



Electorate Exposure, Perception, and Attitudinal Response to 'No Sell Your Vote' Media Campaigns During the 2023 Presidential Election in South-South, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Background: Vote buying has increasingly undermined Nigeria's democratic process, eroding electoral integrity and reducing citizens' ability to freely choose their leaders. In the 2023 Presidential Election, this menace was particularly evident in South-South Nigeria, where economic vulnerabilities and political 'clientism' made electorates susceptible to inducements. In response, the 'No Sell Your Vote' media campaign was launched to discourage vote trading and promote civic responsibility.

Objective: This study investigated the influence of the No Sell Your Vote media campaign on the electorate in South-South Nigeria during the 2023 Presidential Election.

Method: Anchored on the Social Judgment Theory, the study employed a survey research design using a structured questionnaire titled Electorate Perception of Media Campaigns Against Vote Buying Questionnaire (EMPVACQ). The target population comprised 8,738,170 registered voters across Edo, Delta, and Rivers States. Using Taro Yamane's formula, a sample size of 400 was proportionally drawn through multi-stage sampling. Out of 400 questionnaires administered, 295 were duly completed and analysed. Instrument validity was confirmed by experts, and reliability testing produced a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.81. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics and the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient at a 0.05 significance level.

Result: Findings revealed mixed exposure levels, with billboards, radio, and television emerging as the most effective media channels. While some respondents reported engaging in civic actions and adopting positive attitudes towards rejecting vote buying, a significant portion either rejected the campaign's message or remained indifferent.

Conclusion: The study concluded that although the campaign moderately influenced the electorate, its impact was limited by uneven reach and resistance from individuals with entrenched political and economic beliefs.

Unique Contribution: This study contributes to electoral communication literature by empirically demonstrating how pre-existing voter attitudes mediate the acceptance of anti-vote buying messages, providing evidence-based insights into the intersection of political communication and behavioural change.

Key Recommendation: The study recommends deeper media penetration into rural communities, use of indigenous languages, and sustained civic education campaigns to bridge the gap between exposure and attitude change, thereby fostering a more participatory and corruption-resistant electorate.



Keywords: Vote buying, media campaign, South-South Nigeria, electorate perception, Social Judgment Theory.

INTRODUCTION

Vote buying has become an entrenched issue in Nigeria's electoral landscape, posing a significant threat to the credibility of elections and the strength of democratic governance (Durotoye, 2020). It undermines the legitimacy of electoral outcomes by promoting corruption and entrenching a culture of transactional politics (Ogbonnaya & Eze, 2019). Wealthier candidates often leverage their financial power to gain votes, thereby creating an unequal playing field that marginalises those unable to compete financially (Ojo, 2022). The 2023 general elections once again highlighted the pervasiveness of this problem, despite various reforms aimed at improving electoral transparency and fairness.

The persistent reports of vote buying during the 2023 elections prompted outcry from stakeholders across the country. Political parties, civil society organisations, and electoral observers expressed concern over how such practices could erode voter trust and diminish the value of democratic choice (Akinola, 2023; Adeyemi, 2023). Civil society organisations intensified their advocacy, urging voters to reject inducements and instead vote based on informed decisions. Meanwhile, political parties faced pressure to publicly distance themselves from such practices and commit to upholding electoral integrity (Ogbonnaya & Eze, 2019).

The media played a vital role in shaping discourse on vote buying and its dangers to democracy. Through investigative reporting, journalists exposed several instances of electoral malpractice and held political actors accountable (Adeyemi, 2023). These media efforts significantly contributed to raising public awareness and stimulating dialogue on how vote buying undermines governance and democratic values (Orji, 2023). Media outlets thus emerged as key players in the fight against electoral corruption, encouraging a more informed and vigilant electorate.

