidates. The 2016 general election recorded possibly the highest number ever of endorsements from chiefs across the country (Nsiah, 2020).

A further consideration may be that voters who are not interested in politics and do not attach importance to civic values are more disposed to engage in vote-buying offers. Some voters accept electoral handouts because doing so resonates with their sense of social justice. In the words of Chattopadhyay and Duflo (2004), individuals lacking a strong attachment to civic values are more likely to prioritise personal gain over electoral integrity, thus providing fertile ground for vote-buying practices. The consequences of education were emphasised by Kitschelt and Wilkinson (2007), who suggested that individuals with lower levels of education are more susceptible to vote buying. Voters' knowledge on vote buying is based on their views or perceptions about vote buying practices. Though the knowledge level about it may vary due to various types and definitions of vote buying, it must be seen from the legal aspects thus, the regulations about vote buying (Agyepong et al., 2021).

Ward et al. (2003) underscores the prevalence of laws prohibiting vote-buying across many nations. Despite these legal deterrents, their research suggests that a considerable segment of the population remains uninformed about the practice. This knowledge gap

poses a significant challenge to combating vote-buying effectively. People with lower education usually generate lower incomes than those with higher education, with that, less-educated individuals are expected to be more intensively exposed to vote buying than well-educated people.

On October 1-25, 2024, Ghana Centre for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana) in collaboration with the Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO) in their pre-election project in sixteen selected constituencies, eight regions, ninety-seven constituencies in Ghana observed that, most electorates do not understand the concept of vote buying and are not aware that ‘vote buying or selling’ constitutes election fraud and it is punishable by law. Their report indicates that, the youth would take anything politicians offer them and are ready to sell their votes to any politician who is ready to buy their votes, as some believe vote buying is a norm and view it as an open competitive market where the highest bidder (a politician who offers highest gift) always wins.

Systemic shortcomings are significant enablers of vote buying, including ineffective enforcement of legislation banning the practice, inadequate legislation or insufficient protection of secret ballots (Agyepong et al., 2021). Vote buying is prohibited by law in most countries, yet inadequate law enforcement frequently enables its persistence. An inclination by criminal justice systems, particularly the police, to allow vote-buying activities to occur in some countries permits brokers to engage in the practice with few obstructions.

According to Ookeditse and Makhumalo (2022), weak or poorly enforced campaign finance laws create loopholes that enable vote-buying practices to thrive. They argue that in environments where campaign finance regulations are lax or inadequately

enforced, political actors may exploit these loopholes to funnel illicit funds into electoral campaigns, including funds used for vote-buying purposes. The lack of transparency and accountability in campaign financing can obscure the sources of funding, making it difficult to detect and deter vote-buying activities. Additionally, in systems with weak candidate-centred accountability mechanisms, parties may exercise greater control over candidate selection and electoral campaigns, facilitating the coordination of vote-buying efforts. Intense party competition can incentivise political actors to engage in vote buying as a means of gaining a competitive advantage over their rivals (Kitschelt and Wilkinson, 2007). The fear of losing power or influence can drive parties to employ vote-buying tactics as a strategy to bolster their electoral prospects.

2.3.1 Approaches to Explaining Voting Behaviour

2.3.1.1 Identity or expressive voting

Indications from the voting model and a straightforward test of voters' expectations about forthcoming goodies show that voters anticipate targeted commodities from co-ethnic politicians. The normative repercussions of these conclusions are varied. On one hand, they show that anticipations of proper long-term functioning of governments, parties or candidates, as autonomous from real functioning, are contributing significantly to voting. On the other hand, it appears that these expectations may be centred on actual provisions: co-ethnicity does not provide any significant advantage to a candidate without a prior history, and Easterners seem to have never learned (or unlearned) to associate ethnicity with improvement or advancement. In the long run, it appears that co-ethnicity may not have any real advantage for an aspirant unless it also carries some advantage for voters (Carlson, 2010).

Carlson (2010) used a voting model investigation in Uganda to examine the fundamental justification for ethnic voting. She finds proof that voters expect more forthcoming commodities or resources from a co-ethnic presidential candidate. Most amasingly, she establishes that co-ethnicity is vital to voters in a situation where the candidate has evidence or history of prior provisions of goods and comparably, that history is relevant when the aspirant is co-ethnic. Additionally, those kinds of voters who are most likely to get access to ethnic sponsorship are the ones who are most likely to vote along ethnic lines. She confirmed this conclusion by telling participants to make forecasts about the potential performance of co-ethnic and non-co-ethnic candidates. It was revealed that respondents expect more future resources from co-ethnics than from non-co-ethnic candidates. The Uganda panel of the Afrobarometer survey again establishes that ethnicity has a substantial, autonomous influence on vote decision, controlling for other candidate features, such as policy or performance. (Bratton, Mattes & Gyimah Boadi, 2004).

Dowd and Dreissen (2008) note reductions in the superiority of state power as ethnicity becomes more intensely connected with the vote. The longest-standing premises on ethnic aligned voting is that voters would want their co-ethnics due to ethnic pride, or for what Chandra (2004) refers to as the psychic benefits of having someone just like themselves occupying a particular office or position. This was the anticipation of academics in the first days of African democracy who foretold that elections in Africa and other varied places would turn out to be ethnic roll calls (Horowitz, 1985). Ethnic sponsorship, in which the leaders' co-ethnics receive an unequal share of state assets, is a common hope in the literature (Berman, Dickson & Kymlicka, 2004) and one that is still very much active and well in Uganda. Researchers and journalists argue that President Museveni created the whole of his cabinet from his home province (Green,

2010; Habati, 2010; Musoke & Olupot, 2010) and that the Western provinces eat more than others (Rubongoya, 2007).

2.3.1.2 Policy voting

Bratton (2004) noted that campaign indiscretions are targeted at the rural poor and their effects are resolute. These effects are as follows: violence decreases turnout, and vote-buying augments partisan loyalty. But perhaps because most citizens speak against campaign manoeuvring as wrong, compliance with the wishes of politicians is not assured. Defection from intimidations and agreements is more widespread than compliance, especially where voters are cross-pressured from both sides of the partisan divide. Support from the voting replication and the straight test of voters' expectations about future commodities discloses that voters anticipate targeted commodities from co-ethnic candidates. The normative consequences of these findings are varied. On one hand, they indicate that beliefs of future performance, as autonomous from real performance, are adding significantly to voting. On the other hand, it seems these anticipations may be founded on genuine patterns of provision: co-ethnicity does not give any real advantage to a politician who does not hold a previous history, and politicians who seem to have never learned (or unlearned) to connect ethnicity with development.

In the long run, it appears that co-ethnicity may not provide a candidate with an advantage unless it also benefits voters. Recently, Bratton and Kimenyi (2008) revealed that Kenyans who are most committed to their ethnic identity are the ones most likely to vote along ethnic lines. Ugandans vote retrospectively, supporting politicians who have performed well during their tenure. Confirmation of retrospective voting has been found in countries across the globe (Fiorina, 1987; Lohmann, Brady & Rivers, 1997;

Besley & Burgess, 2001; Kousser, 2004). Although each of them has limitations, there are also a variety of findings that expose evidence of retrospective voting on the African continent (Ferree, 2004; Ferree & Horowitz, 2007; Hoffman, Gibson, Ferree & Long, 2007; Bratton et al., 2004; Lindberg & Morrison, 2008). These studies show that voters in Africa, notwithstanding their ethnicity, use the candidate's performance as a basis for their vote decisions.

In connected research, Blaydes (2006) argues that voters in Egypt go to the polls or turnout simply because they expect physical remuneration. Chen and Zhong (2008) say that in China, individuals who identify most strictly with the current government or party in power are most likely to vote. Shi (1999) finds that voters in China's elections vote due to a desire to penalise fraudulent officials. Bratton (1999) finds that, in Zambia, political involvement is determined by institutional connections between individuals and the state. Kuenzi and Lambright (2005) find credence for this argument and argue that persons with higher levels of linkages to political parties are most likely to vote. I contribute to this literature and illustrate the mobilising impact of vote selling in this study.

Voting behaviour is a set of personal electoral activities, including participation in electoral campaigns, turnout at the polls, and choosing for whom to vote (Bratton 2013). Democratic citizenship is defined here as participation in popular collective action and engagement with political leaders and institutions, including between elections and within a rule of law (Bratton, 2013). This broad notion of citizenship goes well beyond the formal attributes of legal citizenship, such as birth, marriage, or naturalisation, that entitle an individual to hold a passport or national identity card. Instead, it refers to a political understanding of citizenship based on civic engagement and participation. It

is consistent with the contrasts made in the literature between citizens, on the one hand, and parochials who are disengaged from the political system and subjects who passively defer to authority on the other (Almond & Verba, 1963; Mamdani, 1996).

Citizens are differentiated from clients, defined as those who merely want patronage rather than participation in political decision-making (Fox 1994; Bratton 2008). If survey participants are reluctant to disclose an unadulterated ethnic preference, investigations will ultimately underestimate the influence of co-ethnicity on predicting voter selection. Recent studies indicate that presidential performance is a more significant predictor of vote choice than ethnicity (Bratton & Kimenyi, 2008), potentially reflecting the notion that retrospective voting is a more socially acceptable rationale for candidate preference than ethnicity. Moreover, the prevalent observation that ethnicity does not correlate with electoral outcomes in certain African nations, including Senegal and Burkina Faso (Bratton et al., 2004; Posner, 2004; Basedau & Stroh, 2009; Huber, 2012), may reflect the sensitivity surrounding the reporting of ethnic voting rather than genuine voter preferences.

2.3.1.3 Governance Performance

Guardado and Wantchékon (2018) report that receiving an electoral handout increased the likelihood of turning out to vote by about 4.5%, as shown in the first row (“All countries”). Yet this effect is far from uniform across all cases, while some countries exhibit a large positive and statistically significant coefficient (Uganda, Mali, Kenya, and Botswana). Based on these findings, one would conclude that there is some evidence that handouts exert a positive effect on mobilisation and the vote share of certain parties. In contrast, Nichter (2008) as well as Stokes et al. (2013) argue that passive supporters are most likely to be targeted as well.

Nichter (2008) and Stokes (2005) find that the level of support or partisanship will influence the odds of being targeted with a handout. The concern with accounting empirically for partisanship is that it is often only measured post-treatment and thus strongly correlated with vote choice. The same is true of other outcomes considered necessary in the vote-buying literature, such as attitudes toward democracy and citizenship (Carlin & Moseley, 2015). In terms of economic variables, it is generally hypothesised that individuals with fewer financial resources are likely to be targeted since their votes are cheaper to purchase (Nichter, 2008; Kramon, 2009). Stokes (2005) argues that those weakly opposed are most likely to be approached by political machines to ensure their support.

Nevertheless, two factors that may introduce bias could be influencing these outcomes. Firstly, it is crucial to employ matching to assign greater weight to genuinely treated explanations and to avoid overstating the impact of the treatment. The second point is that, as indicated in the Benin case, district-level factors might affect the observed outcome and should be incorporated into the estimation. The findings succinctly corroborate prior research on voting in Africa and uphold the notion that voting decisions, even within ethnically diverse societies, are predominantly retrospective. These data suggest that although both co-ethnicity and performance confer advantages to a political candidate, performance is more critical. These findings validate the hypothesis that voters will cast their ballots depending on performance.

What is good about these findings is that voters, even those who vote ethnically, are holding their elites responsible for performance rather than basing their vote solely on ethnic cues. Reported voting behaviours or vote intentions serve as the dependent variable in studies on the effects of a range of theoretically important independent

variables: actual and perceived government performance (Gutierrez-Romero, 2010; Bratton et al., 2011). These data have also been used to predict the winners of elections and to estimate the percentage of official vote share determined by fraud (Long & Gibson, 2009).

However, despite their widespread use, few studies have been done on the reliability of survey responses for measuring actual vote preferences in African countries. Others have looked at vote buying or intimidation (Kramon, 2009; Bratton, 2008). The most visible proponents of “anti-tribalism” are politicians and the media, whose attitudes may be pretty disconnected from the general public. African presidents routinely call for inclusivity in politics, but evidence suggests this is essentially a strategy to court the votes of the ethnic opposition (Keefer, 2010; Lindberg & Weghorst, 2010). Calls to avoid tribalism also dominate newspaper editorials. Recent headlines read, “Tribalism and Ethnicity Could Plunge Ghana into Anarchy” (Kunateh, 2009). Tribalism has no Place in Namibia (Jochem, 2007) and Ugandan Trade Minister, Fires Salvo on Tribalism, Calls Perpetrators Stupid and sees Tribalism, a barrier to Progressive Democratic Dialogue” (Odunze, 2013; Blattman, et al., 2019).

2.3.2 Vote Buying Strategies

Vote buying is greater in environments where political competitors are less able to make credible commitments to voters (Keefer & Vlaicuís, 2017). It requires parties to have at least some ability to monitor specific vote choices; otherwise, opposing voters could accept rewards and then vote for their preferred candidates (Tomz & Van Houweling, 2008; Bermeo, 2016). Political parties often buy votes from groups to which they cannot credibly commit to deliver post-electoral transfers. They promise larger post-electoral targeted transfers when credibility is lower. Burkell and Regan (2019) contend

that vote-buying strategies vary in their directness, subtlety, and sophistication, reflecting the diverse methods used to manipulate electoral outcomes and influence voter behaviour. Cash payments are one of the most straightforward and commonly used methods of vote buying, and political actors may distribute money directly to voters in exchange for their electoral support (Burkell & Regan, 2019). This form of vote buying is often visible and easily detectable, but its effectiveness lies in its immediacy and tangible impact on recipients (Stokes et al., 2013). Parties may also engage in “turnout buying” (Nichter, 2008).

In this approach, political parties offer incentives to inactive or less-engaged supporters to encourage them to vote (Nichter, 2008; Hawkins & Rosas, 2008; Nazareno et al., 2008). Unlike vote-buying, this strategy, known as turnout buying, does not involve tracking how individuals vote, but instead focuses on ensuring that those who receive rewards turn out to cast their ballots.

The distribution of material goods, such as food, clothing, or household items to voters, particularly in impoverished or marginalised communities, serves as a form of patronage and generates gratitude or loyalty towards the distributing party or candidate (Hicken, 2011). During the 2004 US election, operatives in East St. Louis offered cigarettes, beer, medicine and money to increase turnout of the poor (Nichter, 2008). Double persuasion, which targets indifferent or opposing non-voters, provides rewards to influence vote choice and induce participation. During campaigns, parties employ double persuasion to obtain individuals’ votes. Double persuasion requires monitoring of both turnout and voting decisions.

In clientelism, many individuals have little in the way of ideological preferences or reasons to vote, outside of the material reward structures set up by parties and candidates. Unlike the swing voters often targeted with vote buying, indifferent non-voters will not show up at the polls without incentives. According to De Vitis (2016), many among the urban poor in Italy remain so totally alienated from the political system that they see no particular reason to prefer one party or candidate over another. Diaz-Cayeros, Estevez, and Magaloni (2016) argue that parties may offer particularistic benefits to core supporters during elections to sustain electoral coalitions. Parties may engage in “normative” strategies, providing goods to supporters who, in turn, feel a “personal obligation” to vote for a given candidate (Schaffer & Schedler, 2007: 33-4; Lawson & Greene, 2014). Similarly, promises of immediate benefits, such as access to healthcare, education, or public services, can be used to incentivise voters to support a particular candidate or party.

Clientelism and patronage networks are common indirect strategies used to mobilise electoral support where political actors cultivate relationships with community leaders, local elites, or influential figures who can then mobilise support on their behalf (Levitsky & Way, 2010). This form of vote buying relies on social networks and personal connections to secure electoral backing. Promises of future benefits, such as government contracts, job opportunities, or preferential treatment, are another indirect strategy used to buy votes. Political actors may offer these incentives to voters in exchange for their support, with the understanding that these benefits will be delivered after the election. While less overt than direct exchanges, promises of future benefits can still exert significant influence on voter behaviour, particularly in contexts where access to resources is scarce (Koter, 2013).

Technological advancements have played a transformative role in modernising vote-buying tactics. The use of digital platforms, social media, and targeted messaging has enabled political actors to reach voters more efficiently and disseminate offers or incentives in a covert manner (Enikolopov et al., 2016). Additionally, advancements in data analytics and voter profiling have enhanced the ability of parties to identify and target vulnerable populations for vote-buying efforts. However, technological advancements have also presented new challenges for combating electoral manipulation. The proliferation of fake news, misinformation campaigns, and algorithmic manipulation has made it increasingly difficult to distinguish between legitimate political engagement and illicit vote-buying activities (Gutmann & Moe, 2018; Ford, 2020). As a result, efforts to address vote buying must adapt to the changing landscape of digital politics and incorporate strategies for monitoring and regulating online electoral behaviour.

2.3.2.1 Channels of Vote Selling

Generally, vote buying constitutes a form of appeasement of the population that is not conditional on policy. If vote buying is the primary source of ‘politicians’ accountability’, and if it is effective in driving the electorate, policies will necessarily favour the wealthy elite. This implication may be especially problematic in countries where rent-seeking policies are pervasive and significant oil revenues are expected in the future. It is well known that the natural resource curse feeds on poor political institutions. The essay on turnout and clientelism posits that vote buying is likely to influence an individual's voting decision through three distinct avenues. The channels comprise a personal-level supervision and punishment mechanism, a community-level supervision and punishment mechanism, and a credibility-signalling mechanism (Keefer & Vlaicu, 2008; Robinson & Verdier, 2002). Vote buying constitutes a sort of

clientelism, characterised by the provision of personal or private material incentives in exchange for political support, a practice prevalent in numerous impoverished nations and certain affluent ones. Rather than appealing to voters through ideological or programmatic propositions, countless political parties resort to providing private financial benefits (Kitschelt & Wilkinson, 2007). Researchers agree that widespread clientelism and vote buying might have detrimental impacts.

Vote-buying and clientelism are asserted to result in the inadequate provision of community goods (Robinson & Verdier, 2002), adversely affect the economy (Baland & Robinson, 2007), create incentives for politicians to foster underdevelopment (Stokes, 2007), and undermine political neutrality and democracy (Stokes, 2007b). In a study conducted in Benin, Wantchekon (2003) finds that voters are more amenable to rhetoric characterised as clientelistic rather than universal. Lindberg and Morrison (2008) assert that voters in Ghana evaluate politicians based on their policy orientations rather than ethnic affiliations or clientelism. Similarly, Young (2009) does not uncover any indication that clientelism has augmented the vote count for incumbent MPs in Kenya and Zambia. Bratton's (2008) investigation of Nigeria reveals that the experience of vote buying diminishes the likelihood of an individual voting. He argues that vote buying and electoral violence deter voters, causing them to disengage entirely from the democratic process. Conversely, in a randomised field experiment conducted in São Tomé and Príncipe, Vicente (2008) finds that vote purchasing increases voter turnout by "energising" potential voters. Pedro (2008) noted a substantial impact of the campaign on perceptions of vote buying, which serves as the exogenous variation utilised to ascertain effects on voting behaviour. They identified the characteristics of vote purchasing determinants (more prevalent in swing and rural areas) and observed that vote buying stimulates the electorate by enhancing turnout. Importantly, we

document the actual impact on candidates' comparative performance by recognising that the challenger is responsible for garnering more votes through vote purchasing (after the intervention), which aligns with the chronological sequence of events (the late entry of the challenger).

Observers are more aware of the deficiencies in democratic procedures within developing nations. In poor countries, competition may be limited by credit limits, and the need for information may be diminished by voters' lack of education. Vote buying, a distinct category of campaign expenditure devoid of substantive political messaging, tends to thrive in such situations, functioning as a surrogate for political responsibility. Vote buying may so indicate inadequate democratic practices. This would be especially true if vote buying is indeed effective in influencing the electorate. Vicente (2007) demonstrates that cash-for-votes prior to an election may enhance electoral competitiveness or mitigate the incumbent's clientelistic advantage. Moreover, vote buying appears to be enhancing voting turnout in São Tomé & Príncipe. The experiment in Sao Tome and Principe showed that targeted voter education can significantly alter electoral behaviour. Although it may be challenging to dissuade impoverished voters from accepting payment before the election, one can nonetheless effectively advocate for voting decisions devoid of monetary influence. The primary factor influencing the voting alterations in São Tomé & Príncipe was evident. Furthermore, less educated individuals, such as those in Benin, and economically disadvantaged voters appear to be the focal point for vote buying. This discovery substantiates the notion that integrating voter education with local development initiatives may serve as a targeted and efficacious strategy to mitigate vote-buying and clientelism in politics.

Berelson et al. (1954) identified a limited number of party switchers during the campaign, leading them to infer that the campaign predominantly reinforced pre-existing political predispositions. Furthermore, these political inclinations were identified as being influenced by enduring socio-demographic traits, religious affiliation, and geographic location. Berelson et al. (1954) conclude that "A man thinks politically as he is socially." The study may be seen as implying a form of social determinism. Thus, upon reviewing our theoretical literature, it is evident that there is a necessity to comprehend our primary empirical conclusion within the framework of a stylised model of political rivalry, wherein incumbents derive greater advantages from clientelism, while challengers excel in vote buying. The contrast between these two vote-selling strategies is only addressed in Dekel, Jackson & Wolinsky (2008). Theoretical models in the literature on vote buying predominantly examine the variables that enable bribes to maintain cooperation in repeated interaction contexts. This research is predicated on the premise that parties can monitor voting preferences (Stokes, 2005) or, at the very least, observe voter turnout (Nichter, 2008). Under these circumstances, a specific bribe amount exists that will appease the voter and ensure their support for the distributing candidate. Utilising this framework, we modify the monitoring assumption by the absence of political machinery throughout sub-Saharan Africa (Van de Walle, 2007; Bratton, 2008) and augment the number of participants disseminating handouts during an election.

2.3.2.2 Timing and Execution of Vote-Buying

The timing of vote-buying within the election cycle is a carefully calibrated process that candidates use to maximise influence over voters. Research suggests that vote-buying in Ghana intensifies at specific phases, aligning with critical points in the campaign where political actors believe they can sway voters most effectively. Early

stages of the election cycle often involve indirect forms of vote-buying, such as funding community projects or donating to local events. This preliminary interaction establishes a basis of goodwill that candidates aspire to utilise when elections approach (Gyampo & Asare, 2021). These nuanced strategies foster a positive perception without explicitly guaranteeing advantages linked to votes, enabling candidates to cultivate a supportive presence within the community from the outset.

As the election date approaches, candidates tend to shift from these indirect strategies to more direct forms of vote-buying, intensifying their efforts as voter indecision peaks. Research by Ampofo et al. (2023) indicates that this period, typically a few weeks before the election, is marked by the distribution of gifts, cash, or services aimed directly at influencing voter decisions. Voters may receive these incentives through community gatherings, rallies, or even personal visits from campaign agents, capitalising on the urgency and heightened political atmosphere. By deploying resources during this period, candidates aim to secure votes in the face of competitors who might also be engaging in similar practices, making this phase a particularly intense period for vote-buying.

In the final days leading up to the election, vote-buying efforts often peak, with candidates prioritising households and individuals who are deemed undecided or susceptible to last-minute incentives. Studies have shown that last-minute vote-buying can significantly sway voter decisions by appealing to immediate needs and creating a psychological sense of obligation (Boateng & Yeboah, 2022). At this late stage, candidates often rely on direct cash payments and material gifts that provide instant gratification. This tactic is especially effective among voters facing economic hardships, as it offers a tangible, short-term benefit that can outweigh longer-term

political considerations (Owusu & Darko, 2021). Candidates deliberately time these efforts to minimise the window in which voters might reconsider their choice or feel regret after receiving incentives.

