VOTE BUYING IN ELECTION: A CLOSER LOOK ON ELECTORAL TRADING IN TAGO, SURIGAO DEL SUR, PHILIPPINES

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Abstract – This paper attempts to investigate the prevalence of vote buying practices in Tago, Surigao del Sur, Philippines and the reasons that motivate voters to engage in electoral trading. It uses a descriptive research design. The respondents include farmers, fishermen, housewives, and government/private employees of the place understudy who are of voting age. The findings have shown that the residents of the municipality of Tago, Surigaodel Sur have acquired proper awareness on the effects of vote buying so they can vote the right candidates for the good of our country. Although they all agreed that money and materials incentives are the factors that lead to vote buying, the preference in selecting candidates are based in behavior, educational qualification and popularity/fame. Giving money and materials incentives are the reasons why many voters change their perspective in selecting candidates. And based on our respondents, poverty, corruption, lack of job are the effects of vote buying so there is a possibility that people will take an opportunity to accept any from benefits.

Keywords - Vote Buying, Electoral Trading, Reasons for Vote Buying

INTRODUCTION

Vote buying does not only involve paying someone to vote for a candidate but also to not vote for a certain candidate. It is usually done by the candidates and their supporters. The trend of vote buying issues and practices nowadays becomes a culture to the voters, especially during election. It is mandated in the 1987 Philippine Constitution that there should be an election of officials who will serve for the country. Every registered voter of the Philippines will chose the best politician whom they think will serve the country with sincerity and honesty. Since Philippines is a democratic and republican state, election provides avenue to exercise his right to vote (De Leon, Article 2, 1987 Constitution).

According to Bordadora (2010), vote buying is the distribution of material wealth from candidates to voters in exchange for support in the election and their votes. In the blog by Man (2015), he quoted the section 261 (a. no. 1) of the omnibus Election Code of the Philippines as any person gives, offers or promises money or anything of value, promises any office for employment, franchise or grant, public or private, or makes or offers to make an expenditure, directly or indirectly, or cause and expenditure to be prepared to any person, association, corporation, entity or community in order to induce anyone or the public in general to vote for or against any candidate or withhold his vote in the election, or to vote for or1. against any aspirant or political party. In other words, a vote-buyer is someone who pays or promises to pay money or any value to a voter in exchange for their votes during election. According to Sison (2013), this is a pernicious practice prevalent in every election especially during the campaign period, or during the Election Day when voters are about to enter the polling booth. Everybody knows about it, but nobody can prove it simply because, like any other illegal operation, it is usually finished clandestinely. Indeed, this is one offense where the victims (voters) have to cooperate with the offenders (vote-buyers) to consummate the act. And so, when it is already done deal, the voters cannot denounce and file a complaint against the vote buyers because they may also be held liable for accepting the money. Vote buying can be minimized if not totally be eradicated when there is intensive political education especially to the young voters whom we consider to be the country's hope for the future. Vote buying has been part of the political culture in the Philippines especially during the election. It cannot be denied that young voters today though they accept the money or anything in exchange for their votes, still exercise their right to choose the best leaders whom they think would best serve the country. Thus, the study unfolds the vote buying practices especially the values of the young voters in choosing the candidates to lead the country.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This paper attempts to investigate the prevalence of vote buying practices in Tago, Surigao del Sur, Philippines and the reasons that motivate voters to engage in electoral trading. Specifically, it aims to determine the profile of the respondents in terms of age, sex, civil status, educational status and income;
The factors that lead to vote buying; The preferences of voters in selecting candidates; How vote buying changes the perspective of voters; and the possible effects of vote buying.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study uses a descriptive survey research design. A self-constructed survey questionnaire is used as an instrument in gathering data. The questionnaire is structured in restricted check response. It has

undergone validation to ensure that the validity and reliability of the questionnaire. The study is conducted randomly in some barangays of the municipality of Tago, Surigaodel Sur. The respondents of this study are the qualified voters. A total of 243 qualified respondents composed of 157 farmers, 59 private/government employee and 27 housewives. The gathered data are treated using frequency counting, percentage and weighted mean.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The respondents' profile are deemed important because buying off voter loyalty requires establishing an ongoing relationship, which is often mediated through a partisan network of brokers and activists in which parties give material incentives to a selected group only. The profile of the respondents is identified as to gender, age bracket, civil status, educational status, occupation and monthly income of the voters who experienced vote buying during election.