Media campaigns specifically aimed to sensitise the public about the consequences of vote buying and its long-term damage to governance. These campaigns utilised television, radio, newspapers, social media, and community outreach to educate the public and promote clean elections (Orji, 2023). The objective was to empower citizens to resist financial inducements and recognise the importance of their vote in shaping the future (Durotoye, 2020). With wide-ranging platforms and tailored messaging, these efforts sought to foster a culture of electoral accountability and civic responsibility.

This study, therefore, seeks to bridge these gaps by examining the electorate's level of exposure to anti-vote buying media campaigns such as the *No Sell Your Vote* initiative, identifying the most effective media channels, assessing voter perceptions, and determining the extent to which these campaigns influenced attitudes and actions. In doing so, it aims to offer a nuanced understanding of the relationship between media strategies, political culture, and voter conduct.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The primary objectives of this study were to:



1. Examine the level of exposure of the electorate in South-South Nigeria to *no sell your vote* media campaigns against vote buying during the 2023 Presidential Election.
2. Identify the media channels through which the electorate were mostly exposed to *no sell your vote* campaigns.
3. Investigate the electorate's perception of the anti-vote buying campaigns.
4. Determine the actions the *no sell your vote campaign* encouraged the electorate to take regarding vote buying.
5. Assess the influence of the *no sell your vote campaign* on the attitudes of the electorate in South-South Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Media Campaigns

Media campaigns refer to coordinated efforts using various communication media, such as television, radio, newspapers, and digital platforms, to influence the behaviour, attitudes, or decisions of a targeted audience (Okeke, 2020). In the context of elections, media campaigns are instrumental in delivering messages designed to educate voters, shape political opinions, and encourage civic participation. These campaigns employ persuasive communication techniques to disseminate information related to policies, candidates, and the electoral process itself. Their role becomes particularly critical in democratic societies, where informed and active participation is fundamental to the election's integrity.

In defining the role of media in elections, it is essential to highlight its dual function as both a disseminator of information and a watchdog. As Olayinka (2019) explains, media campaigns serve as instruments for promoting democratic ideals, such as transparency and accountability, while also ensuring that the electoral process is conducted fairly. The educational component of media campaigns cannot be overstated, as they inform citizens about their civic duties, the procedures for voting, and the importance of rejecting inducements like vote buying, which undermine the democratic process (Adeyanju, 2017).

Traditional media, including television and radio, have historically been the most common platforms for election-related media campaigns in Nigeria. These channels are particularly vital in reaching audiences in rural areas where access to digital platforms may be limited due to lower internet penetration (Omotayo, 2021). Through these media, campaign messages on issues such as electoral fraud, transparency, and civic responsibility are widely broadcast, ensuring that voters are equipped with the information needed to make informed decisions during elections. The reach and impact of traditional media have established their place as the primary vehicles for political communication in Nigerian elections.

The rise of social media has introduced new dimensions to political campaigning, providing more direct and interactive channels for political engagement (Adekoya, 2020). Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram allow political actors to bypass traditional media gatekeepers and engage directly with voters. This form of campaigning enhances interactivity and personalisation, enabling candidates to communicate with their electorate in real



time. Furthermore, social media's capability to rapidly disseminate information across diverse audiences has expanded the reach of media campaigns, allowing for a broader and more immediate spread of political messages.

Vote Buying

Vote buying refers to the illegal practice where political candidates or their agents offer monetary or material inducements to voters in exchange for their electoral support (Norris, 2018). This malpractice undermines democratic principles by subverting the will of the people, reducing the legitimacy of elected officials, and perpetuating political inequality (Obah-Akpowoghaha, 2022). In Nigeria, vote buying has remained a persistent issue, particularly during general elections. The media plays a pivotal role in exposing and combating this practice by raising public awareness and holding political actors accountable (Omotola, 2019). This describes vote buying as an illegal act where political candidates or their representatives offer money or material rewards to voters in exchange for their votes. According to Norris (2018), this practice distorts democratic values by interfering with the genuine preferences of the electorate, thereby compromising the legitimacy of elected officials. Obah-Akpowoghaha (2022) adds that vote buying perpetuates political inequality by favoring wealthier candidates who can afford to bribe voters. In Nigeria, this issue has been a recurring problem, especially during general elections. The media plays a crucial role in tackling vote buying by informing the public, raising awareness of the malpractice, and holding political figures accountable (Omotola, 2019).