Vote-buying also peaks near the election due to logistical reasons and the need to mitigate backlash or scrutiny from authorities and civil society organisations. As noted by Agyemang and Ofori (2023), candidates are aware that voters are less likely to report or denounce acts of vote-buying close to the election day, as the immediate nature of the incentives creates a sense of secrecy and urgency. By concentrating vote-buying in the final days, candidates also reduce the risk of legal repercussions, as election monitors and regulatory bodies may struggle to gather evidence quickly enough to act before the polls. This timing thus serves a dual purpose, maximising voter influence while minimising the risk of exposure or accountability.

The timing of vote-buying throughout the election cycle has significant implications for democratic integrity in Ghana. By strategically spacing out incentives across the campaign period, from early goodwill-building gestures to last-minute handouts, candidates effectively shift the electoral focus from policy evaluation to transactional relationships (Frimpong & Akomea, 2021; Diamond & Morlino, 2004). This cycle not only undermines the principle of free and fair elections but also reinforces a culture of dependency among voters who may come to expect these benefits as part of the political process. Addressing this issue requires a multi-faceted approach, including voter education, campaign finance reform, and stronger regulatory oversight, to deter candidates from manipulating the election cycle for personal gain (Gyampo, 2022).

2.3.4 Execution of Vote-Buying: Tactics and Methods

The execution of vote-buying in Ghana is characterised by a variety of tactics and methods that political actors employ to influence voter behaviour. One of the primary strategies involves direct cash payments, where campaign agents or intermediaries offer money to individual voters or groups within a community. This method, widely documented in studies, is particularly effective because it provides an immediate benefit that voters facing economic challenges often find difficult to refuse (Ampofo et al., 2023). Cash payments are typically made discreetly to avoid legal scrutiny, and in many cases, recipients are asked not to disclose the transaction. This approach creates a direct transaction between the candidate and the voter, which often establishes a sense of moral obligation or reciprocity (Agyemang & Frimpong, 2023).

Beyond cash, candidates frequently offer material goods that appeal to the specific needs of the constituency. These goods may include items such as food, clothing, farming tools, or other resources relevant to the local economy. By providing material goods, candidates foster a connection with voters who see these gifts as essential for their livelihood, especially in rural or economically disadvantaged areas (Owusu & Darko, 2021). For instance, during election periods, it is common to see donations of agricultural equipment in farming communities or educational materials in urban areas with significant youth populations. Such targeted vote-buying not only increases voter loyalty but also reinforces the image of the candidate as a provider of community welfare.

In addition to cash and material goods, promises of future benefits such as scholarships, jobs, or business opportunities are frequently used in vote-buying strategies. Candidates often assure voters, especially younger ones, that they will receive employment or

educational opportunities if they win the election. This tactic plays on the aspirations of voters, especially those in regions with high unemployment rates, offering them hope for a better future tied to the candidate's victory (Boateng & Yeboah, 2022). Such promises are less immediate than cash or goods. Still, they create an emotional investment in the candidate's success, as voters believe that their futures are tied to the electoral outcome (Ankrah, 2022).

Moreover, vote-buying tactics include using influential community figures, such as chiefs, religious leaders, or youth leaders, to distribute incentives or endorse candidates. This method leverages the authority and trusts these figures hold within the community to validate the candidate's offerings. When respected community members align themselves with a particular candidate and openly distribute incentives, it legitimises the vote-buying process, often making voters feel that accepting these gifts is both normal and encouraged (Frimpong & Akomea, 2021). This tactic is particularly potent in regions where traditional leaders wield considerable influence, as their endorsement can sway large segments of the population in favour of the candidate.

The diversity of methods used in vote-buying demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of local dynamics by candidates who tailor their strategies to maximise influence. By deploying a range of tactics, from immediate cash payments and material gifts to promises of future benefits and leveraging community leaders, candidates effectively reach different segments of the population and enhance their chances of winning votes. As Agyemang and Ofori (2023) argue, these strategies underscore the deeply entrenched nature of transactional politics in Ghana, posing a challenge to democratic principles by reducing elections to a series of financial and material

exchanges. Combating this requires robust regulatory frameworks and more vigorous enforcement to disrupt these entrenched practices, which undermine electoral fairness.

2.3.4.1 Socio-political and Economic Drivers of Timing and Execution

The timing and execution of vote-buying in elections are influenced by a complex interplay of socio-political and economic drivers, each shaping how and when candidates approach voters with incentives. In regions where economic hardship is prevalent, such as in many areas of Ghana, candidates exploit the financial vulnerabilities of the electorate by timing vote-buying efforts to align with points in the election cycle when economic needs are most pressing. Studies show that during periods of economic strain, such as seasonal downturns or post-harvest times, candidates target communities with gifts, cash, and essential resources, appealing to immediate needs that create a sense of dependency (Owusu & Darko, 2021). This economic context makes voters more receptive to vote-buying as a means of meeting short-term needs, rather than focusing on long-term governance issues.

Social networks and community structures further drive the timing and methods of vote-buying. Candidates often rely on influential community members, such as chiefs, local business leaders, or respected elders, to mediate vote-buying efforts. By timing these efforts around community gatherings, festivals, or religious events, candidates can maximise their influence with the endorsement of trusted figures. These events provide cover for the distribution of cash and goods while amplifying the legitimacy of the candidate's actions within the cultural framework of community giving (Gyampo & Asare, 2021). The strategic use of community networks for vote-buying is particularly prominent in rural areas, where local leaders play a vital role in shaping community values and political allegiances.

Political drivers, including competition between candidates and voter demographics, also impact the timing and intensity of vote-buying practices. In highly competitive races, candidates are often compelled to engage in vote-buying earlier in the election cycle to pre-empt rivals and secure a loyal base. Ampofo et al. (2023) note that as election day draws near, vote-buying efforts intensify to counteract competitors who may also be deploying similar strategies. Furthermore, demographic factors such as age, gender, and occupation play a role in the timing and form of vote-buying; for instance, younger voters may receive promises of employment or educational opportunities, while older voters may be targeted with healthcare or household support, reflecting their respective needs and priorities (Ankrah, 2022).

Economic drivers, particularly poverty and unemployment, reinforce the acceptance and expectation of vote-buying in some communities. High unemployment rates create conditions in which promises of future employment become a powerful tool for candidates, who time their offers to coincide with the periods leading up to voting day, when hope for economic improvement is most palpable (Boateng & Yeboah, 2022). In this context, the financial vulnerability of voters transforms vote-buying from an occasional practice into a normalised part of the election cycle. Such promises, while not always materialising post-election, reinforce a transactional relationship that voters may come to rely upon, given the lack of other economic opportunities.

Together, these socio-political and economic factors reveal that vote-buying is deeply woven into the fabric of electoral processes in certain regions. The carefully timed execution of vote-buying not only shapes electoral outcomes but also perpetuates a culture of dependency that hinders democratic development. Addressing these factors requires more than just electoral reforms; it necessitates social and economic

interventions, including poverty alleviation, voter education, and transparent governance, to mitigate the root causes that make vote-buying a viable electoral strategy (Agyemang & Ofori, 2023). Without tackling these underlying drivers, vote-buying is likely to remain a significant factor in electoral politics.

2.4 Effects of Vote Buying in Election Processes

Mochtak et al. (2021) assert that the impact of vote buying on election processes is significant in affecting electoral integrity, representation, corruption levels, democratic values, and social cohesion. It distorts the electoral process, incentivises individuals to vote based on personal gain rather than informed choice or political conviction. This erodes the principle of political equality, as those with resources wield disproportionate influence over electoral outcomes (Alvarez & Hall, 2008). Koter (2016) understands that vote buying weakens the principle of majority rule when electoral results are skewed in a candidate's or party's favour. Chong and De La O (2016) argue that vote buying perpetuates corruption within political systems and contributes to a culture of graft and malfeasance. Moreover, Kitschelt and Wilkinson (2007) emphasise that the foundational values of democracy, which involve transparency, accountability, and civic engagement, are a contradiction of vote buying, especially when electoral outcomes are influenced by monetary transactions rather than the will of the electorate.

Wantchekon (2003) and Issacharoff (2020) understands that, social unrest, protests, and violence threaten the stability of democratic regimes when electoral illegitimacy is perceived. This exacerbates social divisions and threatens social cohesion within communities. When voters are offered material incentives or favours in exchange for their votes, it may alter their motivations for participating in the electoral process and ultimately affect voter turnout rates. It can have a dampening effect on voter turnout by

discouraging individuals from participating in elections for reasons aligned with democratic values. This is especially true when they perceive that their votes are being bought or that monetary transactions predetermine electoral outcomes, leading to disillusionment with the political process and a decision not to vote. This disenchantment can lead to apathy and disengagement from civic responsibilities.

Moreover, vote buying distorts the nature of political participation by incentivising individuals to engage in opportunistic behaviour rather than active citizenship (Wantchekon, 2003). Instead of participating in elections as a means of expressing their political preferences and contributing to the democratic process, voters may view elections as opportunities for personal gain. This transactional approach to politics undermines the civic virtues of informed decision-making and civic engagement, promoting a shallow and instrumental view of democracy. Furthermore, vote buying disproportionately affects marginalised communities that may be more vulnerable to coercion or inducements. In societies where socio-economic disparities are pronounced, vote buying can exploit the vulnerabilities of disadvantaged groups, further marginalising them from the political process (Kitschelt & Wilkinson, 2007). This exacerbates inequalities in political representation and reinforces existing power dynamics, undermining efforts to promote inclusive and equitable democratic participation. The erosion of voter turnout and the distortion of political participation due to vote buying undermine core democratic values such as political equality, representation, and civic engagement. When elections are tainted by the influence of money and corruption, the foundational principles of democracy are compromised, eroding public trust in democratic institutions and processes. This erosion of democratic values weakens the legitimacy of governance and jeopardises the stability of democratic regimes.

The impact of vote buying on election processes extends beyond its immediate effects on electoral outcomes (Effiom, 2014). One significant area affected by vote buying is political representation and governance. When individuals are induced to vote based on material incentives rather than genuine political preferences, it distorts the representation of public interests and undermines the legitimacy of elected officials. Examining the implications of vote buying for political representation and governance sheds light on the challenges it poses to democratic accountability and the responsiveness of elected leaders to the needs of their constituents.

Vote buying undermines the principle of political representation by skewing electoral outcomes in favour of those who engage in this practice (Uchenna-Emezue, 2015). Instead of elected officials reflecting the genuine preferences and interests of the electorate, they may be beholden to the interests of those who have purchased votes. This undermines the democratic ideal of elected representatives serving as accountable agents of the people, responsible for advancing the common good. Moreover, vote buying can perpetuate a cycle of corruption and clientelism within political systems, where elected officials prioritise the interests of their benefactors over those of the broader public. This erodes trust in democratic institutions and contributes to a sense of disenchantment among citizens who perceive their elected leaders as serving narrow interests rather than the public good. Vote-selling is an open form of bribery that substantially corrupts the Nigerian electoral system (Uchenna-Emezue, 2015). In the same vein, corruption impacts the electoral system. Fundamentally, there is a close nexus between political corruption and infrastructure (Effiom, 2014; Chiakaan, et al., 2021). Unbridled political corruption among Nigerian public office holders leads to inadequate provision of roads, water, healthcare, electricity, and other infrastructure (Ajisebiyawo, 2016; Ferraz & Finan, 2008).

The prevalence of vote buying also undermines the quality of governance by compromising the integrity and effectiveness of decision-making processes. When elected officials are beholden to special interests due to vote buying, it can impede their ability to make impartial and well-informed policy choices that benefit society as a whole (Ajisebiyawo, 2016). This can lead to governance failures, policy distortions, and inequitable outcomes, ultimately undermining the effectiveness and legitimacy of democratic governance. Research by Chong and De La O (2016) highlights the detrimental effects of vote buying on political representation and governance. Their study demonstrates how vote buying perpetuates clientelism and undermines the accountability of elected officials to the broader electorate. Similarly, Wantchekon (2003) explores how vote buying distorts political representation and exacerbates inequalities within societies.

2.5 Consequences of Vote Buying on the Standard of Living

Vote buying, the practice of offering money, goods, or services in exchange for political support, has become a widespread political strategy, especially in emerging democracies. While it may appear as an act of generosity or support during election periods, the long-term consequences on national governance and, particularly, on the standard of living are profoundly detrimental. Vote buying distorts democratic values and encourages a culture of political patronage over merit-based leadership, ultimately hampering the development of effective public policies aimed at improving citizens' well-being (Kramon, 2016).

One significant way vote buying affects the standard of living is through the misallocation of resources. Politicians who buy votes are more likely to prioritise short-term electoral gains over long-term investments in health, education, infrastructure, and

social services. Since their main objective is to retain power through material inducements rather than through sound policy and development, public funds are often diverted away from essential services to sustain clientelistic networks (Vicente, 2014). Consequently, communities suffer from inadequate schools, poor healthcare systems, and crumbling infrastructure, all of which contribute to low living standards.

Furthermore, vote buying undermines accountability. When politicians rely on financial inducements rather than performance to win elections, they feel less obligated to deliver on campaign promises. This weakens the social contract between elected officials and the electorate. Citizens who accept bribes often lose the moral authority to demand quality service delivery, as their votes were essentially sold, not earned through competent representation (Schaffer & Schedler, 2007). The absence of accountability mechanisms enables corruption and inefficiency to thrive, which directly impacts public welfare.

Another significant impact is the entrenchment of poverty. Vote buying is both a symptom and a driver of poverty. Politicians exploit the desperation of the poor, who may exchange their votes for small gifts like rice, cooking oil, or cash, due to immediate needs. However, this exchange traps them in a cycle where their long-term development is sacrificed for short-term relief (Bjørnskov & Paldam, 2012). By perpetuating dependency on handouts, vote buying discourages empowerment initiatives, entrepreneurship, and self-sufficiency, thereby reducing upward mobility and maintaining poor living conditions.

Vote buying also distorts voter preferences and the political landscape. It often rewards candidates with greater financial muscle, not necessarily those with better policies or leadership abilities. This leads to the election of individuals who may lack the

competence or vision to formulate and implement policies that can improve the general standard of living (Hicken, 2011). When electoral outcomes are driven by monetary exchange rather than informed choices, the democratic process is compromised, and poor governance becomes the norm.

In addition, vote buying erodes trust in institutions. As citizens witness repeated cycles of electoral manipulation and unfulfilled promises, they become disillusioned with the political process. This disenchantment may reduce voter turnout and civic engagement, weakening democracy and reducing the pressure on leaders to perform (Gonzalez-Ocantos et al., 2012). A weak democratic system often results in poor policymaking, which further degrades social and economic development indicators.

The economic implications are also severe. In countries where vote buying is prevalent, corruption becomes institutionalised, discouraging both local and foreign investment. Investors seek stable, transparent, and accountable systems. However, vote buying signals instability and unpredictability, driving away potential economic opportunities (Rose-Ackerman, 1999). This reduces job creation and economic growth, which are essential for raising the standard of living.

Moreover, vote buying fosters social inequality. It reinforces the divide between political elites and ordinary citizens. While the elites consolidate power and wealth, the masses are left to deal with underfunded public systems and poor service delivery. This growing inequality can lead to social unrest and instability, which further deteriorate living conditions (Khemani, 2015). Societies marked by inequality often struggle to achieve social cohesion and sustainable development.

Efforts to curb vote buying are essential for improving the standard of living. These include voter education, electoral reforms, strengthening institutions like anti-corruption agencies, and enhancing transparency and accountability mechanisms. When citizens are empowered with knowledge and economic security, they are less likely to be swayed by short-term inducements and more likely to demand competent and ethical leadership (Nichter, 2008). Such efforts can pave the way for improved governance and, subsequently, better living conditions.

2.6 Standard of Living of the People of Effutu

The standard of living in Effutu, a constituency in Ghana, reflects the socioeconomic realities of a community grappling with various challenges. Many residents face issues such as unemployment, limited access to quality healthcare, and inadequate infrastructure. These challenges contribute to economic vulnerability, leaving many individuals dependent on irregular or informal sources of income (GSS, 2021). In such contexts, people often prioritise immediate survival over long-term development, creating fertile ground for transactional political practices like vote-buying.

Vote-buying flourishes in economically disadvantaged regions when individuals perceive election seasons as chances to obtain immediate cash or material gains. In Effutu, this practice frequently appears as politicians providing monetary incentives, foodstuffs, or other presents to sway voter preferences. Although these trades may give temporary relief from specific difficulties, they sustain a cycle of dependency and weaken the electorate's capacity to advocate for substantial governance improvements (Ayee, 2020). Thus, vote-buying not only signifies a diminished standard of life but also aggravates it by distracting from essential developmental concerns.

The relationship between vote-buying and the standard of living is also evident in how candidates prioritise campaign expenditures over sustainable development initiatives. Funds used for vote-buying often come at the expense of investments in education, healthcare, and job creation—key factors that could improve the quality of life for Effutu residents. Moreover, elected officials who gain power through vote-buying may feel less obligated to fulfil campaign promises, as their success relied on transactional relationships rather than a shared vision for community progress (Gyampo, 2022).

Socially, vote-buying erodes trust in democratic processes and diminishes the community's collective agency to advocate for long-term improvements. In Effutu, the practice contributes to a culture of disillusionment, where voters may perceive politics as a means of personal gain rather than a platform for addressing communal needs. This disillusionment discourages active citizen engagement, weakening the constituency's ability to hold leaders accountable for improving living standards (Boafo-Arthur, 2021).

Furthermore, vote-buying perpetuates inequality within the community. Politicians often target economically disadvantaged groups, exploiting their vulnerability to secure votes. This creates divisions between those who benefit from the practice and those who do not, exacerbating social tensions and marginalisation. Over time, these divisions undermine community solidarity, making it harder to mobilise collective efforts for developmental initiatives in Effutu (Asante & Ninsin, 2020).

The standard of living in Effutu is both a cause and a consequence of vote-buying. While the immediate financial benefits of vote-buying may seem appealing to economically vulnerable residents, the practice ultimately perpetuates poverty, inequality, and underdevelopment. Addressing this issue requires a multifaceted

approach, including public education on the long-term harms of vote-buying, policy interventions to strengthen electoral transparency, and investments in sustainable development to improve the economic resilience of the Effutu community.

2.7 Empirical Review

2.7.1 Socio-economic Dynamics Influencing Vote-Buying

The study by Jensen and Justesen (2014) examined the relationship between poverty and vote buying in sub-Saharan Africa, highlighting its implications for individuals and nations alike. The authors employed data from the Afrobarometer survey to undertake a comprehensive analysis of the influence of poverty on individuals' vulnerability to vote buying in various African democracies. This paper presented an exhaustive analysis of electoral bribery in 18 sub-Saharan African countries. The findings from multilevel regression analysis indicate a significant correlation between poverty and the likelihood of being approached by vote buyers. Research indicates that economically disadvantaged voters are more susceptible to bribery, particularly during highly competitive elections. The research highlighted the enduring relationship between poverty and clientelism in African politics, stressing the need for targeted efforts to alleviate poverty and its impact on electoral integrity and democratic governance throughout the continent.

Cross-national empirical studies further validate the socio-economic justification for vote-buying. Research employing Afrobarometer data from many African countries demonstrates that electoral clientelism is more prevalent in economically challenged societies, where economic inequality intensifies voters' dependence on politicians for material support (Resnick, 2022). The results confirm that poverty and economic instability remain fundamental drivers of vote-buying behaviour in developing

democracies. Recent institutional data in Ghana supports this position. The National Commission for Civic Education (2024) asserts that economic adversity increases the likelihood of voters being swayed to support alternative candidates, indicating that vote-buying remains an issue for Ghana's democracy.

A relevant study for the current topic is the research conducted by Jensen and Justesen (2014) on poverty and vote buying, employing survey data from Africa. This study aimed to identify the factors that lead individuals to engage in vote buying in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). They examined the impact of poverty on vote buying at both individual and national levels. They sought to ascertain the demographic groups from which political parties attempt to garner votes and the rationale behind these efforts. Jensen and Justesen (2014) employed data from the Afrobarometer survey, a credible source of relevant information concerning voters' attitudes and experiences of democracy in Africa (Bratton et al., 2005; Bratton, 2008; Justesen, 2011; Justesen & Bjørnskov, 2012). The data were acquired by a stratified random sampling technique, yielding a broadly representative sample of individuals from several nations (Bratton et al., 2005). The sample size was 1,200; however, it was 2,400 for Nigeria, South Africa, and Uganda, which comprised distinctly diverse groupings. We employed standardised questionnaires to ensure comparability of data across all nations. We performed in-person interviews in the local language with individuals unacquainted with the area to guarantee the anonymity and objectivity of the respondents.

Jensen and Justesen (2014) suggest that substantial relationships exist between poverty and election corruption. The microeconomic conditions impacting inhabitants substantially determine the incidence of vote buying among African voters. This type of influence appears to intensify as the competition for votes escalates. The conclusion

was reiterated that poverty renders vote buying one of the most prevalent methods employed by politicians to secure votes during elections. This study differs from the research by Jensen and Justesen (2014), which focused on persons of low socioeconomic level whom politicians want to persuade for political support. This study aims to analyse the influence of vote selling on democratic elections, with a focus on voting behaviour.

A significant study by Kramon (2009) on vote-buying and political behaviour, which evaluates and elucidates the impact of vote-buying on electoral turnout, is an Afrobarometer study carried out in Kenya. The study sought to examine the paradox of vote-buying in democracies, investigating the fundamental reasons for its occurrence despite the safeguarding of voter privacy and the incapacity of politicians to ensure that particular individuals will cast their votes in their favour (Kramon, 2009, p.2). It also examined the impact of vote-buying on voting behaviour. The research aimed to elucidate the impact of vote buying on individual voter participation in Kenya. The quantitative research methodology employed the survey method. A nationally representative sample of 1,278 respondents was utilised in the Afrobarometer study, wherein participants addressed multiple questions pertinent to the issues under investigation. Kramon contends that "pre-election material incentives, exemplified by vote-buying, are crucial for understanding the motivations for voting in Kenya." Statistical evidence indicates that vote-buying significantly affects an individual's voting decision, with Kenyans approached by a vote buyer being approximately 14 percentage points more likely to vote than those who have not been approached (Kramon, 2009, p. 24). This study investigated the relationship between money, voting, and democracy in the Effutu Constituency, aiming to deepen academic understanding of electoral misconduct in the area and to provide insights that inform policy and

advocacy efforts supporting free and fair elections while strengthening democratic governance.

Evidence from several regions corroborates that socio-economic vulnerability significantly influences vote-buying. Stokes et al. (2013) demonstrate that financially unstable voters in Latin America are more inclined to engage in clientelistic exchanges. Hicken (2011) asserts that clientelism and electoral bribery flourish in contexts marked by poverty and weak institutional structures, necessitating politicians to offer private goods in exchange for electoral support. Schaffer (2007) observes that vote buying persists in Southeast Asia mostly because economically disadvantaged voters regard immediate money benefits as valid responses to precarious economic conditions. Cross-regional research confirms that socio-economic gaps remain a primary driver of vote-buying behaviour in nascent democracies.

Despite these contributions, further empirical study, cross-country comparisons, and comprehensive studies of Ghanaian electoral systems are necessary to elucidate the social and economic factors underlying vote-buying and its impact on local democratic governance.

Recent empirical research has begun to overcome this deficiency by providing contemporaneous and contextually relevant evidence concerning vote-buying conduct. Takyi and Kyere (2025) investigated vote-buying among first-time voters in Ghana and discovered that young voters were more inclined to accept bribes while facing financial difficulties and seeing personal gain. Their findings indicate that economically disadvantaged voters often perceive vote-buying as an effective means to satisfy their immediate needs. Gyasi and Torsu (2024) investigated vote-selling behaviour in the Bantama Constituency, identifying poverty, unemployment, and dissatisfaction with

political leadership as key motivators for voters to exchange votes for material incentives. The research found that the increasing commercialisation of electoral campaigns promotes the normalisation of vote-buying practices in Ghanaian elections.

2.7.2 Cultural and Political Dynamics Influencing Vote-Buying

Agomor and Adams (2014) conducted a study on the determinants of voting behaviour in Ghana. This study was conducted to examine the diverse criteria voters employ in selecting one candidate over another. These scholars sought to clarify questions concerning the factors affecting voter decisions in Ghana. Is it evaluative criteria, encompassing candidates' attributes and accomplishments, governmental efficacy, and party policy frameworks, or non-evaluative elements such as political allegiance, ethnic affiliations, or familial relationships? In the examination of voting conduct, a conventional inquiry arises: do people cast their ballots retroactively to "oust the incumbents" or proactively, based on pledges? (Agomor & Adams, 2014, p. 1). The research focused on the determinants affecting voting within the framework of the rational choice paradigm. Their approach involved surveying a representative sample of individuals from around the nation.

Asiedu and Frempong (2021) examined voter perceptions on vote inducements in the Greater Accra and Ashanti areas of Ghana. Cultural norms of reciprocity and patronage influence the acceptability of these inducements. A considerable number of voters perceive the act of gift-giving as a customary political practice rather than an instance of corruption. Boateng and Owusu (2022) conducted a mixed-methods analysis of electoral campaigns in Kumasi, demonstrating that political party rhetoric and ethnic alliances significantly affect voter susceptibility to bribery, suggesting that political identity often intersects with material incentives to influence voting behaviour.

The initial phase of sampling encompassed all ten regions. In each region, one-tenth of the districts were selected employing a combination of non-probability and probability sampling techniques. Purposive sampling was utilised to select a district from the regional capitals of all ten regions, guaranteeing adequate representation of all major ethnic groups in the area. We utilised random sampling to select districts outside of regional capitals. Adam and Agomor (2014) contend that in relation to emerging democratic frameworks, this study reinforces rational choice theories, suggesting that non-evaluative factors such as gender, ethnicity, religious affiliation, and contributions from candidates or parties remain influential, yet do not form the basis for voter decisions. Thus, they concluded that in Ghana, voting behaviour is predominantly shaped by evaluative criteria like health, education, and political party employment initiatives. The study by Agomor and Adams differs from this one as it examines vote selling and its impact on voting behaviour in democratic elections. This study focuses exclusively on a single constituency in the Central area and employs a case study design within the qualitative research framework.

Adam and Agomor (2014) illustrate that juxtaposing the ranking of factors and assessing individual complexities during elections provides greater insights into emerging patterns. For example, just 14 individuals indicated that receiving presents from candidates influenced their voting decisions, whereas 27 individuals asserted that their ethnic background was the primary factor in their evaluative criteria. When requested to discuss each feature individually, however, the responses varied significantly. For instance, the count of individuals who mentioned presents increased from 14 to 651, the count of those who referred to campaign message rose from 1,009 to 1,032, the number of respondents citing education decreased from 932 to 918, and the figure for employment provision remained constant at 918. In summary, assessing

the components both individually and together reveals that voting behaviour is shaped by a multitude of complex and dynamic factors.

The study's findings unequivocally demonstrate that voting judgements are not invariably rational; sociological and, in certain cases, psychosocial factors may take precedence. The investigation concerns the prevalence of certain causes during specific periods. Further investigation is required to elucidate this matter. The study's findings indicate that Ghanaian voters employ several clues alongside their intricate social and ideological identities to determine their voting choices. This corroborates the instrumentalist viewpoint that both performance evaluations and ethnicity influence voter decision-making.

Conversely, Vicente (2014) examines the efficacy of vote buying in elections, particularly in São Tomé and Príncipe. The author utilises a randomised field experiment methodology during an election in São Tomé and Príncipe, where such behaviours are prevalent. An initiative to inform voters was implemented in the experiment to prevent vote purchasing. The research's principal findings elucidated critical aspects of vote buying. The initiative to educate voters effectively diminished the influence of monetary incentives on voting behaviour. Informing voters about the potential negative consequences of purchasing votes can deter them from engaging in such behaviour. The campaign unexpectedly resulted in a decreased voter turnout. This implies that efforts to prevent vote buying may deter individuals from engaging in the practice, but could simultaneously dissuade them from voting altogether. The research indicates that the voter education campaign benefited the incumbent candidate. This illustrates the complexity of electoral politics and posits that vote buying may serve to equalise opportunities for incumbent leaders. The study offers significant empirical

data concerning the efficacy of vote buying and the possible repercussions of initiatives aimed at its elimination.

Asekere et al. (2023) performed a study analysing the influence of financial resources on candidate selection in political parties. It highlights the discriminatory effects on economically disadvantaged candidates and the broader implications for Ghanaian democracy. It employs qualitative approaches, including semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, to gather primary data from key informants and party members in the Greater Accra and Central Regions of Ghana. Alongside the primary statistics, there exist peer-reviewed research, political declarations, and civil society organisations. Thematic analysis is utilised to evaluate the data, clarifying patterns and themes relevant to the influence of money on candidate selection. The findings indicated that financial resources significantly influence individuals' decisions to pursue parliamentary candidature. Individuals believe that financial resources are essential for funding campaign activities and securing endorsements from influential figures. Candidates lacking sufficient financial resources face a disadvantage, as they are unable to compete with wealthier adversaries capable of covering campaign expenses and engaging in bribery. Asekere et al. (2023) illustrate the profound influence of financial resources in Ghanaian politics, with numerous participants expressing a sense of resignation regarding the perception that politics is synonymous with commercial transactions. The monetisation of parliamentary primaries results in various detrimental consequences, such as corruption, the election of incompetent leaders, and unfulfilled campaign promises. The research indicates that financial resources play a significant role in parliamentary primaries; yet, they are not the sole determinant of victory. Additional crucial factors for individuals aspiring to hold public office are community endorsement, ethical integrity, and spiritual preparedness.

Diallo et al. (2023) performed a comparative analysis of West African democracies, employing Afrobarometer data to illustrate that socio-cultural expectations of reciprocal loyalty between politicians and communities intensify the prevalence of vote-buying, especially in environments marked by reduced trust in official institutions. A qualitative study by Mensah and Adjei (2024) done in several nations highlights that traditional leadership structures in rural Ghana influence vote-buying practices by changing the communication and acceptance of political promises and inducements within the community.

Literature indicates that cultural expectations, ethnic identities, political competition, and patronage networks significantly influence vote-buying activities. However, despite these contributions, further empirical research is necessary to achieve a more nuanced and context-specific understanding of how cultural and political factors affect vote-buying behaviour in different districts of Ghana.

2.7.3 Historical Evolution of Electoral Malpractices in Ghana

Finally, Mensah's (2024) research, as detailed by The Africa Report, probes into the concerning increase in vote buying within Ghana's political sphere preceding the critical 2024 elections. The study illuminates the disturbing surge in vote buying witnessed during the internal polls of the New Patriotic Party (NPP). It uncovers instances where delegates openly displayed cash purportedly distributed by aspirants to sway votes, with reported amounts reaching as high as GHC5,000 (approximately \$420) per delegate. Notably, one party official implicated in the alleged vote buying, parliamentary aspirant and veteran journalist Ken Agyei, defended the practice. Agyei contended that providing GHC100 (\$8.25) to each of the 850 delegates was not vote buying but rather intended to facilitate transportation to the voting centre. These

practices have elicited concerns among citizens and civil society organisations, who perceive them as compromising the integrity of the democratic process by prioritising financial incentives over the merit and vision necessary for effective leadership selection.

Drawing from a 2022 survey conducted by the Ghana Centre for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana), the study highlights the exorbitant costs associated with political campaigns in Ghana. It reveals that running for parliament requires approximately \$693,000 (GH¢4m), with half of the sum allocated to nurturing the constituency of interest and participating in primaries, and the remaining GH¢2m dedicated to the general election campaign. Furthermore, to mount a viable presidential campaign under either the National Democratic Congress (NDC) or the New Patriotic Party (NPP), a candidate must raise and expend around GH¢575m (\$100m). The survey underscores that the escalating cost of politics is fuelled by both demand-driven and supply-side corruption, with politicians and political parties purportedly receiving funding from individuals involved in criminal activities.

2.8 Summary

The study explores the phenomenon of vote-buying in the Effutu Constituency in Ghana, where economic vulnerability and political competition intersect. During election periods, candidates offer voters money, goods, or services in exchange for votes, a practice that undermines the integrity of the democratic process. While this exchange may provide immediate relief to voters struggling with economic hardship, it perpetuates a cycle of dependence and discourages long-term political engagement, ultimately distorting the democratic system.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology employed for the research; the philosophical underpinning, the research approach, the research design, the study area, the population, the sample and sampling procedure, the instrumentation, the trustworthiness of the instruments, the data collection procedure, the method of data analysis and ethical considerations.

3.1 Philosophical Underpinning

A research paradigm is a coherent assemblage of beliefs, values, and practices that assist researchers in planning, executing, and comprehending research. It encompasses ontological assumptions (the nature of reality), epistemological assumptions (the nature of knowledge), and methodological assumptions (the processes of knowledge creation) (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Creswell (2014) defines a paradigm as a worldview or philosophical perspective that directs the selection of research approaches and strategies. Scotland (2012) contends that paradigms shape researchers' understanding of reality, the generation of knowledge, and the conduct of ethical research. Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) define a paradigm as a framework that enables a researcher to scrutinise their study, ensuring that objectives, procedures, and analyses align with fundamental philosophical concepts. These notions jointly emphasise that paradigms are essential at every stage of research, including problem conceptualisation, interpretation, and dissemination.

Research paradigms provide structure, guidance, and intellectual rigour to the research process. The researchers ensure that the study questions, design, and interpretations are coherent and logical, hence enhancing the credibility, validity, and trustworthiness of the findings (Creswell, 2014; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Understanding the philosophical underpinnings of a chosen paradigm allows researchers to justify methodological decisions, anticipate and mitigate potential biases, and engage ethically with participants. Furthermore, paradigms establish a shared context for scholarly discourse, which is particularly vital in interdisciplinary research, where divergent assumptions about knowledge can lead to misinterpretation or conflict (Scotland, 2012).

The study employed the interpretive paradigm, focusing on understanding the subjective meanings and social realities individuals assign to their experiences. Vote-buying is a complex and context-specific occurrence shaped by economic variables, socio-cultural standards, political rivalry, and personal viewpoints. The interpretive paradigm allows the researcher to analyse how voters, candidates, and party agents in the Effutu Constituency perceive and rationalise vote-buying strategies, providing insights into motives, experiences, and decision-making processes (Stokes et al., 2021; Baidoo et al., 2018). This approach prioritises understanding over forecasting, rendering it effective for analysing intricate social issues where context, significance, and human action are crucial (Scotland, 2012).

The research employed an interpretive framework to emphasise the contextual and situational factors influencing vote-buying. It recognises that the phenomenon is not uniform across regions or communities but is closely associated with local political dynamics, historical patterns of patronage, and socio-economic factors (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This perspective facilitates the collaborative generation of knowledge with participants, ensuring that the research accurately represents authentic experiences and views within their actual situations. Consequently, the study design prioritises qualitative methodologies such as interviews, focus groups, and observations to obtain rich, thorough, and nuanced data.

The interpretative paradigm influences our perception and comprehension of the data. It compels the researcher to critically evaluate participants' perspectives, examining the influence of financial resources on electoral behaviour and democratic participation in ways that resonate with the impacted individuals. This paradigm enables the analysis to transcend mere numerical data and examine the interplay of economic incentives, political decisions, and democratic principles. It facilitates a thorough narrative that situates vote-buying within broader frameworks of governance and society, so enhancing the study's theoretical importance, practical relevance, and policy implications.

The interpretive paradigm was selected for its philosophically coherent and methodologically robust framework for understanding vote-buying as a socially constructed and contextually specific phenomenon. It guides the choice of qualitative methodology, promotes ethical and reflective engagement with participants, and ensures that the study produces credible, nuanced, and valuable insights about the complex interplay of money, votes, and democracy within the Effutu Constituency.

3.2 Research Approach

A research strategy is not merely a procedural selection; it is a philosophical decision regarding my perception of reality, knowledge, and the inquiry process. Creswell (2014) defines a research strategy as the framework guiding data collection and analysis, while Saunders et al. (2019) describe it as the logical structure linking research questions to procedures. I view it primarily as an epistemological stance. It encapsulates assumptions about the essence of valid knowledge and the methods via which such information can be generated and verified. Thus, selecting a study methodology required an analysis of my ontological and epistemological positions before determining methodological options.

This study utilised a qualitative research methodology grounded in interpretivism. I deliberately chose this choice because the phenomenon I am examining encompasses intricate human experiences, contextual elements, and socially constructed meanings that cannot be comprehensively grasped by numerical data alone. Quantitative methods effectively identify patterns, assess correlations, and produce generalisable outcomes; nonetheless, they are epistemologically rooted in positivist beliefs that reality is objective and measurable (Bryman, 2016). In contrast, my research required an analysis of how participants comprehend, navigate, and construct meaning within their unique socio-cultural contexts. This form of investigation aligns with interpretivist perspectives that assert reality is complex, subjective, and socially constructed (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

The decision to employ a qualitative methodology significantly influenced the execution of my investigation. It influenced the formulation of the study questions by prioritising exploratory "how" and "why" enquiries over predictive or causal

assessments (Creswell, 2014). It shaped my choice of data gathering methods, leading me to prioritise comprehensive interaction with participants to get insight into their lived experiences. It transformed my analytical thinking; rather than testing fixed assumptions, I engaged in iterative, reflexive analysis, allowing patterns and themes to emerge from the data through repeated interaction (Bryman, 2016). The qualitative approach not only guided my approaches but also structured the logic of inquiry and defined what I considered reliable evidence.

A primary advantage of employing a qualitative technique in this study is its capacity to facilitate an understanding that is both contextually pertinent and theoretically robust. Educational and social phenomena rarely display linearity or uniformity; they are inextricably interwoven with institutional cultures, socio-economic structures, and power dynamics that interact in complex ways. A qualitative framework enabled a complete examination of these junctions rather than an artificial segregation of data. This degree of profundity is particularly crucial at the doctoral level, where the objective extends beyond mere description to encompass theoretical contributions and rigorous critical analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). The flexibility of qualitative research allowed me to be responsive to emerging ideas, so improving conceptual clarity and ensuring that the analysis was grounded in participants' realities rather than imposed theoretical frameworks.

However, I understand that the qualitative methodology has particular limitations. A prevalent concern is that the findings may not be applicable to several contexts (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative research sometimes employs smaller, context-specific samples, making its conclusions non-generalisable in the probabilistic manner typical of large quantitative studies. Moreover, the interpretive role I assume as a researcher

introduces the possibility of subjectivity. Critics from positivist traditions argue that this subjectivity could compromise objectivity and replicability (Bryman, 2016). I do not dismiss these critiques; rather, I contextualise them within comprehensive epistemological debates over the meaning of rigour.

To mitigate these concerns, I employed rigorous methodologies to enhance reliability. I employed reflexive practice to maintain awareness of my stance and any biases I may possess. I employed systematic coding techniques, cross-referenced data sources, and adhered to the criteria of believability, transferability, dependability, and confirmability established by Guba and Lincoln (1994). Furthermore, my aim was not statistical generalisation but analytical generalisation, where findings augment conceptual understanding and may guide similar contexts (Yin, 2018). From this viewpoint, depth, coherence, and interpretive rigour are more relevant indicators of quality than numerical representativeness.

Ultimately, I contend that the qualitative research methodology is the most effective approach to addressing the research problem because to its consistency and reliability. The emphasis on meaning, context, and complexity aligns with the attributes of the phenomenon I intended to investigate. Despite acknowledging its limitations, I contend that the richness, depth, and interpretive clarity of qualitative research significantly outweigh worries about statistical generalisability. This PhD study employed a qualitative approach not for convenience, but because of its philosophical alignment with the research problem and a commitment to producing nuanced, contextually pertinent knowledge.

3.3 Research Design

Research design is the systematic framework that delineates the methodology for conducting a study to effectively address its research questions with clarity and comprehensiveness. Creswell & Creswell (2018) define study design as the framework for data collection, analysis, and interpretation, whereas Kerlinger and Lee (2000) emphasise its role in structuring enquiries and controlling variance. I consider research design to entail more than mere procedural preparation. This represents the practical application of my research technique. It transforms conceptual convictions into tangible methodological decisions. Thus, the choice of a research design required the alignment of the research problem, the epistemological viewpoint, and the intended type of information to be generated.

This research utilised a qualitative case study methodology, specifically an intrinsic case study, to investigate vote-buying in the Effutu Constituency. The choice of a case study design was deliberate and grounded on the attributes of the research problem. Vote-buying transcends electoral periods; it is ingrained in the local political culture, economic dynamics, historical linkages, and the mechanisms of power. To understand this phenomenon, it is crucial to situate it within its real-world context rather than examining it in isolation. Yin (2018) asserts that case study approach is particularly appropriate when the boundaries between a phenomenon and its environment are not well defined. In this study, separating vote-buying from the socio-political environment of Effutu would have reduced the phenomenon's explanatory depth.

The implementation of the case study design significantly impacted the conduct of the research. The Effutu Constituency was established as the unit of analysis, serving as the confined system for the study of the occurrence. This constraint enhanced clarity

and concentration, preventing the study from being overly broad or analytically dispersed. Secondly, it impacted the sampling approach by assisting me in selecting those directly engaged in the electoral processes of the constituency, including voters, political players, party leaders, and community stakeholders. Third, it influenced data collection by necessitating evidence from several sources, including interviews, documentary analysis, and media records, to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the case (Yin, 2018). Ultimately, it transformed the analytical approach by necessitating theme analysis within individual cases rather than across multiple examples.

The main benefit of utilising a case study approach is its capacity to produce contextually rich, comprehensive, and analytically deep results. Political behaviours, such as vote-buying, rarely display consistency between constituencies; they are shaped by local histories, economic vulnerabilities, and political affiliations. A survey or experimental method might have revealed prevalence or trends but likely would not have clarified the methods and logic for vote-buying within Effutu's specific political context. Stake (1995) contends that case studies allow scholars to understand the uniqueness of a case while also deriving broader conceptual insights. This study emphasised depth over breadth, as substantial explanation required immersion in local dynamics.

Nevertheless, I am aware that case study design is sometimes criticised for its limited generalisability. Critics argue that focusing on a single constituency may restrict the generalisability of findings to different contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Moreover, the contextual distinctiveness of case studies may provoke concerns about subjectivity or analytical bias. It is essential to recognise these limitations. However, I contend that

these criticisms often reflect expectations rooted in positivist traditions that prioritise statistical representativeness over contextual depth.

The aim of this study was not to attain statistical generality across all constituencies in Ghana, but to acquire analytical and theoretical insights into the mechanisms and contextual elements that influence vote-buying. The intrinsic case study methodology enabled the recognition of patterns, motivations, and structural elements that could improve understanding in similar political circumstances. Furthermore, methodological rigour was ensured by the triangulation of data sources, comprehensive coding processes, and reflexive engagement with the data. These measures enhanced the reliability and robustness of the findings.

The decision to employ an inherent case study design was crucial. The intrinsic design was chosen because Effutu represents a politically significant and contextually nuanced location where vote-buying practices required thorough examination for their own value (Stake, 1995), as opposed to instrumental case studies that use a case to illustrate wider theories. The constituency's political competitiveness, socio-economic conditions, and electoral history provided a compelling context for the analysis of the occurrences. By treating Effutu as a unique and intrinsically important instance, the study successfully elucidated aspects that might have been overlooked in a multi-case or comparison analysis.

The case study methodology ultimately enhanced the explanatory power of this research. It allowed me to go beyond basic descriptions and get a sophisticated understanding of vote-buying as a socially embedded political phenomenon. I acknowledge its limitations in large generalisation; however, I contend that the depth, contextual sensitivity, and analytical richness offered by this approach significantly

exceed these constraints. The design was not merely a matter of convenience; it was a methodologically and epistemologically coherent choice that corresponded with the aims of this doctoral research.

3.4 Study Area

Effutu Constituency is located in the Central Region of Ghana and is the administrative hub of the Effutu Municipality. It is an area characterised by a blend of urban and rural communities, with Winneba as its principal town and economic center. The constituency is culturally rich and politically vibrant, playing a significant role in the political landscape of Ghana. Effutu Constituency is divided into 18 electoral areas, each represented by an assembly member who is elected by the residents. These electoral areas serve as administrative and political subdivisions that facilitate local governance and elections. Within the constituency, there are 152 polling stations, distributed across the various electoral areas. These polling stations act as the primary locations where citizens exercise their voting rights during national and local elections. The political dynamics in Effutu Constituency are highly competitive, with active participation from multiple political parties, including the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC). Election periods in the constituency are often marked by intense campaigns, with candidates striving to secure the support of voters through various strategies, including the distribution of incentives and other forms of vote-buying.

The practice of vote-buying is of particular concern in Effutu Constituency, where socio-economic challenges such as unemployment and poverty often make residents more susceptible to financial inducements. Politicians and their agents sometimes exploit these vulnerabilities to sway voter preferences. The presence of vibrant political

activities coupled with these socio-economic conditions creates a fertile ground for the phenomenon under study. Effutu Constituency's administrative structure, with its assembly members and electoral areas, provides a framework for understanding the local governance system and its intersection with electoral processes. The high number of polling stations ensures widespread access for voters but also poses challenges for monitoring and preventing election malpractices. As such, this constituency provides a valuable context for investigating the relationship between money, votes, and democracy, offering insights into the broader implications of vote-buying on Ghana's democratic processes. Understanding the dynamics within Effutu Constituency will contribute to identifying effective strategies to address electoral malpractice and strengthen democratic governance.