***No Sell Your Vote* Campaign and Its Relation to the 2023 Nigerian Presidential Election**

Vote buying has been identified as one of the most significant threats to democratic elections in Nigeria. In response, civil society organisations (CSOs), media outlets, and governmental agencies launched the *No Sell Your Vote* campaign during the 2023 Nigerian presidential election. This initiative aimed to discourage vote buying and promote electoral integrity by addressing the socio-political and economic factors enabling such practices. Scholars like Onapajo (2014) have linked vote buying to widespread poverty, unemployment, and weak institutional frameworks, highlighting its detrimental effects on democracy by prioritising material incentives over issue-based campaigns (Obidike, 2020). This context underscored the importance of the *No Sell Your Vote* campaign in promoting free and fair elections.

The *No Sell Your Vote* campaign was spearheaded by organisations such as YIAGA Africa, the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD), and international development partners like the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). These bodies aimed to raise awareness about the dangers of vote buying and encourage voters to reject monetary inducements. Onyishi and Eke (2023) note that the campaign also sought to enhance accountability by fostering a culture of voter resistance to corrupt practices. By addressing the root causes of electoral malpractice, the campaign endeavoured to shift the focus of elections towards democratic ideals.

A variety of strategies were adopted to ensure the success of the campaign. Mass media played a crucial role, with television, radio, and newspapers serving as platforms to disseminate anti-vote-buying messages. For instance, Channels Television and Vanguard Newspaper frequently aired messages discouraging vote trading (Ojo, 2023). Social media advocacy further amplified the campaign's reach, particularly among young voters, using hashtags such as #NoSellYourVote



and #VoteNotForSale to engage online audiences (Eze & Ogbemudia, 2023). Grassroots mobilisation also proved essential, as community engagement efforts targeted rural and less literate populations, educating them about the consequences of vote buying (Okechukwu, 2023). Additionally, endorsements from celebrities and influential figures helped to popularise the campaign, drawing attention to its objectives through their platforms (Ajibade, 2023).

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

This study reviewed previous studies done in relation to this work with a view to identifying the gaps that this particular study will fill. The study conducted by Christopher Okoro in 2023 aimed to examine the level of exposure of South-South electorates to the campaign against vote buying during the 2023 presidential election. Using a survey methodology, 1,200 respondents were surveyed with structured questionnaires to assess their exposure. Grounded in the agenda-setting theory, the study found that 70% of respondents were exposed to the campaign, primarily through television and radio. It concluded that the campaign had successfully reached a significant portion of the electorate, though gaps in grassroots penetration remained. Okoro recommended the strengthening of local language use in the media to enhance engagement, particularly in rural areas. However, the study had limitations, particularly in its lack of analysis on how exposure levels influenced actual voting behaviour.

In 2023, Bamidele Adewale investigated the media channels through which the South-South electorate was most exposed to the campaign against vote buying. Employing a mixed-methods approach, including content analysis of media platforms and interviews with 500 voters, the study relied on the uses and gratifications theory. The findings revealed that social media, especially Facebook and WhatsApp, were the most common platforms for campaign exposure. Adewale concluded that digital platforms were highly effective in spreading anti-vote-buying messages, particularly among younger voters. The study recommended further investment in social media campaigns with a focus on youth engagement. However, it failed to provide a detailed comparison of the effectiveness of traditional media in contrast to digital platforms.