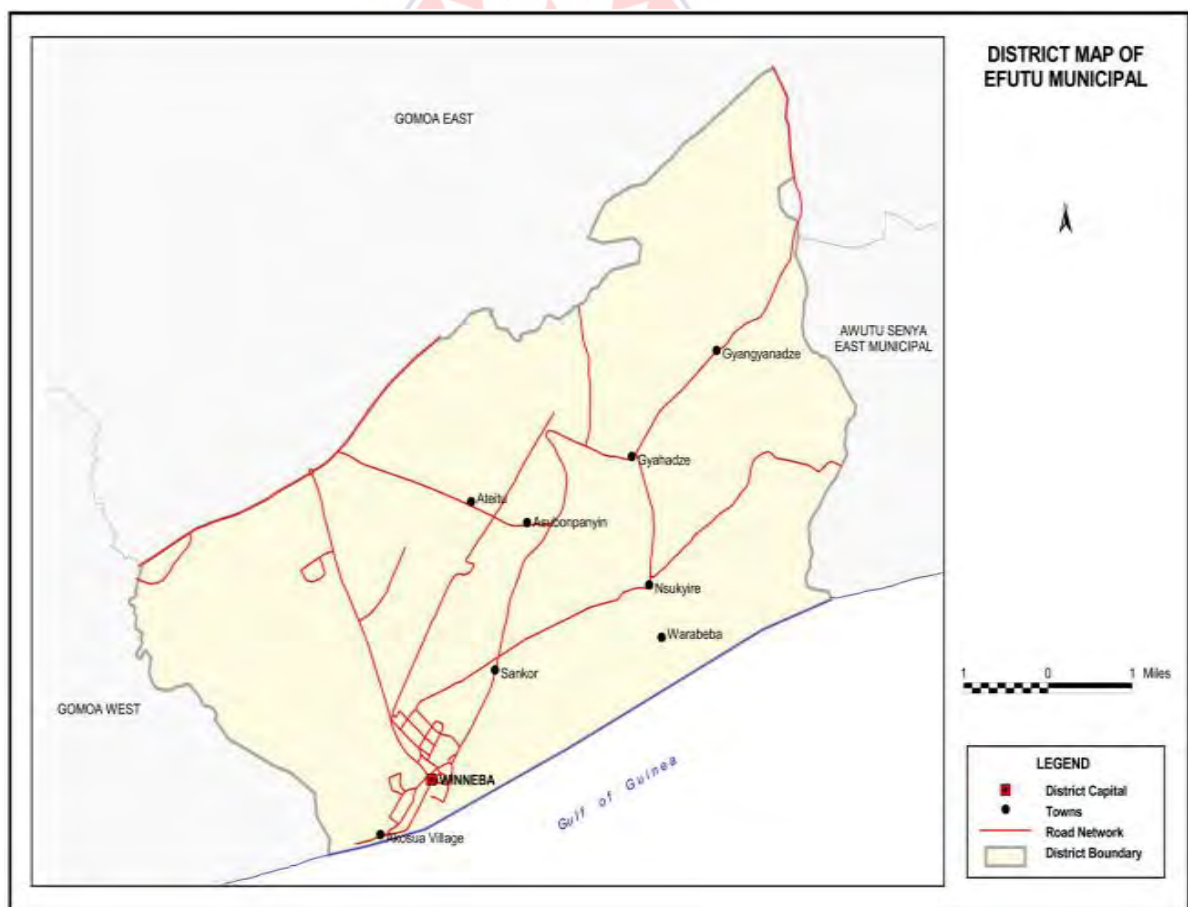


Figure 2: Map of Effutu Municipality (GSS)



Figure 3: Regional Map Showing the Study Area.

3.5 Population

Population in research refers to the entire group of individuals or elements that share a common characteristic and are of interest to the researcher. As described by Bryman (2016), a population is the complete set of cases, individuals, or entities that the researcher wishes to conclude about, typically defined by specific inclusion criteria relevant to the research topic. The total population for this study stands at 107,798 individuals. This comprises 54,723 males and 53,075 females (GSS, 2024).

The target population for the study was two hundred and sixteen (216) which comprised of one (1) assembly member, five (5) unit committee members and six (6) electorates from each electoral area.

The accessible population were thirty-six (36) participants, which comprised one (1) assembly member or one (1) unit committee member and one (1) electorate from each electoral area.

3.6 Sample and Sampling Techniques

Sample size is a critical component of research design, as it determines the number of participants included in a study and influences the depth and credibility of findings. In qualitative research, however, sample size is not determined by statistical representativeness but by the principle of information richness and data saturation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Patton, 2015). The aim is to select participants who can provide detailed, relevant, and contextually grounded insights into the phenomenon under investigation.

The Effutu Municipality comprises eighteen (18) electoral areas. However, it was not methodologically necessary to include all electoral areas, since qualitative inquiry prioritises depth over breadth (Mason, 2010). Purposive sampling was therefore used to select twelve (12) electoral areas for individual interviews. Purposive sampling involves the deliberate selection of participants based on specific characteristics relevant to the research objectives (Patton, 2015). The selected electoral areas were those with active political engagement and relevance to issues of local governance, vote-buying, and electoral participation.

The decision to select twelve electoral areas was guided by the need to achieve variation across the municipality while maintaining analytical manageability. Data collection continued until thematic saturation was reached that is, when additional interviews no longer generated substantially new insights (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). Thus, the number twelve was not arbitrary but grounded in qualitative sampling principles.

3.6.1 Selection of Assembly Members and Unit Committee Members

Within the twelve (12) electoral areas, expert sampling a subtype of purposive sampling was used to select one (1) Assembly Member or one (1) Unit Committee Member from each electoral area. Expert sampling involves selecting participants who possess specialised knowledge relevant to the research topic (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016).

Assembly Members serve as the primary elected representatives at the local level and act as the institutional link between the electorate and the Municipal Assembly. They are therefore uniquely positioned to provide informed insights into electoral dynamics, governance processes, and vote-buying practices. Selecting one representative per electoral area ensured that each electoral unit functioned as a distinct analytical case, while avoiding duplication of elite perspectives within the same area.

The unit of analysis in this study was the electoral area rather than multiple political actors within a single area. Consequently, one knowledgeable representative per electoral area was methodologically sufficient to capture area-specific dynamics while allowing cross-area comparison.

3.6.2 Selection of Voters

In addition to political representatives, one (1) voter was purposively selected from each of the twelve electoral areas, making a total of twenty-four (24) participants for individual interviews. The inclusion of voters was essential to capture grassroots perspectives and to balance elite narratives with citizen experiences. Qualitative research emphasises the inclusion of diverse perspectives to enhance credibility and depth (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The selection of one voter per electoral area was guided by criterion-based purposive sampling (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The criteria included:

- i. Being a registered voter within the electoral area
- ii. Having participated in at least one recent local election
- iii. Willingness to discuss electoral practices

In some instances, community gatekeepers facilitated initial identification of potential participants. However, final selection was based strictly on the established criteria to ensure relevance and credibility. The objective was not statistical representation of all voters which would require probability sampling but the generation of rich, experience-based accounts relevant to the research questions (Patton, 2015).

Electoral areas within the Effutu Municipality vary in size, often comprising several hundred to several thousand registered voters. However, because the study adopted a qualitative design, the total voter population did not determine the number of participants. Instead, the emphasis was placed on depth of engagement and analytical richness.

Focus Group Discussions

Purposive sampling was also used to select the six (6) remaining electoral areas for focus group discussions. From each of these areas, one (1) Assembly Member, one (1) Unit Committee Member, and one (1) voter were selected, making twelve (12) participants in total. Two (2) focus groups were conducted, each comprising six (6) participants. Focus groups were employed to generate interactive data and capture collective reflections that may not emerge during individual interviews (Krueger & Casey, 2015). The use of focus groups complemented the individual interviews by allowing participants to debate and reflect on shared experiences of electoral practices.

The total sample size for the study was thirty-six (36) participants: twenty-four (24) individual interviews and twelve (12) focus group participants. In qualitative research, adequacy of sample size is judged by the depth of information obtained and the attainment of saturation rather than numerical proportionality (Mason, 2010; Guest et al., 2006).

In qualitative research, the concept of saturation is essential for determining an adequate sample size. Saturation occurs when the researcher reaches a point where additional data collection produces no new themes, insights, or patterns relevant to the study's objectives (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006; Mason, 2010). The definition relies on the quality and amount of the obtained data rather than a fixed number of participants. The emphasis is on cases rich in information that provide a profound, nuanced understanding of the topic under investigation, rather than on obtaining a statistically representative sample (Patton, 2015).

Saturation ensures that the research includes all relevant views and experiences pertaining to the subject matter. This indicates that interviews, focus group talks, or observations are conducted repeatedly, with the need for more participants contingent upon concurrent analysis. If later interviews or observations fail to provide unique or varied insights, the researcher may reasonably conclude that saturation has been reached (Fusch & Ness, 2015). This technique enhances the study's credibility and reliability by demonstrating that the results are comprehensive and accurately reflect the individuals' experiences.

The flexibility of qualitative sample sizes is essential in studies of complex social phenomena, such as vote-buying behaviour, due to the enormous variation in participants' experiences across socio-economic, cultural, and political contexts. A

sample that is too small may overlook significant variations in perspectives, whereas a sample that is overly large may contain an unwieldy amount of data that is difficult to handle. Researchers contend that the sample size in qualitative research should be adaptable and receptive to emerging insights, ensuring that the study thoroughly achieves its objectives and captures the intricacies of participants' lived experiences (Saunders et al., 2018).

This study employed saturation as a criterion to determine the requisite number of participants. The researcher continued data collection until additional interviews no longer yielded fresh insights into the manifestations, causes, and consequences of vote-buying in the Effutu Constituency. This strategy ensured that the qualitative findings were robust, comprehensive, and grounded in the participants' real-life experiences. This instilled trust in the validity of the thematic analysis and the interpretive results of the investigation. Researchers note that qualitative sampling continues until saturation is reached, which is characterised by the point at which additional interviews yield few or no new themes or insights (Guest et al., 2006; Mason, 2010). Qualitative research typically employs small, information-rich samples, as the aim is to achieve in-depth understanding rather than statistical generalisation. study has shown that qualitative sample sizes are flexible and must appropriately represent the complexities of the study problem while being suitable for comprehensive analysis.

The ability to extrapolate data from a qualitative investigation, especially on sensitive issues such as vote buying, depends on analytical or theoretical generalisation rather than statistical generalisation. Analytical generalisation involves applying findings to broader theoretical frameworks or similar contexts with comparable situations. Researchers achieve this by providing thorough contextual descriptions that allow

readers to evaluate the relevance of findings to different situations. Consequently, qualitative findings can be effectively transferred to similar electoral circumstances when supported by strong theoretical frameworks and significant empirical data.

Thus, a sample of thirty-six individuals is scientifically valid since it allows the researcher to attain data saturation and produce thorough insights, while also enabling analytical generalisation to similar political contexts marked by vote-buying methods.

3.7 Data Collection Instruments

Data collection instruments are tools or techniques used by researchers to gather information and evidence to answer research questions. These instruments are critical in ensuring the reliability, validity, and accuracy of the data. The choice of data collection instruments depends on the research design, the type of data being sought, and the overall objectives of the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). These instruments help in systematically capturing the data required for analysis, which forms the foundation for drawing conclusions and making recommendations. Some standard data collection instruments include questionnaires, interviews, observations, focus groups, and document analysis.

In this study, interview protocols and focus group discussion checklists were employed as the data collection tools. The selection of the appropriate data collection instrument is crucial for ensuring that the research findings accurately reflect the phenomena under study. The use of multiple instruments, also known as triangulation, enhances the reliability and validity of the study by cross-checking data from different sources (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Each instrument has its advantages and limitations, and the choice should align with the study's aims, the type of data needed, and the research context.

3.7.1 Semi-structured Interviews

The primary instrument for data collection in this study was a semi-structured interview guide tailored to align with the project's research topics and qualitative case study methodology. The instrument was not based on a pre-existing template; instead, it was carefully crafted by the researcher in alignment with the study's conceptual framework and objectives. Each research topic was converted into thematic clusters of open-ended questions to ensure a direct correlation between the study objectives and the resulting data.

The interview guide comprised four sections, each corresponding to one of the four research questions: indicators of vote-buying, contributing factors, electoral consequences, and societal and economic impacts. Questions were categorised within each subject, ranging from generic and descriptive to more analytical and reflective. Participants were initially posed general enquiries regarding their knowledge (such as if they were familiar with vote-buying) before being encouraged to recount personal experiences or observations. This order was devised to reduce defensiveness and encourage gradual information sharing, particularly due to the politically sensitive nature of the topic.

The researchers intentionally employed a semi-structured approach to investigate human views, lived experiences, and contextual dynamics within the Effutu Constituency. We established essential questions in advance to ensure uniformity across the interviews, while also allowing for probing, clarification, and subsequent enquiries. Strategically utilised enquiries such as "Can you elaborate?" "Can you provide an example?" and "How did that impact you?" facilitated the acquisition of more comprehensive responses and the discernment of nuanced meanings. This

adaptability enhanced the data's richness while preserving alignment with the research purpose. The method adheres to qualitative research principles that emphasise depth, context, and participant perspective (Bryman, 2016; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The terminology was meticulously selected to maintain impartiality due to the sensitivity of political issues such as vote-buying. The questions were formulated to avoid leading participants to predetermined judgements. Rather than enquiring whether vote-buying was detrimental, participants were prompted to discuss the potential consequences if it were to occur. This reduced the likelihood of interviewer bias and socially desirable responses (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). The instrument's vocabulary was refined to provide clarity and cultural appropriateness, facilitating more comprehensible and candid interviews.

To enhance the credibility of the interview guide, it was reviewed before to data collection to ensure clarity, coherence, and relevance to the research objectives. Minor modifications were implemented to enhance clarity and organisation. During fieldwork, interviews were audio-recorded (with consent) and transcribed verbatim to preserve the participants' original expressions. Member clarification was employed when necessary to verify meanings during the interview process. These measures enhanced the reliability and credibility of the results.

Reliability was improved through systematic documentation of the interview process, including detailed field notes on context, non-verbal cues, and interview interactions. An audit trail was maintained to demonstrate the correlation between the interview questions and the study topics, as well as the emergence of themes during the analysis. The transferability was elucidated by a thorough description of the Effutu Constituency

context, allowing readers to evaluate the applicability of the findings to similar political environments.

The tool was entirely congruent with the intrinsic case study design employed in this research. The study aimed to understand vote-buying in a specific constituency; the semi-structured interview style allowed the researcher to collect varied perspectives from voters, political players, and community stakeholders, while emphasising the local socio-political environment. The instrument facilitated descriptive narratives and analytical reflections, hence enabling the identification of trends, motivations, power dynamics, and perceived consequences of vote-buying.

3.7.2 Focus Group Interviews

Focus group interviews are a popular qualitative research method that involves gathering a small group of participants to discuss a specific topic or set of issues in a facilitated environment. The aim is to encourage interaction among participants, allowing them to share their perspectives, build upon each other's ideas, and explore the topic in depth (Krueger & Casey, 2015). Typically, the group consists of 6-10 participants, which ensures that each individual has enough time to contribute while still maintaining a dynamic conversation. The researcher acts as a moderator, guiding the discussion using open-ended questions but allowing the conversation to flow naturally, creating a group dialogue that generates rich insights.

In this study, a semi-structured interview guide and focus group discussion checklists were used. The questions comprised fourteen (14) questions. Four (4) for research question 1, Four (4) for research question 2, Three (3) for research question 3 and Three (3) for research question 4. For every participant that the researcher spoke to, the researcher sought their permission to record their voice on tape. From the tape,

recordings were subsequently transcribed into a readable version.

3.8 Data Collection Procedure

The researcher visited the electorates, assembly members, and political parties to collect the data. The researcher first reported to the electorates, explained the mission and submitted the introductory letter from the University of Education, Winneba, and the Department of Social Studies to them. The researcher booked an appointment with them and started visiting them as and when necessary to gather relevant data about the study. The researcher used a recorder and field notebook to record proceedings during the interviews with the participants, and these were later transcribed to discern conclusions that were made from the conversations.

3.9 Data Analysis

Data analysis is defined as the processes involved in transforming raw data into meaningful information in answering research questions or meeting study objectives (Braun, Clarke, Hayfield, & Terry, 2019). The qualitative data generated from the interviews were analysed using thematic analysis. The choice of thematic analysis was informed by its flexibility and its suitability for identifying patterns of meaning across participants' accounts of vote-buying practices in the Effutu Constituency. The analytical process was inductive in orientation, allowing themes to emerge from participants' narratives rather than being imposed a priori.

The analysis began immediately after data collection. All interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent and transcribed verbatim by the researcher. The transcripts were cross-checked against the audio recordings to ensure accuracy and completeness. During transcription, pauses, emphasis, and emotionally charged expressions relevant to the discussion were carefully noted, as these contributed to

contextual meaning. Each transcript was anonymised using participant codes to ensure confidentiality.

Following transcription, the researcher immersed himself in the data through repeated reading of the transcripts. This immersion enabled a deep familiarity with participants' accounts and facilitated the identification of recurrent patterns relating to economic motivations, political party strategies, voter expectations, and community norms surrounding vote-buying. During this stage, reflective notes were made in the margins to capture initial analytical insights and emerging ideas linked to the research questions.

Subsequently, a systematic coding process was undertaken. The researcher examined each transcript line by line and highlighted segments of text that were relevant to the study's objectives. Codes were generated directly from participants' expressions to preserve contextual meaning. For instance, statements referring to the distribution of money prior to elections were coded in ways that reflected the specific language used by participants, while references to hardship and survival pressures were coded to capture the socio-economic context influencing voter behaviour. This process ensured that the coding remained grounded in the data.

After completing the initial coding across all transcripts, the researcher compared codes across participants to identify similarities and variations in perspectives. Related codes were grouped together into broader analytical categories. These categories were then examined for underlying connections and organised into candidate themes. At this stage, attention was given to how different categories interacted, particularly in explaining how structural economic conditions, political mobilisation strategies, and local electoral culture intersected in shaping vote-buying practices in Effutu.

The themes were reviewed and refined by returning to the dataset to ensure that each theme was internally coherent and distinctly different from others. Some preliminary themes were merged where conceptual overlap existed, while others were redefined to sharpen their analytical focus. This iterative movement between the coded extracts and the full dataset strengthened the credibility of the analysis.

In the final stage, the researcher developed clear definitions and names for each theme, ensuring that they captured the central organising idea underpinning participants' narratives. Verbatim excerpts were carefully selected to illustrate the themes in Chapter Four. The analytical write-up went beyond description by interpreting the themes in relation to existing literature on vote-buying and electoral politics, thereby situating the findings within broader scholarly debates while remaining grounded in the lived realities of the Effutu Constituency.

Through this systematic and iterative process, the raw interview data were transformed into analytically coherent themes that addressed the research questions and illuminated the dynamics of vote-buying within the local electoral context.

3.10 Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, trustworthiness refers to the extent to which the findings accurately represent participants' actual experiences and are generated through a transparent and systematic methodology. This study considered trustworthiness not merely a theoretical requirement but a real necessity, particularly due to the politically sensitive and potentially controversial nature of vote-buying in the Effutu Constituency. Participants engaged in discussions regarding matters with potential reputational, social, or political ramifications; consequently, intentional measures were implemented during data collection and analysis to guarantee that the findings were credible, reliable,

and based on participants' narratives rather than researcher conjectures. The credibility of this study was bolstered by ongoing field engagement, member validation at various research stages, data source triangulation, peer debriefing, reflexive self-assessment, and the maintenance of a thorough audit trail. These approaches were included into the study process rather than applied retrospectively.

3.10.1 Credibility

Credibility was ensured by establishing confidence that the findings genuinely reflect the perspectives of participants in Effutu. Data were collected from multiple categories of stakeholders, including voters, party actors, and community opinion leaders. This variation in participant categories enabled the researcher to compare narratives across social positions within the constituency and identify converging and diverging accounts of vote-buying practices. The recurrence of similar explanations across these groups strengthened confidence in the authenticity of the patterns identified.

Member checking was conducted both during and after data collection. During interviews, responses were frequently paraphrased and restated to participants to confirm that their views had been accurately understood. Where statements appeared ambiguous or sensitive, clarification was sought immediately. Following transcription and preliminary coding, summaries of emerging interpretations were shared with selected participants drawn from different stakeholder groups. Rather than presenting full transcripts, which could create discomfort given the political nature of the topic, concise thematic summaries were discussed with them. Participants were asked whether these interpretations accurately represented their experiences and whether any significant aspects had been misrepresented or omitted. Feedback received at this stage led to minor refinements in the framing of certain themes, particularly those relating to community expectations and the moral justifications for accepting inducements.

Credibility was further enhanced through peer debriefing. Preliminary themes and coding structures were discussed with two colleagues experienced in qualitative political research. These discussions challenged certain early interpretations and prompted closer examination of overlapping categories. This external scrutiny strengthened the analytical coherence of the study.

3.10.2 Confirmability

Given my familiarity with Ghanaian electoral politics and my normative commitment to democratic integrity, confirmability required deliberate reflexive engagement. I was conscious that my personal stance on vote-buying could unconsciously shape the interpretation of participants' narratives. To address this, I maintained a reflexive journal throughout the research process. After each interview, I recorded my impressions, assumptions, and emotional reactions. During coding, I revisited these entries to distinguish between participants' meanings and my own evaluative judgments.

For example, while I initially conceptualised certain practices strictly as electoral corruption, several participants framed them as reciprocal political exchange or survival strategies within conditions of economic hardship. Reflexive engagement required that I prioritise participants' framing in theme development rather than imposing a normative interpretation. This process ensured that the findings emerged from the data rather than from preconceived moral positions.

An audit trail was also maintained, including interview recordings, transcripts, coding notes, thematic maps, and reflexive memos. This documentation allows the analytical process—from raw data to final themes—to be traced transparently. The use of

verbatim quotations in the findings chapter further demonstrates that interpretations are grounded in participants' own words.

3.10.3 Dependability

Dependability was addressed by ensuring procedural consistency and providing detailed documentation of the research process. The same semi-structured interview guide was used across all interviews, with probes adjusted only to reflect participants' roles. All interviews were transcribed using the same conventions, and coding followed a consistent inductive procedure across transcripts.

The development of themes was iterative rather than linear. Codes were reviewed multiple times and compared across participants before being consolidated into broader categories. Where inconsistencies emerged, transcripts were revisited to reassess interpretation. This repeated movement between data and emerging themes enhanced analytic stability.

Additionally, segments of coded data and thematic groupings were reviewed during peer debriefing sessions. Feedback received prompted refinement of certain categories to avoid conceptual overlap. By documenting each stage of analysis and maintaining consistency in procedures, the study ensures that the research process is transparent and logically traceable.

3.11 Positionality

As a researcher conducting this study, I acknowledge that my personal background, experiences, and values significantly shape my perspective and approach to the research. I have lived in and engaged with communities where political processes, such as elections, are deeply embedded in local culture and influenced by socio-economic dynamics. These experiences provide me with a nuanced understanding of the

contextual factors surrounding vote-buying in Effutu Constituency. At the same time, I am aware that my position as an academic and researcher may create a degree of distance from the participants, necessitating careful efforts to build trust and rapport throughout the research process. My education and exposure to discussions on ethical leadership and civic responsibility shapes my understanding of democracy and governance. These views have strengthened my belief in the importance of fair electoral processes as a cornerstone of democracy. However, I recognise that these perspectives could potentially influence how I interpret the data. To address this, I have consciously designed the study to allow participants to narrate their experiences and perspectives authentically, ensuring that their voices take precedence over my assumptions or preconceptions.

Furthermore, my cultural familiarity with the Effutu Constituency provides me with an insider perspective, enabling me to interpret local norms and practices with sensitivity and depth. However, this familiarity also carries the risk of bias, as I may unintentionally project my own understanding of vote-buying onto the data. To counteract this, I am committed to maintaining reflexivity throughout the research process. This involves critically examining my own biases and assumptions, regularly reflecting on how they might shape my interactions with participants and my analysis of the data. By engaging in reflexive practices, I aim to uphold the credibility and authenticity of the research.

Ultimately, I view my positionality as both a strength and a challenge. While my background equips me with valuable contextual knowledge, it also necessitates vigilance in ensuring that the study remains participant-centred and unbiased. By employing a qualitative approach that emphasises participants' lived experiences and

by consistently reflecting on my role as a researcher, I aim to produce findings that are not only rigorous and credible but also deeply rooted in the realities of the Effutu constituency. This commitment to reflexivity and ethical research practices underscores my dedication to understanding and addressing the complex issue of vote-buying in Effutu Constituency.

3.12 Ethical Issues

This aspect involves obtaining permission to research the study site from various stakeholders. The researcher received ethical clearance from the University Ethics Committee, which allowed him to seek permission to conduct research among the electorate within the Effutu Municipality. All the participants were personally contacted, requesting their assistance. This process enabled the researcher to issue invitations to them to participate in the study. All of them accepted the request, and before the commencement of the interviews, the researcher again explained to them that they didn't need to take part in the study and that they were free to withdraw at any time if they felt like it. Those who were interested were assured on matters of their concerns such as assurance that no harm (for example, bodily harm) whatsoever would befall them.