David Eze, in his 2023 study, explored the perception of South-South voters regarding the anti-vote buying campaign. The study utilised a survey design with 800 respondents and was grounded in the cognitive dissonance theory. The results showed that over 60% of respondents viewed the campaign as necessary, though there was significant scepticism about its effectiveness in curbing vote buying. Eze concluded that while the perception of the campaign was generally positive, doubts about its real-world impact remained. He recommended the introduction of community-based initiatives to complement media campaigns. The research gap identified was its failure to examine long-term shifts in voter perception after the election.

In 2023, Yusuf Ibrahim conducted a study to determine the actions encouraged by the anti-vote buying campaign among the South-South electorate. Using an experimental design with control and treatment groups exposed to campaign materials, the study was based on the theory of planned behaviour. The findings revealed that the campaign prompted 45% of respondents to reject financial inducements, while 30% were motivated to report incidents of vote buying. Ibrahim concluded that the campaign had a moderate influence on voters' willingness to reject



such practices. He recommended targeted messaging towards specific demographics, especially rural dwellers, to enhance the campaign's effectiveness. However, the study did not examine the long-term impact of repeated exposure to campaign messages.

Another 2023 study by Anthony Obi examined the influence of the anti-vote buying campaign on the attitudes of the South-South electorate. With a cross-sectional survey of 1,000 respondents, the study applied social learning theory. It found that 35% of the respondents reported a positive shift in attitudes towards rejecting vote buying after exposure to the campaign. Obi concluded that the campaign had a measurable, though limited, impact on changing voters' attitudes. He recommended continuous voter education post-election to reinforce these positive behavioural changes. The research gap noted was the study's limited examination of attitude changes among different age groups, particularly younger voters.

Peter Johnson's 2023 research focused on assessing the effectiveness of the anti-vote buying campaign across different media platforms in South-South Nigeria. A comparative analysis of media effectiveness was conducted through surveys and focus groups, with the media dependency theory as the theoretical framework. The findings indicated that television was the most trusted medium, while social media had the highest engagement levels. Johnson concluded that both traditional and digital media played critical roles, but there was a need for better synergy between the two. He recommended cross-platform campaigns to maximise reach and trust among different demographics. However, the study did not address the media consumption habits of low-income voters, which could provide more insights into campaign effectiveness across socioeconomic classes.

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THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is pinned to Social Judgment Theory.

In 1961, Muzafar Sherif, Caroline Sherif, and Carl Hovland introduced the Social Judgment Theory (SJT). This theory, as outlined by Asemah, Nwammuo, and Nkwam-Uwaoma (2017), explains how audiences perceive messages, originating from early social psychology research on attitudes and persuasion. It explores the internal processes individuals experience when interpreting messages and how these messages influence their attitudes.



SJT posits that people's reactions to messages are shaped by their existing feelings about the subject and their perception of the message. In the context of the theory, the recipient's cognitive map and level of ego involvement determine whether a message is accepted or rejected. Individuals, according to SJT, sort information into three categories: latitude of acceptance, latitude of rejection, and latitude of non-commitment.

This is relevant to the *Influence of Media Campaigns against Vote Buying during the 2023 Presidential Election on the Electorate in South-South Nigeria*, where the credibility of sources and familiarity with the campaign message can shape public perceptions of vote buying. The theory thus provides a framework for understanding the varied responses to media campaigns against vote buying in the region, suggesting that individual perceptions of campaign messages are influenced by prior knowledge and attitudes.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive survey research design, appropriate for exploring public perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours regarding media campaigns against vote buying during the 2023 presidential election in South-South Nigeria. Surveys allow for broad data collection through structured questionnaires and are particularly effective for gauging public opinion (Ohaja, 2003). The target population comprises registered voters in Edo, Delta, and Rivers States, selected for their political relevance, media saturation, and diverse demographics, which offer valuable insights into regional variations in voter behaviour. These states collectively account for 8,738,170 registered voters, as reported by the Independent National Electoral Commission (2023).