In this study, specific ethical issues were taken into consideration based on the University's policy on research ethics. Participation was voluntary, and the researcher ensured that participants had a good understanding of the reliability of the findings of the study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Therefore, investigations need to be carried out with integrity and honesty. The participants were also informed about the right to withdraw participation at any time they so wished. The researcher ensured that the three most essential elements of ethics - privacy, confidentiality and anonymity - were

maintained throughout the study. This was achieved by not disclosing participants' workstations and personal identities, or any information that could lead to their identification. Participants were given numbers to hide their identity (Cohen & Manion, 2007). Assurance was given to all stakeholders that no disruption of the court would occur during the study.

3.12.1 Informed consent

Informed consent relates to the decision to participate in a study based on knowledge of what the study involves, what is demanded in terms of time, activities and topics to be covered, what risks are involved, and where to complain should that become necessary (Best & Kahn 2006). The consent form, which contained the explained details were given to the participants. This was done to enable the researcher to immediately provide answers where there were questions. The participants were requested to acknowledge their participation in writing or oral agreement. The agreement meant that participants were free not to answer questions they found uncomfortable and that taking part in the research was purely voluntary.

The researcher explained to the participants that it was important for them to take part in the study because their responses, views and ideas might help in the development and improvement of mediation practice in the court. The researcher reminded the participants that they were free to withdraw, at any time, without penalty and that they did not need to offer any reason for doing so.

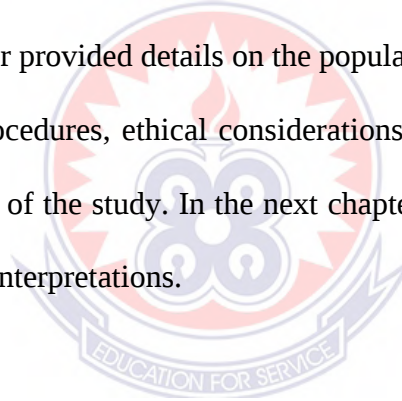
3.12.2 Anonymity and confidentiality

The essence of anonymity and confidentiality is that information provided by the participants should in no way reveal their identity. Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained throughout the study: this was a way of protecting the participant's right to

privacy (Cohen & Manion, 2007). The researcher must make sure that guarantees of confidentiality are carried out in spirit and through letters. The researcher promised all the participants that the information they provided would not be publicly reported in a way that would identify them; the right to privacy helps to ensure both confidentiality and anonymity. From the discussions on ethical considerations, the researcher now details the data analysis process.

3.13 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the researcher presented a detailed discussion of the qualitative research design and methodology used to collect data for this study. Data collection methods included face-to-face semi-structured interviews, participant observation and document analysis. The researcher provided details on the population, sample and sampling, data collection, analysis procedures, ethical considerations as well as the trustworthiness, validity and credibility of the study. In the next chapter, the researcher discusses data analysis, findings and interpretations.



CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Overview

This chapter presents the findings and discussion of the study. The purpose of the study was to explore the phenomenon of vote-buying in the Effutu Constituency of Ghana, examining its manifestations, underlying drivers, and implications for electoral integrity, democratic representation, and community well-being. The findings are presented based on the research questions of the study.

4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Participants

This section presents the demographic data of the participants used in the study. The section discussed the, age, gender, marital status, number of dependents, level of education, employment status, number of years staying in Effutu and number of years involved in politics. Findings from the demographic characteristics are presented in Table 1.

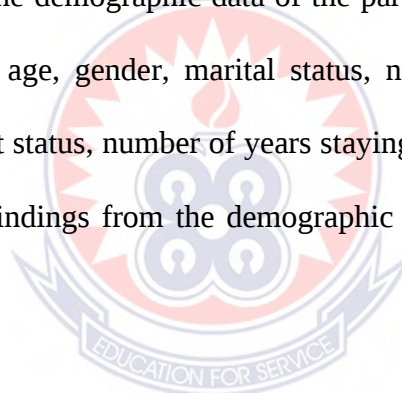


Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Variable	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Age		
18-27 years	7	19.4
28-37 years	9	25
38-47 years	7	19.4
48-57 years	8	22.2
Above 57 years	5	14
Gender		
Male	26	72.2
Female	10	27.8
Marital Status		
Single	8	22.2
Married	28	77.8
Divorced	0	0
Separated	0	0
Number of Dependents		
Below 2	4	11.1
2-4	14	38.9
5-7	12	33.3
8-10	6	16.7
Above 10	0	0
What is your level of education?		
No formal Education	0	0
JHS	9	25
SHS	7	19.4
Tertiary	20	55.6
Others (Specify)	0	0
Employment Status		
Unemployed	5	13.9
Self-Employed	26	72.2
Public Service	5	13.9
How long have you stayed in Effutu?		
Less than 10 years	0	0
10-20 years	6	6.7
21-30 years	10	27.8
31-40 years	16	44.4
41-50 years	4	11.1
Above 50 years	0	0
Have you been involved in politics? If yes, how long?		
Less than 10 years	0	0
10-20 years	16	44.4
21-30 years	5	13.9
31-40 years	8	22.2
41-50 years	6	16.7
Above 50 years	1	2.8
Are you a registered voter?		
Yes	36	100
No	0	0

The demographic analysis of participants involved in the study provides critical insights into the composition and representativeness of the sampled population from Effutu. The age distribution shows a relatively even spread, with the highest percentage (25%) of respondents falling within the 28-37 years age range, followed by 22.2% between 48-57 years, 19.4% from between the ages 18-27 years and 38-47 years, and 14% above 57 years. This suggests a predominance of adult respondents with sufficient life experience and political exposure. In terms of gender, the sample is male-dominated, with 72.2% male and only 27.8% female participants. Marital status data indicate that a majority (77.8%) of respondents are married, while 22.2% are single, with no participants reporting as divorced or separated.

The number of dependents varied, with the most common category being 2–4 dependents (38.9%), followed by 5–7 (33.3%), and 8–10 (16.7%), while 11.1% reported having fewer than two dependents. No respondents had more than 10 dependents. Educational background shows a significant lean towards higher education, with 55.6% having tertiary education, 25% completing Junior High School (JHS), and 19.4% completing Senior High School (SHS). No respondents reported having no formal education or other forms of education.

Employment status reveals that 72.2% of respondents are self-employed, indicating a strong informal economy or entrepreneurial presence in Effutu. A smaller proportion of participants are employed in the public sector (13.9%) or are unemployed (13.9%). The length of residency shows that most respondents are long-term residents, with 22.2% living in Effutu for 31-40 years, 13.9% for 21-30 years, 44.4% for 10-20 years, and 1% for more than 50 years, while none have lived there for less than 10 years. This suggests a stable and rooted population. Political involvement is also notable, with

44.4% having participated in politics for 10-20 years, 22.2% for 31-40, 16.7% for 41-50 years, 13.9% for 21-30 years, and 2.8% for more than 50 years, indicating that most respondents are politically engaged and experienced. Finally, all participants (100%) are registered voters, affirming that they are active citizens with a legitimate stake in political processes, which reinforces the credibility of their responses regarding electoral behaviours and perceptions of vote buying.



Table 2: Systematic Coding Process Used to Generate Themes

Code	Meaning Unit	Condensed Meaning Unit. Description close to the text	Condensed Meaning Unit. Interpretation of underlying meaning	Theme	Sub-Theme
FGD3	“It’s also common for them to give out business capital to young people like giving someone GH¢500 or GH¢1000 and calling it “support.” But the truth is that it’s done with an expectation that the person will vote for them. They don’t need to say it; everyone understands what it means”.	Politicians give cash support to youth during elections with implied expectations.	Financial support is used as a subtle form of vote buying.	Manifestations of vote buying	Distribution of Money and Gifts
P5	“What they normally do is that, they do a good timing during election period and they gather all the community opinion leaders at a particular place and give them money. The opinion leaders will also go to their various electoral areas, gather the electorate and give them money...”	Politicians use opinion leaders to distribute money to voters.	Intermediaries are used to indirectly influence voters.	Manifestations of vote buying	Use of Intermediaries and Opinion Leaders
P10	“Yes, vote buying is something we all know about in this constituency. It usually happens a few weeks to the elections. You’ll see people suddenly getting bags of cement, roofing sheets, and other things they’ve been asking for all year....	Materials are distributed before elections.	Politicians use development goods as indirect bribes.	Manifestations of vote buying	Services and Development Projects
P7	“Sometimes they organise free health screenings or donate items like school bags and food to schools or churches, especially where they know they have more support. These	Public donations and events are timed before elections.	Politicians disguise vote buying as charity or public service.	Manifestations of vote buying	Events and Public Gatherings

	things come just before elections, and it's a way to win the hearts of the people. It may look like charity, but there is a political agenda behind it”.				
P4	“Through importation of electorate from different constituency to Effutu constituency by giving them money and other items”.	Voters are brought from outside in exchange for money/items.	Politicians manipulate the electoral process by recruiting non-constituents.	Manifestations of vote buying	Strategic Importation of Voters
FGD1	“Even in football, when you target the key players of the opponent, you are likely to win the game. What some of the politicians do is that, they visit the key members of the opponent and promise them a package. This is done prior to the elections so it wouldn't look like vote buying but it is”.	Politicians target influential opponents' members with gifts.	Undermining opponents by bribing their key supporters.	Manifestations of vote buying	Targeting Opponent's Key Influencers
P1	“...the politician intentionally make the economy hard. So at the time of election, the little they give to you is nothing but you will think it's something big he's done. Just imagine your ward is not well and probably has been admitted at the hospital. You need 20 cedis for drugs and you are not getting. When this politician shows up to give you this 20 cedis, you might think he is done something big ...”.	Politicians exploit voters' economic hardship.	Poverty is intentionally maintained or used to manipulate voters.	Factors of vote buying	Poverty and Economic Hardship
P6	“The thing is that, the electorate knows after voting for the candidates, he or she will not remember him again unless another election is approaching so that is an opportunity for the electorate to take his share...”	Voters take money because they don't trust politicians.	Mistrust fuels transactional voting behaviour.	Factors of vote buying	Lack of Trust in Politicians / Broken Promises

P5	“... low level of education. Some people may not like this vote buying but poverty is forcing them to vote for a candidate who gives them money. Just imagine a politician sharing corn dough, this happened in 2016”.	Voters accept money due to poverty and lack of awareness.	Ignorance and economic pressure lead to vulnerability to vote buying.	Factors of vote buying	Low Level of Education and Political Awareness
P6	“The elders responsible for insisting the indigenes abide by the cultural norms are themselves affiliated to politics. The elderly who we thought would have a say in this vote buying also have their preferred candidates. And so if they hide and accept this vote buying then automatically, the cultural norms play a role”.	Community leaders involved in vote buying.	Cultural norms fail to resist vote buying due to political affiliations.	Factors of vote buying	Weak Cultural Enforcement and Leadership Failure
P4	“...One thing I have seen is that, there are certain associations or groups within the constituency and this is what they do. Anytime, a politician wants to visit them and talk to them in anyway, some must be given to them. This is not only one group. We have several of such groups in the constituency. ...these same people within the municipality have put themselves together to form groups and they are encouraging such act”.	Groups demand incentives from politicians before engagements.	Organised groups perpetuate vote buying culture.	Factors of vote buying	Influence of Organised Social Groups
P3	“...you know, culture is dynamic and not static. ...things are changing, so people are changing as the situation changes”. (P3)	Changes in culture affect voter behaviour.	Traditional resistance to vote buying is weakening.	Factors of vote buying	Dynamic Nature of Culture

P3	“...even if they don’t have money, they have to go and look for money and come and share. At the end of the day, they will win, assume office and get their money back...”	Politicians borrow or source funds to spend on voters.	Vote buying is seen as an electoral investment to be recovered.	Factors of vote buying	Strategic Political Investment
P2	“Vote buying really influences the election results. Some people do not have any intention of voting, but when money or items are shared, they suddenly become active. Even people who don’t support a particular candidate end up voting for him or her just because of what they received”.	Items or money cause people to vote.	Material incentives alter voter decisions and outcomes.	<i>Impact of Vote buying on election</i>	Direct Influence on Election Outcomes
P11	“...it creates an unfair advantage for candidates who have more financial strength, especially over the younger or new entrants”.	Financially strong candidates dominate elections.	Vote buying undermines fair competition in elections.	Impact of Vote buying on election	Distorts Democratic Values and Fairness
P2	“...when people know that they will receive something before or after voting, it motivates them to show up. Some people even encourage others to go and vote because of what they stand to gain....if they are not expecting anything, they may not feel motivated to vote. But when there’s the promise of money, they come out in large numbers”. (P2)	People are motivated to vote due to expected benefits.	Vote buying inflates voter turnout artificially.	Impact of Vote buying on election	Increases Voter Turnout
P1	“Vote buying gives me less expectation. I expect a lot of good things to be done in this constituency, but the moment vote buying begins, you know that there is an individual selfishness shooting up...nothing significant will happen in this constituency.”	Vote buying reduces expectations of development.	It erodes hope for genuine development projects.	Consequences of Vote buying	Low Expectations for Development

P3	“You see, when you take money from a politician and vote, more or less you have sold your conscience so when something is going wrong with the politician, you can hardly talk about it...the consequences of vote buying is negative as the word negative. Just too bad!”	Voters who accept money cannot hold leaders accountable.	Vote buying suppresses public accountability.	Consequences of Vote buying	Erosion of Accountability and Civic Voice
P4	“...Vote buying does not help any person living in this constituency. People have received fat monies from politicians. If it results in overall well-being of people, we shouldn't have any problem in this constituency. I have not seen anybody in this constituency who can boldly say that, the money I took from this politician is what I have used to establish this business.” (P4)	Money from vote buying has no lasting benefit.	Vote buying does not lead to economic empowerment.	Consequences of Vote buying	Absence of Tangible Improvements in Well-being
FGD3	“...vote buying benefits individuals for just a day, but the community suffers for four years. <i>No jobs created because of vote buying.</i> ”	Individuals benefit short-term; community suffers long-term.	Vote buying sacrifices sustainable development for quick personal gain.	Consequences of Vote buying	Short-term Gain, Long-term Suffering
P3	“...these days, people don't look for qualities in a leader. All that they think about is who can solve my problem now...”	Voters prioritise immediate needs over leadership qualities.	Vote buying undermines merit-based leadership.	Consequences of Vote buying	Undermining Leadership Quality and Meritocracy

4.2 Presentation of Findings

4.2.1 Various Manifestations of Vote Buying in the Effutu Constituency

This research question guided this section: *What are the various manifestations of vote buying in the Effutu Constituency?* Vote buying undermines democratic values and the integrity of elections. In the Effutu Constituency, participants and focus group discussions reveal that this practice takes diverse forms. These manifestations are often strategically timed and targeted, especially during election periods, with politicians using various intermediaries. Findings are presented in themes below.

4.2.1.1 Distribution of Money and Gifts

Distribution of money and gifts is a prominent manifestation of vote buying in the Effutu Constituency, where politicians influence electoral decisions through material inducements. Participants revealed that candidates and their agents distribute money, household items, and even personal support disguised as goodwill, but with clear political intentions.

The below extracts reveal that, voters are grouped and assigned a liaison who maintains contact and facilitates the distribution of items such as money and gift from political candidates. Also, participant 3 points out the vulnerability of economically disadvantaged voters, who are easily swayed by monetary inducements due to their financial struggles. It came to light that a more organised approach where community opinion leaders are first targeted with money, who then mobilise and distribute funds to the electorate at strategic times such as dawn before voting.

One participant stated that

“... they assure the electorates that some items will be coming from the candidate and it will be shared among them. They share money, fridges, etc” (P1)

Another participant also revealed that

It takes place in a form of the candidate and his or her agents giving money to voters to vote for them ..., economic challenges of prospective voters can succumb to some of these monies and vote to a certain direction, particularly to the candidates they took the money from (P3).

Another participant also said

“What they normally do is that, they do a good timing during election period and they gather all the community opinion leaders at a particular place and give them money. The opinion leaders will also go to their various electoral areas, gather the electorate and give them money. What is also done is that, in all the polling stations, they have a point of gathering. So they gather all the electorate at dawn, give them money and when it is time for the elections, they match all the electorate to the polling station to vote” (P5).

The focus group discussion 3 emphasises the subtlety of this practice, where young people are given startup capital under the guise of empowerment, though it is widely understood to be a transactional exchange for votes. Similarly, FGD2 describes how politicians cover personal expenses like wedding costs and school fees or distribute food and uncollectible loans, creating a sense of obligation among beneficiaries to reciprocate through their vote. These accounts reflect the systematic and deeply ingrained nature of vote buying through gifts and monetary incentives in the constituency.

It emerged from the focus group discussion that

“It’s also common for them to give out business capital to young people like giving someone GH¢500 or GH¢1000 and calling it “support.” But the truth is that it’s done with an expectation that the person will vote for them. They don’t need to say it; everyone understands what it means” (FGD3).

Another focus group discussion also reiterated that

“There are a lot of ways it happens. Some politicians even sponsor people’s weddings or pay school fees when elections are near. Others send agents to do house-to-house sharing of food or give loans they don’t expect to be paid back. All these are ways of buying votes without saying it directly” (FGD2).

4.2.1.2 Use of Intermediaries and Opinion Leaders

Use of Intermediaries and Opinion Leaders is a strategic method employed by political candidates to indirectly influence voters through trusted figures in the community. Rather than approaching individuals directly, politicians engage opinion leaders and group heads to distribute inducements and sway voter decisions on their behalf.

The extract describes how political actors form small groups and assign a contact person who maintains regular interaction, builds trust, and communicates the promise of forthcoming gifts from the candidate, subtly influencing loyalty. Another account highlights the tactical timing of distributing money through community opinion leaders, who then reach out to voters in their respective areas, ensuring a broader and more coordinated spread of inducements. One explanation shows that candidates deliberately avoid direct contact with the electorate, instead relying on trusted intermediaries to gather people and share the money, making the transaction appear less politically motivated. In some cases, leaders of women’s groups and market associations are given money to persuade their members, reinforcing the idea of using influential figures to shape voting behaviour without direct candidate-voter interaction. Similarly, mobile money transfers are made to youth leaders who are instructed to redistribute the funds among peers and family, with the clear expectation of securing votes for the candidate.

One of the participants stated that,

“Sometimes they are put into groups and one person is selected among them to be having a regular conversation ... assure them that some items will be coming from the candidate ...” (P24)

Furthermore, participant 6 stated that,

... the candidates have opinion leaders in the various electoral areas. So the money is given to the opinion leaders, then they will also gather individuals or groups, then they share the money amongst them. The candidates do not normally go to share the money by themselves.” (P19)

Another participant reiterated that,

“Sometimes they use the women’s groups and market associations. They will give money to the leaders of these groups and ask them to convince their members to vote in a particular direction. It’s more of influencing the influencers than going to each voter.” (P11)

Another participant also said,

“What they do is that, they give mobile money directly to some selected youth leaders in the community. These youth leaders are tasked to distribute the money among their friends and even family members with a clear message that they should remember the candidate on election day”. (P8)

4.2.1.3 Services and Developmental Projects

Politicians initiate or promise development projects, not out of civic duty, but as strategic electoral incentives. The extracts reveal that vote buying in the Effutu Constituency is often disguised as acts of service or community development, strategically timed to occur just before elections. Politicians provide building materials like cement and roofing sheets, which have been long requested by residents, creating the impression of responsiveness while aiming to secure votes. They also promise personal benefits such as jobs, school fee payments, and financial assistance, appealing to the immediate needs of voters. However, these actions are largely transactional, as such support quickly fades after elections. Additionally, politicians visibly increase their presence at community events like funerals and church services during the election

period, using such occasions to distribute gifts and portray themselves as caring leaders, all in a bid to gain electoral favour.

One participant said that,

“Yes, vote buying is something we all know about in this constituency. It usually happens a few weeks before the elections. You’ll see people suddenly getting bags of cement, roofing sheets, and other things they’ve been asking for all year... (P10).

Another participant recapped that.

“Of course. Vote buying is widespread here. Politicians visit communities with promises of jobs, school fee payments, and various forms of support, all aimed at securing votes. And after the election, they disappear (P22).

It emerged from the FGD that,

“Vote buying here is not a hidden thing. It’s obvious. The moment elections are near, politicians start attending funerals, churches, and community events, and they don’t come empty-handed. They distribute drinks, clothes, and even pay school fees, and fix a community crisis just before elections to win sympathy and votes (FGD4).

4.2.1.4 Donations at Public Events and Gatherings

This theme highlights how political candidates exploit public events and social gatherings to discreetly influence voters under the guise of community support or charity. These gatherings become convenient platforms for politicians to make strategic donations and distribute resources, subtly shaping voter preferences without direct solicitation.

The first extract reveals how politicians use free services such as health screenings and educational donations to win public approval, especially in areas with strong electoral support. These acts, though appearing benevolent, are tactically timed and politically motivated. The second extract shows how religious institutions are targeted through generous donations during campaign seasons, with church leaders allegedly receiving

additional incentives to promote a candidate among congregants. The third extract discusses how candidates sponsor funfairs and similar gatherings to distribute money, food, and branded items. While the request for votes is not made openly, the political intent is clearly understood. The final extract from the focus group highlights how personal and community occasions like weddings are sponsored, and food or interest-free loans are distributed just before elections, revealing a calculated strategy to secure loyalty through indirect but impactful gestures.

One participant reported that,

“Sometimes they organise free health screenings or donate items like school bags and food to schools or churches, especially where they know they have more support. These things come just before elections, and it's a way to win the hearts of the people. It may look like charity, but there is a political agenda behind it”. (P17)

Participant 10 also stated that,

“One way I've seen is through donations to churches and mosques. A candidate will visit a church, make a significant donation, and use that platform to discuss their plans. But behind closed doors, the church elders are given something extra to encourage their members to vote for that candidate”. (P10)

Another participant said,

“Vote buying also happens through organised funfairs or social events. A candidate will sponsor the event, using the opportunity to distribute money, food, or branded souvenirs. They don't openly ask for votes, but it's understood that it's a way to gain favour”. (P12)

From the FGD, it came to light that,

“Some politicians even sponsor people's weddings when elections are near. Others send agents to distribute food through house-to-house sharing or provide loans that they don't expect to be repaid. All these are ways of buying votes without saying it directly”. (FGD2)

4.2.1.5 Strategic Importation of Voters

This theme captures the deliberate mobilisation of non-resident voters into the Effutu Constituency during election periods. Politicians, in their bid to win elections, orchestrate the temporary relocation of individuals from other constituencies, often incentivising them with money and material items to influence the voting outcome.

The participant 20 highlights a direct method where people are brought from outside the constituency and are offered money and goods in exchange for their vote. The second response explains that some of these imported voters demand transport fares and other forms of compensation, indicating that their relocation is not voluntary but strategically influenced by political candidates. Participant 13 emphasises the scale of the practice, noting a significant and unusual increase in the constituency's population during election periods, which is attributed to paid voters being brought in from other areas, further confirming the organised and transactional nature of this electoral manipulation.

Participant 4 uttered that,

“Through the importation of electors from different constituencies to the Effutu constituency by giving them money and other items”. (P20)

Another participant stated that,

“...Some electorates would want to have some money given to them before they vote. The reason is that he or she is coming from afar, so he needs a lorry fare. This candidate did not come by himself but was influenced by some of the candidates to come and vote in Effutu...” (P6)

Also, participant 7 said,

“Yes, I have heard of vote buying. Vote buying has been prevalent in this constituency. Just imagine during the election period, the population in Winneba can increase by 40%. All these happen because some voters have been imported from different constituencies to come and vote here. This is not free importation, but the electorates are being paid to come”. (P13)

4.2.1.6 Targeting Opponent's Key Influencers

Targeting opponents' key influencers reveals a strategic approach to vote buying where politicians focus not on the general electorate but on influential individuals within their opponents' support base. The aim is to weaken the opponent's campaign by winning over their key supporters through discreet promises and incentives.