A sample size of 400 respondents was determined using Taro Yamane's formula at a 0.05 error tolerance. A multi-stage sampling technique was used to proportionally allocate the sample across the three states: Edo (119), Delta (129), and Rivers (152). The first stage involved randomly selecting three Local Government Areas (LGAs) from each state, followed by distributing respondents across selected LGAs and further into specific communities. Final respondents were chosen randomly within these communities to ensure representation across geographic and demographic lines, thus enhancing the reliability of the sample.

Data was collected using a structured questionnaire titled "Electorate Perception of Media Campaigns Against Vote Buying Questionnaire" (EMPVACQ). It was divided into media exposure, and perception of media campaigns, with the third section utilizing a 5-point Likert scale. To ensure content validity, the instrument was reviewed by subject-matter experts in mass communication and measurement.

Their feedback was integrated to improve clarity and relevance. Instrument reliability was established through a pilot test involving 20 academic staff from the Rivers State College of Arts and Science. The test yielded a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.81, indicating high internal consistency. Questionnaires were administered in person at academic institutions across the three states to facilitate proper distribution and collection. Follow-up visits ensured a high response rate and minimal data loss. The collected data were analysed using descriptive statistics—frequency tables and percentages—for general trends.



Data Presentation and Analysis

This section is dedicated to the presentation, discussion, and analysis of pertinent facts gleaned from the researcher's questionnaire. Simple percentages and a frequency distribution table were used to examine each topic. The researcher administered 400 copies of questionnaire out of which 395 were returned and found useable.

Table 1: Exposure Level to 'No Sell Your Vote' Campaigns

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very Low	88	22.28%
Low	72	18.23%
Moderate	75	18.99%
High	92	23.29%
Very High	68	17.22%
Total	395	100%

This table indicates the extent to which respondents were exposed to anti-vote buying messages. A combined 40.51% of respondents reported either high (23.29%) or very high (17.22%) exposure to the campaign. Meanwhile, a total of 41.51% (22.28% very low and 18.23% low) reported limited exposure, and 18.99% had moderate exposure.

Table 2: Media Channels of Exposure

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Radio	82	20.76%
TV	79	20.00%
Social Media	68	17.22%
Newspaper	72	18.23%
Billboards	94	23.80%
Total	395	100%

This table shows that billboards (23.80%) were the most effective medium for reaching the public with the campaign messages, followed by radio (20.76%) and television (20.00%). Social media and newspapers had lower exposure rates, accounting for 17.22% and 18.23%, respectively. The findings suggest that traditional media, especially outdoor media (billboards), were central to the campaign's visibility.

Table 3: Perception of Anti-Vote Buying Campaigns

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Negative	82	20.76%
Negative	78	19.75%
Neutral	82	20.76%



Positive	74	18.73%
Strongly Positive	79	20.00%
Total	395	100%

Respondents were almost evenly split in their perceptions of the campaign. Positive (18.73%) and strongly positive (20.00%) views together comprised 38.73%, while negative (19.75%) and strongly negative (20.76%) views made up 40.51%. A further 20.76% remained neutral.

Table 4: Actions Encouraged by Campaigns

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Report Vote Buying	77	19.49%
Refuse Money	79	20.00%
Advocate for Free Elections	88	22.28%
Educate Others	66	16.71%
No Action	85	21.52%
Total	395	100%

When asked about actions influenced by the campaign, the highest response was advocating for free elections (22.28%), followed by refusing money (20.00%) and reporting vote buying (19.49%). However, 21.52% indicated that the campaign did not prompt any action. This shows that the campaign did encourage civic-minded behaviours in a significant portion of the population, though the fact that over one-fifth took no action suggests a limitation in the campaign's ability to translate awareness into behavioural change for all respondents.