The focus group discussion compares this tactic to targeting star players in a football match, emphasising its strategic nature. Politicians identify influential figures aligned with their rivals, such as mobilisers or opinion leaders, and covertly offer them attractive packages or promises. This is usually done subtly and ahead of the election period to avoid open suspicion. Yet, the intention is clearly to sway loyalties and manipulate electoral outcomes under the guise of legitimate political engagement.

It appeared in the FGD that,

“Even in football, when you target the key players of the opponent, you are likely to win the game. Some politicians visit key opposition members and promise them a package. This is done before the elections so that it wouldn't look like vote buying, but it is”. (FGD1)

4.2.2 Factors that Contribute to Vote Buying in Effutu Constituency

Research question two sought to explore the underlying factors that contribute to the prevalence of vote buying in the Effutu Constituency. Such factors include poverty and economic hardship, lack of trust in politicians/broken promises, weak cultural enforcement and leadership failure, influence of organised social groups, dynamic nature of culture, and strategic political investment.

The data reveals that several interconnected socio-economic and political conditions drive this practice. Key among these are high levels of poverty and unemployment, which make voters vulnerable to short-term material incentives. Additionally, the lack of political awareness and civic education, coupled with a culture of dependency and

transactional politics, creates an environment where voters expect personal rewards in exchange for their votes. Politicians, aware of these conditions, exploit them by offering money, goods, or promises of support to secure electoral gains.

4.2.2.1 Poverty and Economic Hardship

Poverty and Economic Hardship emerged strongly as a major factor contributing to the persistence and normalisation of vote buying in the Effutu Constituency. The data from participants indicated that socioeconomic vulnerability significantly reduces citizens' ability to resist inducements from politicians. In contexts where basic needs are not met, political engagement becomes transactional rather than ideological or policy-based. Individuals struggling with daily survival tend to prioritise short-term material benefits over long-term democratic ideals, thus creating fertile ground for vote buying practices.

The perception of manipulation of economic hardship by politicians suggests that some citizens believe politicians intentionally allow economic conditions to worsen so that they can exploit people's desperation during elections. When voters lack access to basic necessities such as healthcare, even a small monetary token can appear significant and foster loyalty to the candidate. The implication is that in contexts of scarcity, the psychological impact of receiving goods or cash may outweigh ethical or civic considerations. It was revealed that, the inability to afford basic living costs. This confession illustrates a direct link between financial stress and susceptibility to political manipulation. It shows that for many, voting becomes a coping strategy for economic hardship rather than a democratic right or duty.

Similarly, it was discovered that unemployment and low income make people vulnerable. This statement situates vote buying within the broader context of structural poverty and joblessness, indicating that the lack of economic opportunities erodes political agency and makes citizens more receptive to material inducements. Another participant added another layer to this discourse by pointing out that in times of hardship, people abandon critical political judgment. This reflects a shift in electoral priorities caused by economic desperation. Politicians who offer immediate relief are rewarded over those who may have better long-term plans but lack the means or interest to offer short-term benefits. When people operate under daily economic pressure, the immediate gains from accepting vote buying offers outweigh any sense of civic responsibility or future political outcomes.

Participant 15 stated that,

“...the politician intentionally make the economy hard. So at the time of election, the little they give to you is nothing but you will think it’s something big he’s done. Just imagine your ward is not well and probably has been admitted at the hospital. You need 20 cedis for drugs and you are not getting. When this politician shows up to give you this 20 cedis, you might think he is done something big ...”. (P15)

Another participant also said,

“...when the economy is bad, even small offers like GH¢50 or a bag of rice become tempting”. (P2)

Another participant made this known,

“...If I am not able to pay my utility, rent, etc, I am most likely to collect money from candidates and vote in a certain direction” (P3).

One participant opined that,

“... If someone is working and earning enough, they won’t easily fall for these vote-buying tactics. But in a place like Effutu where unemployment is high, many people just take the money and vote, even if they know it’s wrong”. (P24)

Participant 7 recounted that,

“... when there is hardship, the electorate becomes desperate. They don't vote based on policies or performance anymore. It becomes about who gives them something now...” (P17)

Another participant said,

“...if you have nothing in your pocket and a politician brings you money, you will feel obliged to vote for him. It's just survival. Many of our people here live day by day, so they can't afford to say no to these offers”. (P6)

4.2.2.2 Lack of Trust in Politicians / Broken Promises

One of the major drivers of vote buying in Effutu is the widespread lack of trust in politicians, which stems from repeated instances of unfulfilled campaign promises. Voters have become increasingly disillusioned with political rhetoric that is rarely followed by action. As a result, many resort to collecting material benefits during election seasons as a form of compensation for the anticipated neglect that follows once a candidate assumes office.

Participant 6 explained that voters take inducements during elections because they believe it is their only chance to benefit from politicians. This indicates a shift in voter mentality, where elections are seen not as a civic responsibility but as a transactional moment to "take one's share" before inevitable political abandonment. The history of broken promises has led to cynicism, prompting voters to demand immediate gains rather than rely on uncertain future benefits.

One participant said,

“The thing is that, the electorate knows after voting for the candidates, he or she will not remember him again unless another election is approaching so that is an opportunity for the electorate to take his share...” (P6)

Another participant added that,

“The issue is trust. The people don’t trust that the candidate will deliver on promises after elections, so they prefer to take what they can get now. Once bitten, twice shy. If politicians had kept their promises in the past, people wouldn't be expecting money before voting”. (P14)

This collective sentiment of the FGD reflects deep political disenchantment, where hope in democratic accountability is replaced with resignation and opportunism. In essence, the lack of trust has eroded the moral foundation of electoral participation, replacing it with a practical approach rooted in lived experience one that rationalises vote buying as the only tangible benefit voters expect from the political process.

It emerged during the FGD that,

“After elections, politicians don’t deliver what was promised. So the electorate has given up on asking for development and just takes money during elections...”. (FGD4)

4.2.2.3 Low Level of Education and Political Awareness

A low level of education and limited understanding of the political system, combined with the long-term implications of vote buying, encourage short-term thinking. The extracts reveal that low levels of education and limited political awareness significantly contribute to the prevalence of vote buying in Effutu. Participant 8 adds that many people lack an understanding of the broader implications of their voting choices. Because of insufficient political education, voters focus on immediate benefits and fail to consider how their votes influence the overall progress of their communities.

Another participant made this known,

“I believe it's ... lack of political education. People don't really understand the long-term effects of voting based on money. They look at the immediate benefit and forget about how their choices affect development...” (P8)

The FGD echoes this concern, observing that the widespread low education levels result in a mindset that prioritises individual gain over collective advancement.

Also, during the FGD, it was mentioned that,

“...low level of education is very high in this constituency...the voters of today do not really think about the community, they think about their individual pocket...”. (FGD1)

4.2.2.4 Weak Cultural Enforcement and Leadership Failure

In democratic societies, community elders and traditional leaders often serve as moral and cultural anchors, reinforcing ethical norms and guiding collective behaviour. However, in the context of Effutu, the weakening of cultural enforcement mechanisms and the perceived failure of traditional leadership have contributed to the normalisation and acceptance of vote buying. When those expected to condemn unethical practices instead engage in them, it undermines the community's moral standards and enables a culture of political manipulation.

Participant 21 highlights the conflict of interest that arises when elders, who are supposed to uphold cultural integrity, become politically affiliated and engage in vote-buying themselves. This behaviour erodes their moral authority, suggesting that culture itself becomes complicit in the practice when its gatekeepers are compromised. Participant 10 builds on this, explaining how the actions of leaders shape societal expectations. When respected elders accept gifts or money from politicians, it sets a precedent, signalling to the broader community that such behaviour is permissible.

One participant said that,

“The elders responsible for insisting the indigenes abide by the cultural norms are themselves affiliated with politics. The elderly, whom we thought would have a say in this vote-buying, also have their preferred candidates. And so if they hide and accept this vote buying, then automatically, the cultural norms play a role”. (P21)

Another participant reported that,

“... If our leaders and elders who are supposed to uphold the culture, keep accepting gifts or money from politicians, it gives others the signal that it is acceptable. Over time, this becomes part of the social behaviour in the community”. (P10)

The FGD responses reinforce the idea that silence or active participation from elders in vote buying represents a significant cultural shift. FGD2 laments the loss of past traditions where elders actively condemned such acts, noting that their current quietness or involvement sends a dangerous message of tacit approval. FGD3 further highlights the transformation of once-neutral leaders into politically biased actors, which influences how younger generations perceive right and wrong. The integration of vote buying into traditional ceremonies and festivals blurs the line between cultural celebration and political strategy, embedding unethical practices into the very fabric of communal life. Collectively, these insights reveal how leadership failure and the collapse of cultural enforcement serve as key enablers of vote buying in Effutu.

Report from the FGD says that,

“...In the past, our elders would gather and speak against vote buying. But now, most of these community leaders are quiet and even benefit from it. When such silence happens, it sends a message to the younger generation that it is acceptable...” (FGD2)

During the FGD, it was indicated that,

“...In some communities within the municipality, elders used to serve as moral compasses. Today, many are aligned with specific political parties, and their neutrality is gone. When children see elders accepting gifts from politicians, it becomes a learned social behaviour. Also, traditional ceremonies and festivals are sometimes used by politicians as platforms to distribute items, embedding vote-buying practices into cultural events...” (FGD3)

4.2.2.5 Influence of Organised Social Groups

In the political landscape of Effutu, organised social groups, such as youth associations, local clubs, and interest-based networks, have emerged as influential stakeholders in electoral processes. While such groups traditionally play a role in community mobilisation and development, the findings suggest that many have become vehicles for facilitating and perpetuating vote buying. Their collective bargaining power is now leveraged to demand financial or material incentives in exchange for political access and engagement.

Participant 4 highlights a systemic issue where organised groups within the constituency have institutionalised the expectation of receiving money or gifts from politicians. These groups are not isolated; multiple associations reportedly exhibit similar behaviours, turning political engagement into a transactional process. This practice not only normalises vote buying but also reinforces it as a strategic prerequisite for political candidates seeking visibility and support.

One participant reported that,

“...One thing I have seen is that there are certain associations or groups within the constituency, and this is what they do. Whenever a politician wants to visit and talk to them, something must be given to them. This is not only one group. We have several such groups in the constituency. ...these same people within the municipality have put themselves together to form groups, and they are encouraging such acts”. (P4)

Another participant said,

“...youth groups, and associations expect something from political candidates. Some even go to the extent of negotiating what to receive before allowing a candidate to speak to their members”. (P9)

Participant 9 and the FGD responses further confirm that youth groups and other associations actively negotiate incentives before granting politicians access to their platforms. The phrase “something small,” mentioned in FGD4, reflects a common

euphemism for bribes or inducements, which has become a culturally accepted norm. These interactions suggest a shift from issue-based political dialogue to one grounded in short-term material gain. Over time, such practices may erode democratic accountability, as electoral choices become less about policies and more about immediate benefits delivered through group influence.

During the FGD, it appeared that,

“...even, within the Effutu constituency, groups such as local associations ... expect tokens from candidates. This expectation has become ingrained...”. (FGD2)

It came to light from another FGD that,

“...youth groups demand “something small” before engaging politicians...”. (FGD4)

4.2.2.6 Dynamic Nature of Culture

Culture is inherently dynamic, evolving in response to social, political, and economic changes. In the context of electoral politics, the flexible nature of cultural practices means that long-held traditions can be reshaped or even co-opted to reflect new societal trends including those that compromise democratic integrity. In the Effutu constituency, participants acknowledge that cultural change is inevitable, and this fluidity has contributed to the normalisation of vote buying, even within once-sacred cultural events and communal practices.

Participant 13 and FGD1 participants both affirm that culture is not static but continuously evolving. This understanding lays the groundwork for interpreting how modern political behaviours such as vote buying can infiltrate and become embedded within traditional systems. Their views suggest that what was once culturally

unacceptable may gradually be absorbed into social norms when practiced frequently and unchallenged.

Participant 13 recounted that,

“...you know, culture is dynamic and not static. ...things are changing, so people are changing as the situation changes. However, people see vote buying as something within our society which is part of our modern culture”. (P13)

FGD3 takes this observation further by showing how political actors exploit the evolving nature of culture to advance their interests. By distributing items during festivals and traditional ceremonies, politicians embed transactional practices into revered cultural events, subtly shifting their meanings. As these events increasingly accommodate political gifts and patronage, the lines between tradition and political manipulation blur, reinforcing the idea that cultural change can both reflect and legitimise emerging, and sometimes unethical, political behaviours.

Another participant stated that,

“...we all believe that culture is dynamic and not static ...”. (FGD1)

One participant reported that,

“...traditional ceremonies and festivals are sometimes used by politicians as platforms to distribute items, embedding vote-buying practices into cultural events...”. (FGD3)

4.2.2.7 Strategic Political Investment

In the political landscape of Effutu, vote buying is not merely a spontaneous or emotional act; it is often a calculated, strategic investment by political candidates. The data reveal that some politicians approach elections with a business mindset, where financial expenditures made during campaigns are seen as down payments for future gains. This economic framing of political engagement turns elections into high-stakes ventures, with the expectation of financial returns once power is secured.

The extracts illustrate a shared perception among participants that politicians view vote buying as a transactional process aimed at maximising future benefits. Participant 17 highlights the extent to which candidates are willing to go, including sourcing money through loans or external support, to secure an electoral victory. This suggests that the urgency to win overrides ethical considerations, with victory being the key to accessing state resources for personal or party gain. Participants 7 and 12 further reinforce this by describing vote buying as akin to a business strategy. The idea of investing with the expectation of returns transforms political campaigning into an entrepreneurial act, where voters become commodities in a marketplace.

Participant 3 recounted,

“...even if they don’t have money, they have to go and look for money and come and share. At the end of the day, they will win, assume office and get their money back...” (P17)

Another participant said,

“...they calculate the returns—they know if they invest now, they can gain more when they win the election. It’s like doing business”. (P7)

Another participant stated that,

“...Once they win, they believe they will recover all the money they spent. So, vote buying is like an investment for them. They spend big during elections, but they know the profit is coming after they win”. (P12)

FGD3 participants broaden this notion by pointing out that politicians exploit the economic vulnerabilities of the people while rationalising their expenses with the confidence of future rewards, such as contracts, deals, or control over public resources. Collectively, the data underscores how systemic and deeply embedded vote buying has become, driven by a calculated belief in its profitability.

During the FGD, it was said that,

“Politicians are smart. They are aware of the people's weaknesses and believe that by spending now, they will reap greater rewards when they take office. They don't mind taking loans to buy votes because they know they can recover all through contracts and deals after winning”.
(FGD3)

4.2.3 Effects of Vote Buying on Election within the Effutu Constituency

Research objective three explores how vote buying impacts elections within the Effutu Constituency. This research question aims to uncover the extent to which such practices shape electoral outcomes, influence voter turnout, and distort the democratic process. Through the perspectives of individual participants and focus group discussions, it emerged that vote buying has several impacts within the Effutu constituency, including distorting democratic values and fairness, and increasing voter turnout.

4.2.3.1 Direct Influence on Election Outcomes

This theme explores how vote buying directly affects electoral outcomes within the constituency. The practice, often involving the distribution of money, goods, or favours, significantly alters voter behaviour and decisions. Instead of voting based on policy performance, personal conviction, or developmental vision, many voters are swayed by immediate material incentives, which distorts the democratic process and undermines the legitimacy of electoral results.

The participants' responses provide a compelling picture of the powerful influence vote buying wields over elections in the constituency. Participant 2 observes that individuals who previously had no intention of voting are mobilised solely by the receipt of money or items. This suggests that vote buying not only alters voting decisions but also drives voter turnout, albeit for the wrong reasons. P23 adds that vote buying creates a sense of obligation among recipients, pushing them to vote for candidates they might not support

ideologically. This sense of indebtedness signifies a transactional interpretation of voting, where allegiance is bought rather than earned. Participant 4 highlights another critical issue, importing voters from other constituencies. This act introduces external influences into the electoral process, further distorting results and raising serious concerns about electoral integrity.

One participant reported that,

“Vote buying really influences the election results. Some people do not have any intention of voting, but when money or items are shared, they suddenly become active. Even people who don’t support a particular candidate end up voting for him or her just because of what they received”. (P2)

Another participant recounted,

“...people are not voting based on what a candidate has done or can do, but based on what they are given. When money is given to them, they feel they are indebted to the candidate. So yes, it definitely influence election results here. (P23)

Participant 4 stated that,

“...politicians import people from other constituencies to come and vote here. ... those people do not even know anything about the constituency. They are just taking some money to cast the vote for the candidate”. (P4)

The FGDs reinforce these individual accounts. FGD2 explains that many voters now expect to be “sorted” before participating in elections, indicating a normalisation of the practice. FGD3 supports this by stating that politicians actively exploit this behaviour to manipulate outcomes, even loyal supporters can be swayed at the last minute with enough financial persuasion. FGD4 poignantly concludes that such practices “distort the will of the people,” with votes driven more by immediate needs ("stomachs") than by thoughtful decision-making. Together, these extracts illustrate a direct and deeply entrenched relationship between vote buying and election results. The practice reshapes electoral behaviour, compromises the legitimacy of outcomes, and shifts political

power toward those with greater financial resources, rather than those with better vision or leadership capabilities.

During the FGD, it was reported that,

“...people even refuse to vote until they are “sorted.” This creates a situation where all those who are sorted will come out and vote...”. (FGD2)

It appeared in another FGD that,

“...politicians know that they can manipulate the outcome through money. Sometimes, even strong supporters change their mind last minute just because of the items or cash given...”. (FGD3)

Furthermore, FGD4 stated that,

“...in fact, it distorts the will of the people...people are voting with their stomachs, not with their minds”. (FGD4)

4.2.3.2 Distorts Democratic Values and Fairness

This theme addresses how vote buying undermines the core principles of democracy, particularly fairness, equality, and merit-based political competition. In a healthy democratic system, candidates are expected to compete based on their competence, vision, and policies. However, when vote buying becomes prevalent, the political playing field becomes skewed in favour of financially stronger candidates, thereby distorting the electoral process and eroding the foundations of democracy.

Participant 19 plainly states that vote buying alters the election landscape by enabling unqualified candidates to win simply because they can afford to distribute money. This suggests that elections no longer reflect the electorate's evaluation of leadership potential but are instead turned into bidding wars. As such, merit, accountability, and credibility become secondary to financial muscle. Similarly, Participant 20 highlights the inherent injustice in this system, noting that it disadvantages younger or financially

less-resourced candidates, who may in fact have better plans or a stronger connection with the needs of the people.

One participant said,

“Honestly, vote buying changes the whole election landscape. Some candidates who have no good plans or policies still win just because they shared money...” (P19)

Another participant recounted,

“...it creates an unfair advantage for candidates who have more financial strength, especially over the younger or new entrants”. (P20)

The focus group discussions further reinforce these concerns. FGD2 points out that elections are no longer determined by competence but by expenditure, implying that transactional politics are replacing the essence of political competition. This not only discourages capable candidates from entering the political arena but also deprives citizens of quality leadership. FGD3 underscores this point by stating that the entire democratic system is being “hijacked” by vote buying, a strong metaphor that suggests a hostile takeover of democratic processes by unethical financial influence. These perspectives collectively reveal that vote buying is not merely a corrupt practice; it is a systemic threat to democracy. It transforms elections into contests of wealth rather than governance, silences capable voices, and fosters disillusionment among voters who recognise the erosion of fairness and justice in their electoral system.

One FGD explained that,

“...what happens is that elections become less about competence and more about who can spend more...this creates a situation where those with the best ideas lose to those with the best wallets”. (FGD2)

Another FGD stated that,

“...the whole democratic system is being hijacked by vote buying”. (FGD3)

4.2.3.3 Increases Voter Turnout

This theme explores how vote buying impacts electoral participation, particularly by artificially boosting voter turnout in the constituency. While increased voter turnout is generally seen as a positive indicator of political engagement and democratic vitality, when turnout is driven not by civic responsibility but by material incentives, it raises critical concerns about the authenticity and quality of that participation. The following extracts show how vote buying motivates otherwise apathetic citizens to participate in elections, not out of ideological alignment or democratic conviction, but in pursuit of short-term personal gain.

Participant 20 emphasises the motivational effect of material inducements, noting that the anticipation of receiving money or items prompts even disinterested individuals to vote. This highlights a fundamental shift in voting behaviour—from being driven by informed choice and civic duty to being influenced by immediate rewards. Similarly, Participant 6 reinforces this point by suggesting that the broad distribution of money or gifts guarantees mass voter turnout, essentially converting financial handouts into a political mobilisation strategy. Participant 8 points to the transformative effect vote buying can have on political apathy. Individuals who were previously disengaged suddenly become active participants upon hearing of the rewards. Participant 11 goes further to note that even those who have lost faith in the political system can be lured into participation through material incentives, reducing the act of voting to a transactional exchange.

Participant 20 stated that,

“...when people know that they will receive something before or after voting, it motivates them to show up. Some people even encourage others to go and vote because of what they stand to gain....if they are not expecting anything, they may not feel motivated to vote. But when there's the promise of money, they come out in large numbers”. (P20)

Another participant said,

“Giving out money to the greater number of people will let them also pull out in their numbers on the day of election to come and vote for you...” (P6)

Another participant recounted,

“...people who were initially not interested in voting may change their mind when they hear that some politicians are sharing money or items. So, vote buying acts as an incentive to draw people out to vote”. (P8)

Participant 11 reported that,

“...once they hear there is some money or gifts being given out, they’ll come out to vote, even if they don’t believe in the political system. The gifts become the reason for their participation”. (P11)

The focus group discussions (FGDs) offer deeper insights into the implications of such behaviour. FGD2 acknowledges that this type of turnout is "artificially high"—driven not by genuine political interest but by the allure of material gain. FGD3 further elaborates that social and religious groups can even coordinate their members to vote en masse in return for benefits received from a candidate, eroding the integrity of the democratic process and the meaning of voter choice. FGD4 supports this claim with a retrospective analysis of previous elections, revealing a clear correlation between increased spending on vote buying and higher voter turnout. The use of phrases like “show love” at the ballot underscores how loyalty is effectively commodified, with political support being "purchased" rather than earned.

During the FGD, it was mentioned that,

“...the moment the sharing begins, even uninterested people decide to vote...the turnout is therefore artificially high, not because of political interest but because of what’s at post materially”. (FGD2)

Another FGD explained that,

“...the more politicians share items or money, the more people turn out to vote. But it’s not for the sake of civic duty. We know of churches and social groups that coordinate members to go vote once a certain

candidate has delivered something to them. It is no longer about choice...this compromises the integrity of the turnout data". (FGD3)

It came to light during the FGD that,

"...we analysed previous elections and noticed that in years where politicians spent more on buying votes, the turnout was higher. ...if a candidate is sharing foodstuff, others rush to get theirs and promise to "show love" at the ballot...people who would never bother voting suddenly show up." (FGD4)

4.2.3 Consequences of Vote Buying on the Standard of Living of the People of Effutu

Research question four explores the consequences of vote buying on the standard of living of the people of Effutu. This inquiry sought to understand how the practice of exchanging votes for money or material goods during elections influences citizens' expectations of development, access to basic services, and overall well-being. Through personal interviews and focus group discussions, participants reveal a shared sense of disillusionment, lowered expectations, and a perception that vote buying undermines meaningful political accountability. The findings highlight that vote buying not only distorts democratic values but also contributes to a cycle of underdevelopment, mistrust in leadership, and persistent socio-economic challenges in the constituency. It emerged from the study that low expectations for development, erosion of accountability and civic voice, absence of tangible improvements in well-being, short-term gain, long-term suffering and undermining leadership quality and meritocracy are some of the consequences of vote buying.

4.2.3.1 Low Expectations for Development

The theme of low expectations for development explores how the practice of vote buying in Effutu negatively influences citizens' aspirations for progress, governance, and accountability. The participants' responses demonstrate a collective sentiment of

resignation, disappointment, and disempowerment. Rather than viewing elections as an opportunity to demand and attain sustainable development, voters in Effutu have come to associate the political process with temporary gratification, leading to diminished expectations and a compromised standard of living.

The extracts reveal that vote buying instils a culture of short-term gain over long-term development. Participant 1's statement illustrates how the electorate perceives vote buying as a signal of politicians' self-interest rather than commitment to community welfare. This reinforces a disillusioned mindset, where development becomes an unrealistic expectation once transactional politics sets in. Participant 14 furthers this by highlighting the psychological trade-off involved in accepting money for votes. The idea shows how the electorate internalises the notion that their vote has a finite, transactional value, thereby surrendering their voice and agency for future demands. This supports the broader theme that vote buying reduces citizens to passive recipients, rather than active stakeholders in governance and development.

One participant indicated that,

“Vote buying gives me less expectation. I expect a lot of good things to be done in this constituency. Still, the moment vote buying begins, you know that there is an individual selfishness shooting up...nothing significant will happen in this constituency.” (P1)

Another participant made it known that,

“...we are already paid for the 4 years. So, what again do we expect? We have indirectly told the politician that we don't care about development, just give us some money and go...” (P14)

The focus group discussions deepen the analysis, exposing how accountability mechanisms are undermined. The quote from FGD2 is particularly striking. It reflects the recognition that by accepting bribes, voters inadvertently forfeit their moral and political authority to question leaders or demand developmental projects. This form of

silent complicity erodes the democratic contract between the electorate and their representatives. Furthermore, FGD4 points to a broader communal consequence. This metaphor powerfully captures the collective hopelessness and lowered aspirations that dominate the political landscape in Effutu. Development becomes abstract, something aspirational but increasingly unattainable, primarily because the political process has been reduced to immediate material gain rather than sustained engagement with transformative leadership.

Essentially, this theme points to a vicious cycle where vote buying fosters complacency, which in turn emboldens politicians to neglect development, knowing that their mandate was secured through financial inducement rather than performance. The standard of living suffers as a result, not only due to the lack of infrastructure or social services but because the people themselves have internalised the belief that they cannot or should not expect more. The participants' responses vividly illustrate that vote buying has profound, far-reaching consequences on community development and the standard of living in Effutu. By fostering a culture of resignation and lowering expectations for development, it hinders civic accountability and perpetuates poverty and underdevelopment as normalised conditions of political life.

One of the participants in the FGD stated that,

“Vote buying destroys the expectation of development. Once people accept money, they lose the right to hold politicians accountable...Let me tell you, “I took GHC 50, but I have paid for it with four years of suffering...” (FGD2)

It emerged from another FGD that,

“Vote buying lowers expectations ...after taking money, you cannot ask questions. You have already been paid...I will say vote buying has made development a dream, not a reality.” (FGD4)

4.2.3.2 Erosion of Accountability and Civic Voice

Erosion of Accountability and Civic Voice captures the troubling reality that when citizens participate in vote buying, they inadvertently silence themselves and weaken democratic oversight. The participants' responses highlight how the practice of exchanging votes for money or goods not only affects election outcomes but also undermines the civic power of the electorate to hold their leaders accountable for poor service delivery, bad governance, and underdevelopment.

Participant 3's statement sets the tone by revealing a deep internal conflict. This illustrates the psychological impact of vote buying, where citizens feel morally compromised and thus refrain from challenging politicians, even when they fail to deliver on promises. FGD4 supports this by bluntly stating the transactional nature of vote buying, where voters equate the act of accepting money with forfeiting their rights. In essence, civic voice is not just muted—it is effectively "bought off" for the election cycle. This silence creates fertile ground for corruption, inefficiency, and neglect.

One participant said,

“You see, when you take money from a politician and vote, more or less you have sold your conscience, so when something is going wrong with the politician, you can hardly talk about it...the consequences of vote buying are negative as the word negative. Just too bad!” (P3)

Participant 10's reflection presents a powerful metaphor that summarises the core of this theme. Here, the price of a vote is not just a bribe but a symbolic payment for complicity and disengagement. This kind of silence contributes to the erosion of participatory democracy, where the people become mere spectators in governance, unable or unwilling to influence decision-making. FGD1 further deepens the analysis by connecting the sale of votes with the sale of development. The quote highlights the real cost of vote buying, deterioration in public services like roads, schools, and health

care. Even though people may complain later, their earlier decision to trade their vote compromises their ability to demand change credibly. These extracts demonstrate how vote buying distorts the social contract between the electorate and elected officials. Citizens, having received material rewards, often perceive that they no longer have the moral authority to question leaders, while politicians, having "bought" loyalty, feel less obliged to respond to the community's needs. This mutually reinforcing silence fosters a culture of impunity and perpetuates systemic neglect. The erosion of civic voice leads to fewer citizens attending town hall meetings, fewer complaints about poor services, and fewer collective actions addressing local issues. This weakens the very essence of democracy, where active participation and accountability are fundamental principles.

It was said during the FGD that,

"...after taking money, you cannot ask questions. You have already been paid..." (FGD4)

Another participant mentioned that,

"... It is like being paid to remain silent for four years..." (P10)

It was made known during another FGD that,

"When you sell your vote, you sell your voice and your development...the same people who took money are still complaining about bad roads, schools, and health services..." (FGD1)

4.2.3.3 Absence of Tangible Improvements in Well-being

This theme addresses the lived realities of constituents in Effutu who, despite engaging in vote-buying practices, have not experienced meaningful improvements in their quality of life. The responses from both individual participants and focus group discussions reveal a consensus: vote buying offers short-term gratification without contributing to long-term socio-economic development.

Participants reflect a deep sense of disillusionment with the aftermath of vote buying. There is a clear understanding that while money or items may be given during election seasons, these offerings do not translate into sustained improvements in the community. Instead, basic challenges such as youth unemployment, poor infrastructure, and lack of essential services remain prevalent. The notion that vote buying has brought “more harm than good” encapsulates this sentiment. It shows a recognition that the temporary financial incentives have not only failed to yield development but may also have worsened the constituency’s situation by reducing pressure on politicians to implement real change. Moreover, the participants demonstrate critical awareness of the transactional nature of vote buying and its inability to support entrepreneurship or lasting livelihoods. While large sums may be distributed during campaigns, these funds are either insufficient or misused, failing to create any visible economic transformation. The absence of examples where such money has led to business establishment or job creation serves as an indictment of the practice's inefficacy in improving individual or community welfare.

The responses also reflect a broader frustration with the cyclical nature of political engagement, where short-term financial gains override long-term developmental needs. While voters may benefit momentarily, they endure extended periods of hardship post-election. This dynamic suggests that vote buying acts as a tool to suppress demands for accountability and real investment, allowing elected officials to abdicate their development responsibilities once in power. In addition, the mention of youth unemployment further underscores the failure of vote buying to address structural economic issues. Participants link the lack of jobs directly to the political culture of vote buying, implying that when politicians secure votes through material inducements rather than policy commitments, they have little motivation to tackle pressing social

problems. Consequently, the practice not only stalls development but may also entrench poverty and hopelessness among the youth.

Participant 2 explained that,

“...Vote buying has brought more harm than good. People take money or items, but what happens next? No jobs, no real development. If vote buying truly helped, we would have seen changes in people’s lives, but everything is still the same or even worse.” (P2)

Another participant recounted that,

“...Vote buying does not help any person living in this constituency. People have received fat monies from politicians. If it results in the overall well-being of people, we should not have any problem in this constituency. I have not seen anybody in this constituency who can boldly say that the money I took from this politician is what I have used to establish this business.” (P4)

Participant 8 also said,

“...the people are suffering. Our youth are still unemployed, ... vote buying has not improved our well-being.” (P8)

The focus group insights strengthen this perspective, pointing to the temporal misalignment between individual gain and community suffering. While a voter may enjoy a momentary benefit, the broader community pays the price over the electoral term. This contrast reflects the profound consequences of prioritising immediate consumption over collective, sustainable development. Ultimately, this theme reveals a community that is critically aware of the disconnect between electoral practices and actual governance outcomes. It brings to light the irony that while vote buying is meant to secure support, it ends up eroding trust and reducing expectations of politicians. People recognise that meaningful well-being is not achieved through short-term incentives but through intentional, consistent efforts to address socio-economic challenges.

The participants' insights are thus not just complaints but form a powerful commentary on the need to rethink political engagement strategies. They call for a shift from transactional politics to transformative governance, one that prioritises real investments in health, education, employment, and infrastructure over vote-buying schemes that leave communities in prolonged stagnation.

It was evident in the FGD that,

“...vote buying benefits individuals for just a day, but the community suffers for four years. “No jobs created because of vote buying.” (FGD3)

4.2.3.4 Short-term Gain, Long-term Suffering

This theme captures the participants' shared perception that vote buying may offer immediate personal benefits, but it results in enduring hardship for the wider community. It builds on the realisation that while individuals may momentarily profit from election-time handouts, the practice undermines genuine development, accountability, and long-term well-being.

The voices of the participants clearly express the fleeting nature of the benefits associated with vote buying. A small monetary or material reward may provide momentary relief, but it creates a false sense of political engagement and progress. The term “fake sense of gain” suggests that the illusion of benefit is powerful enough to sway voters temporarily, even though they are aware of the emptiness that follows. This illusion, however, fades quickly, leaving the electorate to confront the same—if not worse conditions that existed before the election. The idea that “the community suffers for four years” while individuals enjoy a day of benefit captures the imbalance between short-term gratification and long-term deprivation. It highlights how vote buying disrupts the collective pursuit of development by reducing political engagement to a transactional affair, rather than a continuous effort to improve public welfare.

Politicians, having secured votes through handouts, may feel absolved of responsibility, resulting in poor governance and unmet campaign promises.

Participants also reflect on the recurring nature of this practice. Politicians tend to vanish post-election, leaving behind communities still grappling with poverty and unemployment. This post-election silence emphasises the strategic use of vote buying as a temporary measure to manipulate voters rather than as a step towards sustained support or development. The result is a loss of trust and growing disillusionment among the electorate, who begin to expect neglect as a political norm. Moreover, the statements bring out a poignant contrast between personal survival and community progress. A GHC 50 note may help someone buy a meal, but it does nothing to address systemic issues like lack of infrastructure, poor education, or limited job opportunities. Thus, vote buying, while appearing generous, ultimately perpetuates the same cycles of poverty and underdevelopment it temporarily distracts people from.

The participants' insights reinforce the idea that vote buying undermines the moral and developmental fabric of the community. It replaces sustained political dialogue with opportunistic exchanges, eroding the electorate's ability to demand accountability and long-term progress. The result is a political culture where promises are short-lived, and poverty becomes a predictable aftermath of every election cycle.

It was evident in the FGD that,

“...vote buying benefits individuals for just a day, but the community suffers for four years. “No jobs created because of vote buying.” (FGD3)

Another participant recounted,

“...Vote buying does not bring any long-term benefit to us. Maybe someone smiles because of a GHC 50 note, but after that, life becomes even harder. ...” (P18)

Also, participant 11 re-echoed that,

“...After elections, politicians disappear, and we are left in the same poverty. It creates a fake sense of gain, but nothing changes for real...”
(P11)

4.2.3.5 Undermining Leadership Quality and Meritocracy

This theme explores how vote buying diminishes the importance of leadership competence, integrity, and vision in the political decision-making process. Instead of assessing candidates based on their capabilities and long-term development plans, voters are increasingly swayed by immediate material inducements, resulting in the election of leaders who may lack the qualities necessary for effective governance.

The responses from participants reveal a troubling shift in voter mindset—from evaluating who can lead best to simply choosing who can provide short-term relief. This mindset favours transactional politics, where leadership potential is secondary to instant gratification. In this context, merit and policy-oriented thinking are replaced by opportunism, weakening the foundations of democratic governance. Participants also highlight the recurring cycle of electing leaders who are unqualified or indifferent to the developmental needs of their constituencies. Vote buying becomes a shortcut to political power, allowing individuals without vision or commitment to assume leadership roles. These leaders, having “bought” their way into office, may feel no obligation to deliver on long-term goals, knowing that voters have already been “paid off.” This leads to poor service delivery, neglect of public needs, and underdevelopment.

The use of phrases such as “leaders who do not care” and references to constituencies as “markets” emphasise the commodification of politics. Voters are not seen as citizens with rights but as consumers whose votes are traded like goods. This perception reduces

the political space to a marketplace where money is the determining factor, rather than ideas, credibility, or experience. Moreover, participants associate good leadership with well-being and long-term policies. Their reflections show that communities understand the link between competent governance and sustained development. However, the influence of vote buying disrupts this connection, denying capable leaders a fair chance to compete and silencing policy-driven political engagement.

The analysis of this theme shows that vote buying fundamentally weakens democratic processes by elevating wealth over wisdom and selfish gain over shared progress. It sidelines qualified candidates, erodes voter agency, and perpetuates a culture of mediocrity in leadership. For constituencies like Effutu, this has far-reaching consequences—not only for governance but also for the prospects of meaningful development.

Participant stated that,

“...these days, people do not look for qualities in a leader. All that they think about is who can solve my problem now...” (P3)

It was noted in the FGD that,

“Vote buying leads to bad leaders who do not care. This behaviour leads to a cycle of underdevelopment...” (FGD2)

Another FGD point out that,

“...well-being comes from good leadership and long-term policies...politicians view the constituency as a market where votes are bought and sold...” (FGD4)

4.3 Discussion of Findings

4.3.1 Various Manifestations of Vote Buying in the Effutu Constituency

The study revealed that vote buying in the Effutu Constituency manifests in diverse and often strategic ways, making it a deeply entrenched feature of the electoral process. These manifestations go beyond direct monetary inducements and involve indirect forms such as material gifts, development projects, and targeted community engagements. Participants consistently described these practices as typical and expected behaviours during electoral cycles, reflecting a normalisation of vote buying within the political culture of the constituency.

One of the most prominent forms of vote buying observed was the distribution of money and gifts such as fridges, food items, and cash, especially close to elections. *They assure the electorates that some items will be coming from the candidate and it will be shared among them. They share money, fridges, etc” (P1).* This finding aligns with the work of Schaffer and Schedler (2007), who argue that in many developing democracies, clientelism and material inducements form a central part of vote mobilisation strategies. The responses also reflect what Van Ham and Lindberg (2015) refer to as “contingent exchange,” where political support is traded for tangible goods rather than policy promises. In addition to direct gifts, the use of intermediaries and opinion leaders as conduits for vote buying was another recurring theme. Participants described how politicians often engage community leaders, women’s groups, and youth leaders to distribute inducements on their behalf. This confirms the findings of Nichter (2008), who observed that brokers and intermediaries are often crucial in ensuring that resources reach target voters efficiently and discreetly. These intermediaries serve both as trust agents and enforcers of reciprocal political support, allowing candidates to influence voter behaviour without being physically present.

The research also uncovered that public events and social gatherings such as health screenings, funfairs, and religious events are used as subtle platforms for vote buying. *“Sometimes they organise free health screenings or donate items like school bags and food to schools or churches, especially where they know they have more support. These things come just before elections, and it's a way to win the hearts of the people. It may look like charity, but there is a political agenda behind it”.* (P17). Politicians sponsor such gatherings, where they offer items like food, money, and souvenirs to win favour. These findings resonate with the work of Lindberg (2003), who notes that in Ghanaian politics, social and religious events often become avenues for political patronage and indirect vote buying. However, this approach is less overt and usually framed as philanthropy or community service, making it difficult to regulate or classify legally as electoral malpractice. Another revealing dimension was vote buying through services and development projects, including last-minute road repairs, job offers, and payment of school fees. This contradicts the ideal of development-driven campaigns and supports Bratton (2008), who argues that in contexts where the state is perceived as a dispenser of patronage rather than a provider of public goods, citizens become accustomed to demanding material proof of political promises before voting. In such environments, development projects are not seen as civic entitlements but as political favours exchanged for electoral support.

The findings also identified a more covert strategy: the strategic importation of voters from other constituencies to increase electoral strength. Participants described how individuals were brought into the constituency and incentivised with transportation money and gifts to vote for specific candidates. This reflects the findings of Ichino and Nathan (2013), who identified similar tactics in Ghanaian elections, where voter registration fraud and cross-constituency mobilisation were used to manipulate election

outcomes. Interestingly, participants also mentioned how candidates deliberately target key influencers of their opponents, enticing them with offers in hopes of weakening the opposition. This shows a strategic understanding of political mobilisation and echoes the findings of Arriola and Johnson (2014), who argue that political actors in clientelist systems often invest in weakening rival networks rather than merely building their own.

Perhaps most striking was the revelation that vote buying is normalised and expected by many voters. Some participants candidly acknowledged waiting for the election season to receive personal benefits, suggesting that the electorate views vote buying as a legitimate way to benefit from politicians who are otherwise inaccessible. This supports the arguments of Kramon (2016), who observed that in many African democracies, voters prefer short-term material benefits over long-term, uncertain promises. However, this normalisation contradicts democratic principles that value informed and policy-based voting.

Despite the consistency of these findings with much of the literature, the study does challenge some perspectives. For example, Norris and Inglehart (2009) suggest that as education and democratic awareness increase, the prevalence of vote buying should decline.

The manifestations of vote buying in the Effutu Constituency are multifaceted and deeply woven into the fabric of local political engagement. The use of intermediaries, public events, development projects, and even voter importation all point to a sophisticated and entrenched system of political clientelism. These findings not only confirm but also expand existing literature on vote buying in Ghana and beyond. They call for a rethinking of anti-corruption and civic education strategies that go beyond legal frameworks and address the socio-economic roots of the practice.

4.3.2 Factors that Contribute to Vote Buying in Effutu

The findings of the study reveal that multiple interwoven factors contribute to the practice of vote buying in the Effutu constituency. These factors include poverty and economic hardship, lack of trust in politicians, low levels of education and political awareness, weak cultural enforcement and leadership failure, the influence of organised social groups, the dynamic nature of culture, and the view of vote buying as a strategic political investment. for instance “... *If someone is working and earning enough, they won't easily fall for these vote-buying tactics. But in a place like Effutu where unemployment is high, many people just take the money and vote, even if they know it's wrong*”. (P24). Also “*I believe it's ... lack of political education. People don't really understand the long-term effects of voting based on money. They look at the immediate benefit and forget about how their choices affect development...*” (P8). These findings not only echo the existing literature but also offer unique community-specific insights into the persistent nature of electoral clientelism in Ghana. A dominant factor identified is poverty and economic hardship. Most participants admitted that the dire economic conditions in Effutu make voters more susceptible to vote buying. This aligns with the literature that identifies economic vulnerability as a key driver of clientelist exchanges (Kramon, 2016). As observed by Stokes et al. (2013), voters experiencing financial insecurity often view electoral seasons as opportunities to gain immediate material relief, even if temporary. This phenomenon, also known as “reciprocal exchange,” suggests that voters prioritise survival over political ideology or policy promises.

The study also identified a lack of trust in politicians and broken promises as key contributing factors. Participants expressed disappointment over unfulfilled campaign promises, which causes voters to lose faith in long-term political commitments and instead demand immediate gratification in the form of cash or gifts. This finding is

corroborated by Ichino and Nathan (2013), who argue that in contexts where political accountability is weak, voters tend to adopt a “get what you can now” approach. In such cases, vote buying becomes a rational choice in response to systemic failures of representation and governance. Low levels of education and political awareness were also cited as crucial factors. According to the study participants, many voters lack the political knowledge to understand the implications of accepting money for votes, focusing instead on short-term personal gain. This aligns with research by Keefer and Khemani (2005), which suggests that in environments where civic education is limited, voters are more likely to engage in non-programmatic voting behaviours such as clientelism. However, the findings go further to show that even educated individuals may succumb to vote buying due to poverty, thereby complicating the linear relationship between education and electoral integrity.

Another notable factor is weak cultural enforcement and leadership failure. The study reveals that traditional leaders and elders who were once moral compasses in the community have become politically compromised. Their silence or participation in vote buying sends a message of endorsement, thereby eroding cultural resistance to corrupt practices. This supports findings by Bofo-Arthur (2003), who emphasised that Ghana’s traditional leadership, once a bastion of ethical governance, is increasingly influenced by partisan politics. When moral leaders lose neutrality, communal values become diluted, allowing unethical electoral behaviour to thrive. The influence of organised social groups such as youth associations and local unions also contributes to vote buying in Effutu. The study finds that these groups often expect financial or material benefits before agreeing to political engagements, turning political discourse into a transactional event. This supports Schaffer’s (2007) observation that organised interest groups can institutionalise clientelism when group norms endorse it. Moreover,

these groups become vote-brokers, controlling access to large segments of the electorate and leveraging that power for gain.

The dynamic nature of culture also emerged as an essential theme. Participants noted that changing social norms have normalised the exchange of gifts for votes, especially during communal events like festivals. This reflects the theoretical framing by Chabal and Daloz (1999), who argue that in many African contexts, culture evolves to accommodate patron-client systems when they offer economic or social benefits. Hence, rather than resisting vote buying, cultural institutions may adapt to legitimise it. One of the most revealing findings of this study is the conceptualisation of vote buying as a strategic political investment. Participants indicated that politicians deliberately allocate financial resources during elections, knowing they will recoup their expenses through state contracts or political appointments. This aligns with the work of Vicente (2014), who found that in clientelist systems, vote buying is not seen as a cost but an investment with calculable returns. This business-like approach to politics transforms electoral integrity into a marketplace, eroding democratic principles.

Despite the alignment with most literature, the study also reveals specific nuances that challenge existing assumptions. For instance, while some scholars suggest that increasing education automatically reduces susceptibility to vote buying (Khemani, 2015), the findings from Effutu show that poverty can override political awareness. Even when voters understand the long-term implications, their immediate economic needs take precedence. This adds complexity to the education-clientelism debate and calls for a more intersectional approach that considers both socioeconomic and informational factors. Additionally, the study highlights the role of political disillusionment in perpetuating vote buying, a factor less emphasised in mainstream

literature. Many participants stated that they have lost all hope in meaningful change through democratic processes, thereby justifying their acceptance of gifts during elections. This sense of voter fatalism contributes to a self-reinforcing cycle where expectations for governance are low, and short-term gains become the only tangible benefits of political participation.

Another unique contribution of the study is its emphasis on cultural complicity in electoral malpractice. While traditional authorities are often idealised in the literature as moral guardians, the study shows that their increasing politicisation can legitimise unethical behaviour. The use of cultural festivals as platforms for vote buying represents a fusion of traditional authority and political strategy, blurring the lines between communal identity and partisan politics.

The factors contributing to vote buying in Effutu are multifaceted and mutually reinforcing. They include poverty, distrust in politicians, limited political education, weak cultural regulation, organised group influence, and strategic electoral investments. The study confirms much of the existing literature while offering new insights into how cultural dynamics and systemic disillusionment shape voter behaviour. Combating vote buying, therefore, requires more than legal reforms; it demands socioeconomic empowerment, civic education, leadership accountability, and cultural revitalisation.