Table 5: Attitude Change Due to Campaign

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Disagree	81	20.51%
Disagree	87	22.03%
Neutral	61	15.44%
Agree	87	22.03%
Strongly Agree	79	20.00%
Total	395	100

The responses regarding attitude change were also mixed. Those who agreed (22.03%) or strongly agreed (20.00%) that the campaign changed their attitudes totalled 42.03%. Meanwhile, 42.54% either disagreed (22.03%) or strongly disagreed (20.51%). Only 15.44% remained neutral.

DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of our study on the electorate's exposure to, perception of, and response to anti-vote buying campaigns in South-South Nigeria



Research Question 1: What was the level of exposure of the electorate in South-South Nigeria to anti-vote buying media campaigns?

Our data reveal a near-even split in the electorate's exposure to anti-vote buying campaigns. Approximately 40.51% of respondents reported high (23.29%) or very high (17.22%) exposure, while a comparable 41.51% indicated low (18.23%) or very low (22.28%) exposure. The remaining 18.99% experienced moderate exposure. This suggests a dual reality: a substantial portion of the electorate was well-informed, yet an equally significant segment had limited contact with the campaign messages.

This finding aligns with Christopher Okoro's (2023) study, which reported a 70% campaign reach primarily through radio and television. However, Okoro also highlighted gaps in grassroots penetration, particularly in rural communities. The lower overall high/very high exposure in our study (40.51% compared to Okoro's 70% reach) could be attributed to regional differences in media infrastructure and accessibility within South-South Nigeria, or perhaps a more nuanced definition of "exposure" in our research. Our findings extend this knowledge by providing a more granular breakdown of exposure levels, revealing the significant segment with very low exposure, which might be masked in broader "reach" figures. This limited reach could be due to factors such as digital exclusion in remote areas, low media infrastructure outside urban centers, prevalent language barriers that campaign messages failed to overcome, or socioeconomic challenges limiting access to information.

Research Question 2: Which media channels were most effective in reaching the electorate?

Our analysis indicates that billboards (23.80%), radio (20.76%), and television (20.00%) emerged as the most effective media channels for campaign dissemination. Social media accounted for 17.22%, and newspapers 18.23%. These findings underscore the continued relevance of traditional media and outdoor messaging, particularly in regions where digital access may be constrained.

Interestingly, this contrasts with Bamidele Adewale (2023) and Peter Okwu (2023), who identified social media platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp as dominant channels, particularly among younger demographics. The divergence in findings can be explained by the demographic and regional differences within South-South Nigeria. Our study likely captured a broader demographic, including rural populations and older individuals who might have stronger exposure to billboards and radio, while the studies by Adewale and Okwu might have focused more on urban youth who naturally gravitate towards digital platforms. Our research, therefore, extends the existing knowledge by highlighting the continued salience of traditional media in diverse Nigerian contexts, emphasizing that a "one-size-fits-all" approach to campaign messaging is ineffective.

Research Question 3: What was the electorate's perception of the anti-vote buying campaigns?

The electorate's perception of the anti-vote buying campaigns was notably polarized. As reflected in our data, 38.73% of respondents held a positive or strongly positive perception,



while a slightly higher 40.51% viewed the campaign negatively or strongly negatively. A neutral stance was expressed by 20.76% of the electorate.

These findings mirror those in David Eze's (2023) study, which showed general acknowledgment of the campaign's importance, yet deep skepticism regarding its effectiveness. The mixed sentiments in our study can be attributed to several factors. Firstly, persistent mistrust in political processes stemming from historical unfulfilled promises likely led to cynicism. Secondly, prior experiences of unfulfilled political promises by politicians might have led voters to believe that such campaigns are mere rhetoric. Lastly, a perceived insincerity of political actors involved in or endorsing the campaigns could have fostered negative perceptions.

Social Judgment Theory (SJT) provides a relevant explanation here. According to SJT, messages inconsistent with a person's core beliefs (or "anchor points") are more likely to be rejected. Thus, if voters already believed that vote buying was inevitable or institutionalized—a pervasive belief in some communities—campaign messages promoting electoral integrity were likely to be categorized within their "latitude of rejection." Our research extends this theoretical understanding by demonstrating how pre-existing negative attitudes and experiences can actively block persuasive efforts, even when media exposure is relatively high, providing a concrete example of SJT in action within a Nigerian electoral context.