This section revolves around the Reciprocal Determinism Theory, which explains vote-buying as shaped by environment, personal factors, and behaviour. Poverty, weak institutions, and beliefs influence voters' choices, while these choices reinforce clientelism. This section explored the theoretical relevance and applied it to Effutu

Constituency, linking psychology and political science to analyse how vote-buying undermines democratic consolidation.

4.3.3 Effects of Vote Buying on Election within the Effutu Constituency

The findings of the study indicate that vote buying has a significant and multifaceted impact on elections within the constituency. It affects voter behaviour, distorts democratic principles, and influences the overall electoral outcome. These findings align with existing literature that portrays vote buying as a major challenge to the integrity of electoral processes, particularly in emerging democracies.

One of the most prominent effects of vote buying, as found in the study, is its direct influence on election outcomes. Participants revealed that vote buying compels people who were previously uninterested in elections to participate simply because they received cash or items. Others noted that even known supporters of rival candidates sometimes switch allegiance after receiving material benefits. This supports the findings of Vicente (2014), who argues that vote buying alters voter preferences and decisions, thereby undermining the legitimacy of electoral results. Similarly, Schaffer and Schedler (2007) emphasise that vote buying encourages clientelistic relationships between politicians and voters, where votes are traded for immediate rewards rather than long-term political change. Furthermore, the study reveals that vote buying distorts democratic values and fairness, as it gives undue advantage to wealthy candidates over those with more credible plans but limited resources. Focus group participants highlighted that elections become less about competence and more about financial capacity. This observation echoes the views of Hicken (2011), who explains that vote buying creates a playing field where monetary influence replaces political ideology and merit. The study also found that new or young candidates are often marginalised due to

their inability to match the financial resources of established politicians, further entrenching political inequality.

Additionally, the findings suggest that vote buying increases voter turnout, although not for the right reasons. Many respondents noted that people who were previously apathetic or disillusioned about politics become enthusiastic about voting when money or gifts are involved. While increased voter turnout is generally seen as a democratic good, in this context, it reflects manipulated participation. This supports the assertion by Kramon (2016) that vote buying serves as a mobilisation tool in many African democracies, drawing people to the polls not out of civic responsibility but for personal gain. However, this form of turnout is superficial and undermines the authenticity of democratic engagement. Some participants reported that even after receiving gifts, some voters still choose based on their conscience, or take gifts from multiple candidates without committing to any. This is consistent with findings by Gonzalez-Ocantos et al. (2012), who argue that while vote buying can influence behaviour, it does not always result in predictable outcomes. Many voters accept money as a form of "redistribution" but still exercise agency at the ballot box.

Moreover, the study found that vote buying promotes transactional politics, where elections are seen as economic ventures rather than democratic exercises. Participants described how politicians invest large sums of money with the expectation of recouping it through contracts and deals once elected. This is supported by Wantchekon (2003), who describes vote buying as an investment strategy in which politicians calculate returns based on their anticipated time in office. Such practices erode public trust in governance and contribute to corruption post-elections. In some cases, the findings point to organised groups within the constituency, such as youth groups and

associations, being complicit in perpetuating vote buying. These groups expect "tokens" from candidates before granting access to their members, essentially turning democratic participation into a bargaining chip. This behaviour mirrors what Nichter (2008) describes as "turnout buying," where political actors provide incentives to ensure presence at the polls rather than loyalty or persuasion.

However, the findings also reveal a lack of sustained impact. Despite the influence of vote buying during elections, it does not guarantee long-term political loyalty. Many voters, once the immediate benefit is over, return to disinterest or disappointment due to unmet promises. This observation is backed by Finan and Schechter (2012), who found that vote buying may lead to short-term compliance but not necessarily long-term allegiance or satisfaction. The cumulative evidence from the study suggests that vote buying undermines the credibility of democratic elections by manipulating voter behaviour, creating unequal playing fields, and incentivising corrupt political practices. While it increases voter turnout, it distorts the purpose of that participation, turning voting into a commodity rather than a civic responsibility. The findings strongly align with global literature on the subject while also contributing new perspectives on the role of organised social groups in facilitating vote buying.

The study underscores the urgent need for electoral reforms, voter education, and institutional accountability to curb vote buying. Strengthening democratic institutions, enforcing campaign finance laws, and empowering civic groups to monitor elections are crucial in restoring the sanctity of the vote and promoting a more inclusive and fair electoral system in the constituency and beyond.

4.3.4 Consequences of Vote Buying on the Standard of Living of the People of Effutu

The findings of this study reveal that vote buying has several adverse consequences on the standard of living of the people in the Effutu constituency. Participants consistently linked the practice to low developmental expectations, erosion of accountability, lack of tangible improvements in well-being, short-term personal benefits followed by long-term suffering, and the undermining of leadership quality and meritocracy. These consequences together contribute to a cycle of poverty, disempowerment, and political disenfranchisement, ultimately affecting the overall standard of living in the constituency.

First, many participants pointed out that vote buying significantly lowers expectations for development. Constituents who receive money or items during elections tend to feel compensated in advance, thus weakening their ability and moral justification to demand accountability or development post-elections. This finding supports the assertion by Vicente and Wantchekon (2009), who argue that vote buying erodes the capacity of citizens to hold elected leaders accountable, as the transactional nature of the ballot undermines civic duty and long-term political engagement. Additionally, the data show that vote buying silences the civic voice and erodes public accountability. Participants felt that accepting money in exchange for votes compromised their moral standing to question politicians later. This aligns with the views of Kramon (2016), who observed that voters in clientelist democracies often feel disempowered to make post-electoral demands once they have been bought off. The silence that follows vote buying contributes to the perpetuation of poor service delivery and neglect of developmental promises.

Furthermore, the study found an absence of tangible improvements in well-being after elections. Respondents expressed that, despite accepting monetary or material incentives, there was no noticeable improvement in employment, health services, or infrastructure. This finding is consistent with the work of Bratton (2008), who suggests that vote buying typically results in symbolic rather than substantive benefits for voters. Constituents may receive gifts or cash, but the broader socio-economic issues, such as job creation and poverty alleviation, remain unaddressed. Participants also highlighted the short-term nature of the gains associated with vote buying. Although the gifts may offer temporary relief, they often translate into long-term suffering due to the neglect that follows elections. This supports the claim by Esaiasson and Ottervik (2014) and Leight, et al. (2020) that vote buying promotes immediate consumption but undermines sustainable development. In Effutu, this short-term mindset has entrenched poverty by sidelining policies that could lead to structural improvements in people's lives. The undermining of leadership quality and meritocracy also emerged strongly in the findings. Respondents noted that vote buying leads to the election of less competent leaders, as financial muscle rather than vision and competence becomes the key determinant for political success. This finding supports the arguments of Hicken (2011), who noted that vote buying distorts the electoral playing field and favours wealthy candidates who may lack developmental vision or leadership skills.

However, this study's findings challenge the optimistic view held by some scholars who argue that vote buying can serve as a redistribution mechanism for the poor (Schaffer & Schedler, 2007). In the context of Effutu, no evidence vote buying improved livelihoods in any sustainable way. Instead, participants indicated that the practice had worsened their socio-economic conditions, thereby refuting the idea that vote buying has any form of progressive redistributive effect. Moreover, the findings

contradict the belief that vote buying enhances democratic participation by increasing voter turnout. While vote buying may encourage more people to participate in the electoral process, the study found that this turnout does not translate into improved representation or policy responsiveness. As such, the artificial increase in participation undermines the authenticity of electoral outcomes and deepens public cynicism toward the political process.

Participants also associated vote buying with the normalisation of political corruption. They believed that once a politician gains office through monetary influence, they are likely to recoup their investment through corrupt means rather than invest in the community. This supports the findings of Gonzalez-Ocantos et al. (2012), who argue that vote buying not only undermines accountability but also encourages a cycle of corruption that erodes institutional trust and diverts resources from public investment. Additionally, the study highlights how vote buying contributes to a culture of dependency. Many respondents indicated that the practice discourages initiative and self-reliance among the youth and other community members. Instead of advocating for long-term empowerment programmes or economic policies, constituents often wait for handouts during elections. This observation echoes the findings of Wantchekon (2003), who noted that clientelism tends to reinforce dependence and weaken collective action among voters.

This section connects the theory of civic ideals and practices, offering a diagnostic and prescriptive framework for understanding Ghana's democracy, highlighting values of equality, justice, and accountability alongside practices like voting and civic education. Applied to Effutu, it shows how financial inducements distort equality, erode accountability, weaken trust, and exploit vulnerabilities.

The evidence from Effutu suggests that vote buying is a detrimental practice that not only undermines the democratic process but also directly contributes to low standards of living by discouraging accountability, entrenching poor leadership, and stifling development. It leads to disillusionment, political apathy post-election, and deteriorating social conditions, particularly for vulnerable populations who are often the targets of such inducements.



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Overview

This chapter presents the summary and key findings of the study. The chapter further provides a conclusion to the research questions. It also includes recommendations based on the findings of the study and suggestions for further studies.

5.1 Summary

The study sought to explore the phenomenon of vote buying in the Effutu Constituency. The study aimed to contribute to the scholarly understanding of vote buying in the Effutu Constituency and provide insights that can inform policy and advocacy efforts aimed at promoting free and fair elections and strengthening democratic governance in the area. The following objectives guided the study. To;

1. investigate the various manifestations of vote buying in the Effutu Constituency.
2. explore the factors that contribute to vote buying in Effutu Constituency.
3. explore the effects of vote buying on elections within the Effutu Constituency.
4. explore the consequences of vote buying on the standard of living of the people of Effutu Constituency

The theory of reciprocal determinism, rational choice and the theory of civic ideals and practices underpinned the study. Literature was reviewed on the following themes: Manifestations of vote-buying in elections, Factors influencing vote-buying, Effects of vote-buying in election processes, and Consequences of vote-buying on the standard of living. A qualitative approach involving case study design was employed for the study, which was also informed by the interpretivist research paradigm. Simple random sampling was used to select twelve (12) electoral areas out of the eighteen (18) electoral

areas. Within the twelve (12) electoral areas, one (1) assembly member or unit committee member and one (1) electorate was selected from each of the electoral areas; totalling twenty-four (24) while purposive sampling was also used to sample the remaining six (6) electoral areas. In those electoral areas, one (1) assembly member or unit committee member and one (1) electorate from each electoral area was selected; totalling twelve (12) participants. Therefore, the actual sample size for the study was thirty-six (36) participants. A semi-structured interview guide and focus group discussion checklists were the instruments used for the data collection. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data collected.

5.2 Key Findings

The first research objective sought to identify the various manifestations of vote buying in Effutu Constituency. The study uncovered several distinct manifestations of vote buying in the Effutu Constituency, reflecting both direct and indirect methods used by political actors to influence voters. One of the most prominent forms identified was the distribution of cash during election periods, often given openly or through intermediaries to secure votes. Participants noted that the monetary amounts vary, but the underlying motivation remains the same: exchanging financial inducements for electoral support. In addition to cash, non-monetary items such as bags of rice, cooking oil, cloth, mobile phones, and even roofing sheets were frequently mentioned as being distributed, especially close to voting day.

Another key manifestation was the provision of social services or personal assistance to select individuals or groups in exchange for political loyalty. Politicians were reported to finance funerals, pay school fees, settle hospital bills, or sponsor community events with the understanding, explicit or implied, that recipients would vote for them.

These actions, while disguised as acts of generosity or benevolence, were identified by participants as strategic tools of manipulation, where developmental needs were exploited for political gain. Such personalised service delivery often replaced broader policy discussions, limiting voter engagement on critical governance issues. Lastly, the study found that some forms of vote buying were embedded in community development promises, where politicians pledged or commenced infrastructure projects such as road construction, school renovations, or the provision of water facilities right before elections. These promises were often left unfulfilled post-election, reinforcing the perception that development in the constituency was transactional and election-driven. Collectively, these manifestations reflect a deep-rooted culture of electoral clientelism in Effutu, where short-term material gains are prioritised over long-term developmental planning and governance accountability.

Research objective two sought to explore the factors that contribute to vote buying in the Effutu Constituency. The findings of the study revealed that several interrelated factors contribute to the prevalence of vote buying in the Effutu Constituency, with poverty emerging as the most dominant driver. Many participants indicated that the high levels of economic hardship in the constituency make voters highly susceptible to immediate financial or material inducements. For people who struggle to meet their daily needs, the offer of money or goods during elections becomes a form of temporary relief, even if it undermines long-term development. Politicians, aware of these economic vulnerabilities, take advantage of them by strategically offering inducements to secure electoral support.

In addition to poverty, the study found that ignorance and lack of civic education play a crucial role in sustaining vote-buying practices. Many constituents do not fully understand the power of their vote or the long-term implications of trading it for short-term benefits. This lack of awareness contributes to a culture where elections are seen as opportunities to “cash out” rather than as moments to demand policies and leadership that can transform their lives. Several participants emphasised that the absence of consistent voter education campaigns makes it easier for political actors to manipulate and exploit voters' limited understanding of democratic processes.

The third research objective sought to examine the effects of vote buying on the election within the Effutu Constituency. The study revealed that vote buying significantly distorts democratic values and undermines the fairness of elections within the Effutu Constituency. Participants widely acknowledged that the practice allows financially stronger candidates to gain an unfair advantage, often sidelining those with better ideas, policies, or genuine intentions to serve. As a result, electoral outcomes are frequently influenced not by competence or political vision, but by the ability of candidates to distribute cash or gifts. This dynamic erodes the democratic ideal of equal opportunity and fair representation, weakening the legitimacy of elected leaders and the trust citizens have in the electoral process.

Another major impact of vote buying identified in the study is the artificial inflation of voter turnout. While high voter participation is typically seen as a positive indicator of civic engagement, in the Effutu context, many participants viewed increased turnout as primarily driven by material expectations rather than genuine interest in governance or democratic participation. The promise of monetary or material reward serves as an incentive for otherwise apathetic voters to participate. However, this form of

engagement is transactional and does not translate into active citizenship or a deeper understanding of the political process.

Furthermore, the findings highlight that vote buying has contributed to the erosion of accountability and civic voice. Once voters accept money or gifts in exchange for their vote, they often feel morally bound to remain silent even when the elected officials fail to deliver on their promises. Participants expressed that after receiving payments, many constituents are reluctant to question or demand accountability from politicians, effectively giving them a free pass to underperform or neglect their duties. This silence weakens the role of citizens in monitoring governance and reduces pressure on politicians to fulfil development pledges.

The practice of vote buying reshapes electoral behaviour in the constituency, moving it away from issue-based decision-making towards a monetised political culture. It discourages meaningful political dialogue and empowers opportunistic politicians who exploit economic hardships to secure votes without offering tangible policy directions. The long-term consequence is a cyclical weakening of democratic institutions, where leadership is not necessarily reflective of the people's will but rather of transactional exchanges that prioritise short-term gains over long-term development and accountability.

The last research objective sought to explore the consequences of vote buying in the standard of living among the people in Effutu Constituency. The study revealed that vote buying has profound negative consequences on the standard of living of the people in the Effutu Constituency. One of the most recurring themes was the lowered expectations for development among citizens. Participants expressed that once voters accept money or items in exchange for their vote, they feel they have forfeited the moral

right to demand development projects or services. This transactional exchange creates an environment where constituents expect very little from elected leaders, believing they have already “sold” their voice and, by extension, their right to demand better living conditions. This passive attitude significantly weakens efforts to improve infrastructure, healthcare, education, and employment opportunities in the constituency.

Many participants noted that once voters accept gifts from politicians, they are less likely to hold them accountable when they fail to deliver on campaign promises. This dynamic diminishes public pressure on leaders to perform and contributes to widespread poor service delivery. The community members’ inability to question or challenge poor governance due to compromised moral standing leads to a governance structure where political leaders feel little obligation to prioritise the public’s welfare, thereby entrenching underdevelopment.

Moreover, the study found that vote buying yields no tangible improvements in the overall well-being of the constituency. Though individuals may receive money, foodstuffs, or other short-term incentives, these benefits quickly dissipate, leaving no lasting impact. The community continues to grapple with high unemployment, especially among the youth, and a lack of basic amenities. Participants noted that the benefits of vote buying are fleeting and serve only as temporary relief, rather than as pathways to economic empowerment or improved living standards. The disparity between campaign-time generosity and post-election neglect further fuels frustration among citizens who realise that they have been exploited for electoral gains.

Lastly, the findings underscore the long-term suffering that stems from vote-buying practices. While individuals may experience momentary joy from receiving cash or goods, the community collectively endures years of hardship due to poor leadership and unmet development needs. Vote buying not only brings incompetent leaders into power but also reinforces a cycle where politics becomes more about material exchange than genuine development. The undermining of leadership quality and meritocracy ensures that qualified, visionary individuals are sidelined in favour of those who can afford to “buy” votes. As a result, the constituency remains trapped in underdevelopment, with its residents continuously deprived of sustainable improvements in their standard of living.

5.3 Conclusion

From the findings of the study, the following conclusions were deduced:

Vote buying in Effutu manifests in multiple forms, including the distribution of money, foodstuffs, clothing, mobile airtime, and promises of employment and future opportunities. These inducements are often delivered either directly by political candidates or through intermediaries and take place during rallies, house-to-house campaigns, and on election day itself. Vote buying is thus deeply embedded in the political culture of the constituency and has evolved into a transactional practice where votes are exchanged for short-term personal gains rather than long-term community development.

Widespread poverty, unemployment, voter ignorance, and the perception of politics as a short-term opportunity for personal gain are major drivers of vote buying in Effutu. Additionally, weak institutional enforcement, lack of civic education, and a historical pattern of political neglect have conditioned many voters to accept inducements as

compensation for years of underdevelopment. Politicians exploit these vulnerabilities to secure electoral victory, reinforcing a system where financial incentives take precedence over policy substance and leadership qualities.

Vote buying significantly increases voter turnout, albeit artificially. The promise of immediate material gain motivates individuals who would ordinarily abstain from voting to participate. However, this increased turnout does not reflect genuine political engagement or interest in governance. Rather, it compromises the electoral process by undermining democratic choice and fairness. The practice distorts the will of the people, enabling less competent or uncommitted individuals to assume leadership positions based on their ability to offer incentives rather than their capacity to lead.

Vote buying has detrimental effects on the standard of living in the constituency. It lowers citizens' expectations for development, erodes accountability, and silences civic voice. Once voters accept inducements, they feel morally constrained to challenge poor governance or demand services. This leads to a lack of tangible improvements in well-being, as elected officials feel no pressure to deliver on promises. Furthermore, the practice undermines leadership quality by promoting a culture where financial capacity outweighs competence, thereby perpetuating underdevelopment and long-term suffering for the constituency.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study on vote buying in the Effutu Constituency and its implications for democratic participation and the standard of living, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. The study established that poverty and economic hardship constitute major factors influencing vote buying. It is therefore recommended that government and development partners design and implement sustainable economic empowerment programmes aimed at improving the livelihoods of vulnerable groups. Skills training, microcredit schemes and employment creation programmes should be strengthened to reduce the economic vulnerability that makes voters susceptible to monetary inducements during elections.
2. The study revealed that lack of civic awareness contributes significantly to vote buying. It is recommended that the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE), Electoral Commission and civil society organisations intensify civic education programmes to educate citizens on the long-term consequences of vote buying and the importance of voting based on competence and policy issues rather than monetary rewards. For example, they could hold community workshops, school programs, radio and TV discussions, and social media campaigns to teach citizens why vote buying is harmful and why it is important to choose leaders based on their skills, policies, and ideas rather than money or gifts.
3. The study showed that weak enforcement of electoral laws encourages the practice of vote buying. It is recommended that electoral laws relating to vote buying should be strictly enforced. Law enforcement agencies and electoral management bodies should intensify monitoring activities during election periods and ensure that

individuals who engage in vote buying are investigated and prosecuted to serve as deterrence to others.

4. The findings indicated that vote buying is often carried out openly through the distribution of money and gifts during election periods. It is recommended that the media and civil society organisations should strengthen investigative reporting and public exposure of vote-buying practices in order to discourage politicians from engaging in such activities.
5. The study revealed that politicians often use development assistance such as payment of hospital bills, funeral donations, school fees and small community projects as indirect forms of vote buying. It is recommended that development interventions at the community level should be implemented through transparent institutional arrangements rather than through individual politicians, particularly during election periods. This will reduce the use of development support as a tool for influencing voter behaviour.
6. The study found that vote buying weakens political accountability because elected leaders often feel less obligated to serve the public interest after securing votes through financial inducements. It is recommended that community-based accountability mechanisms such as town hall meetings and public performance reviews should be strengthened to encourage citizens to demand accountability from elected representatives.
7. The findings showed that politicians and political parties play a central role in promoting vote buying during elections. It is recommended that political parties should develop and enforce internal codes of conduct that prohibit vote buying and other forms of electoral inducement. Political parties should also educate their

candidates on ethical campaign practices in order to promote credible democratic processes.

5.5 Suggestion for Further Studies

Future research could examine how political party hierarchies, campaign financing practices, and intra-party competition contribute to vote buying. This could help clarify whether vote buying is an individual strategy or a coordinated party tactic.

Also, a comparative study involving multiple constituencies across different regions of Ghana, especially contrasting rural and urban settings, could offer a broader understanding of how vote buying manifests differently in diverse socio-political and economic contexts. Such a study could uncover regional patterns and provide a national-level perspective on the phenomenon.

Further studies could explore the gendered and intersectional dimensions of vote buying, including how these groups are targeted, their levels of participation, and how their social and economic vulnerabilities are exploited during elections.

Furthermore, a longitudinal study tracking communities over multiple election cycles would offer insights into how vote buying affects development trajectories over time. Such research could establish whether areas plagued by consistent vote buying experience stagnation in infrastructure, education, health, and economic opportunities compared to constituencies with cleaner electoral processes.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Interview Guide

Research Question 1: What are the various manifestations of vote buying in the Effutu Constituency?

1. Did you vote in the 2024 election
2. Have you heard of vote buying in the Effutu constituency?
3. What are some of the ways vote-buying is practised in the Effutu Constituency?

Research Question 2: What factors contribute to vote buying in Effutu?

1. In your opinion, what makes vote-buying persistent in the Effutu constituency?
2. Do economic conditions influence the prevalence of vote-buying?
3. Do you think cultural or social norms play a role in the acceptance of vote-buying? If yes, how?
4. What do you think motivates candidates or parties to engage in vote-buying?
5. What are the strategies political parties use in buying votes?

Research Question 3: How does vote buying impact the election within the Constituency?

1. How do you think vote-buying influences election results in the Effutu Constituency?
2. Do you think vote-buying affects voter turnout?
3. If yes / no, explain?
4. How often do you see or engage the elected after the election?

Research Question 4: What are the consequences of vote buying in the standard of living of the people of Effutu?

1. In what ways does vote-buying influence your expectations in Effutu? (standard of living)
2. In your opinion, has vote-buying resulted in the overall well-being of the people of Effutu?



APPENDIX B

Letter of Introduction



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Our Ref: SSE/SM.1/VOL.1/288

Date: 7th February, 2025

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam,

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION: MR. ROBERT QUARTEY

We write to introduce **Mr. Robert Quarthey** to your outfit. He is a Ph.D. Social Studies student with index number **92301440008** from the above named Department.

As part of the requirement for the award of Ph.D. degree, he is undertaking a research on the topic **"Money, Vote and Democracy: A case of Vote-Buying in Effutu Constituency"**. We would be most grateful if you could grant him permission to undertake the study including collecting data.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION
WINNEBA

Grace-Gifty Sarpey
for: Ag. Head of Department



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