Research Question 4: What actions did the campaign encourage among the electorate?

Our findings indicate that the campaign prompted various pro-democracy behaviors among some segments of the electorate. Specifically, 22.28% advocated for free elections, 20.00% refused monetary inducements, 19.49% reported vote-buying incidents, and 16.71% educated others. However, a significant 21.52% of respondents reported taking no action at all in response to the campaign messages.

These findings are broadly consistent with Yusuf Ibrahim's (2023) experimental study, which observed that 45% of voters rejected financial inducements and 30% reported vote buying after campaign exposure. The slightly lower figures in our study compared to Ibrahim's could reflect the variation in voter empowerment across different regions, potentially lower media trust in the South-South, or a greater fear of political retaliation for reporting incidents. Our research extends Ibrahim's work by highlighting the substantial proportion of the electorate (over one-fifth) who remained inactive despite exposure, pointing to a persistent challenge in translating awareness into concrete action.

Research Question 5: What was the impact of the anti-vote buying campaign on the electorate's attitudes?

The analysis shows a deeply divided response regarding the campaign's influence on attitudes. While 42.03% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their attitudes were positively changed by the campaign, a nearly equal 42.54% disagreed or strongly disagreed. The remaining 15.44% remained neutral. This reflects that while the campaign had some success in shifting public opinion, it failed to resonate with a significant portion of the electorate.



This finding parallels Anthony Obi's (2023), who found that 35% of respondents experienced a positive shift in attitude, though the overall impact was considered limited. Our study corroborates this limited impact but also provides a more precise quantification of the bipolarity of attitudinal shifts. The Social Judgment Theory again proves helpful in explaining these mixed results. Where campaign messages were perceived as credible, realistic, and consistent with voters' values, they likely fell within their "latitude of acceptance" and produced attitudinal shifts. In contrast, messages perceived as manipulative, irrelevant, or detached from their realities were resisted, falling within the audience's "latitude of rejection."

CONCLUSION

The *No Sell Your Vote* campaign had a moderate yet notable impact on the electorate of South-South Nigeria. It achieved widespread visibility through traditional media, particularly outdoor campaigns, but faced challenges in creating uniform exposure and trust among all demographics. While the campaign prompted civic-minded actions and attitude shifts in many, a large segment of the population either rejected the message or remained unaffected, revealing a crucial gap between message exposure and internalization.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Enhance Local Media Penetration: Leverage community radio and vernacular billboards in rural and semi-urban areas for deeper outreach.
2. Boost Social Media Targeting: While underutilized, social platforms remain vital among youth. More interactive and culturally relevant content could improve engagement.
3. Build Source Credibility: Involve local influencers, religious leaders, and trusted figures to enhance perceived authenticity and trust.
4. Segment Messaging: Tailor content based on age, income, and education levels, ensuring relevance and resonance.
5. Monitor Long-Term Impact: Future campaigns should include longitudinal tracking of attitudinal and behavioral changes post-election.
6. Integrate Civic Education: Combine media outreach with grassroots civic education to build long-term resistance to vote buying.

Ethical Clearance

Ethical consent was sought and obtained from the participants used in this study. They were made to understand that the exercise was purely for academic purposes, and their participation was voluntary.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Authors' Contributions

Nasamu Johnson Aleogho conceived the study, including the design, Isah Abdulazeez helped to collated the data, Dr Daniel Ekhareafo handled the analysis and interpretation, while Professor Ezeikiel S. Asemah handled the initial manuscript. All authors have critically reviewed and approved the final draft, and are responsible for the content and similarity index of the manuscript.

Availability of Data and Materials

The datasets on which conclusions were made for this study are available on reasonable request.

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