		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	181	74%
	Female	62	26%
Age	20 – 30	28	125
	31 – 40	81	33%
	41 – 50	77	32%
	51 above	57	23%
Civil Status	Single	39	16%
	Married	193	79%
	Separated	11	5%
Educational Status	College	74	30%
	High School	79	33%
	Elementary	71	29%
	None	19	8%
Occupation	Farmer	137	56%
	Fishermen	20	9%
	Housewife	27	11%
	Private/Government Employee	59	24%
Income	1,000 – 3,000	34	14%
	3,001 – 5,000	109	45%
	5,001 – 7,000	43	18%
	7,001 – 9,000	37	16%
	9,001 – 10,000 & above	20	8%

Table 1.Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Data shows that majority of the respondents are male with a percentage of 74%. Most of them are within the age bracket of 31 – 40 years old and 79% are married. Majority are high school graduates with 33%. 56% of the respondents are farmers with the average income of Php3,001 – Php5,000. As shown in the data that some respondents are high school level or graduate in terms of education. The income of the respondents is not enough to sustain the family's basic needs especially that 79% of the respondents are married. The table also shows that the respondents' primary livelihood is farming relying on two (2) cropping per year. Given their financial situation, these respondents may really take an opportunity to accept any form of payment during election. Thus, vote buying could personally undermine the desired effects of a democratic constitution arrangement (Schechler, 2011).

Questions	Mean	Adjectival Description
Does receiving money and material incentives increase your electoral participation?	3.00	Agree
Do you think vote buying is the effect of people's distrust to government officials?	3.62	Strongly Agree
Are the citizens receiving incentives more likely to vote than those who do not?	2.82	Agree
Do the citizens who prefer to trade their votes are those who have no permanent income?	2.78	Agree
Does money and other material incentive affect your preference in selecting the candidates?	3.01	Agree
Total Mean	**3.05**	**Agree**

Table 2. Factors Leading to Vote Buying

Table 2 shows the factors that influence vote buying practices. Results reveal that the respondents strongly agree that vote buying has an effect to people's distrust to government officials with a mean of 3.62. Because of that distrust, their preferences in selecting candidates during election are those who have money and other material incentives in exchange for their votes as shown in a Mean of 3.01. Voters who do not have permanent income are vulnerable to vote buying as reflected with the mean of 2.78. The findings imply that vote buying changes the perception of how voters choose an electoral candidate. They now consider accepting any form of dole-out in exchange for their vote. Voters primarily cast their vote to a candidate who can provide them benefits (Helmke and Levitsky, 2006).

Questions	Mean	Adjectival Description
Do you prefer to select candidates who give higher incentives than those who do not give but are more credible than the later?	2.97	Agree
Do you choose candidates based on behavior and educational qualification?	2.98	Agree
Do you choose candidates based on popularity/fame and money?	2.60	Disagree
Do you choose candidates based on the number of service being a government official?	2.84	Agree
Do politicians need to adopt some strategies in vote buying just to win votes?	2.93	Agree
Total	**2.86**	**Agree**

Table 3. Preference of Voters in Selecting Electoral Candidates

Table 3 presents the preferences of voters in selecting electoral candidates. Datashow that voters still choose the candidates based on behavior and educational qualification with the mean of 2.98. It only connotes that Filipinos are still wise voters. Some chooses electoral candidates based on popularity/fame and money with a mean of 2.60. There are few who voted candidates based on popularity even if their educational qualification and behavior do not fit to the position they are running for. Candidates' popularity becomes their advantage in achieving governments position just like the former President Joseph Estrada, who is vey popular as an actor and was able to maintain his popularity even though he changed his career from actor to politician. Riding on his popularity, he easily won his bid up to the presidency. In this case, we cannot deny that popularity and money is one of the preferences of the voter in selecting a candidate.

With the total mean of 2.86, the overall result shows that most of the respondents agreed on the preference of voters in selecting candidates.

Questions	Mean	Adjectival Description
Do you really prefer to accept money from the electorate?	2.96	Agree
Do you believed that Anti-poverty program of the government generate more votes for the incumbent?	2.94	Agree
Do you respond effectively when you received incentives from the electorate?	2.63	Disagree
Do you give more attention to Politicians who have greater incentives?	2.67	Disagree
Do you believed that discretionary program of the government are vulnerable to political and electoral manipulation?	3.08	Agree
Total Mean	**2.86**	**Agree**

Table 4. Vote Buying Changes the Perspectives of Voters

Table 4 above shows how vote buying changes the perspective of voters. Data explain that most of the respondents agree that the discretionary program of the government are vulnerable to political and electoral manipulation with 3.08 Mean and has the highest rating. This is vulnerable in the sense that candidates from the administration who are still holding the power can manipulate machinery in the government to campaign from them. They can use governments fund to support some programs of the people and take advantage of it. That is why even if the people were given an incentive by the electorate during the election, they would still disagree to respond. It has the lowest rating of 2.63 with its description disagree.

The over-all result shows that most of the respondents agreed with the total mean of 2.86, regarding on how vote buying changes the perspective of the voters. The voters decision-making risks upon his principles in life. At the end of the electoral battle, the voters preferences still count (Black2012).

Questions	Mean	Adjectival Description
Do you prefer to vote politicians who helped you in your health related problems?	3.47	Strongly Agree
Do you prefer to vote politicians who helped you find a stable job?	3.53	Strongly Agree
Do you believe that corruption is the effect of vote buying?	3.53	Strongly Agree
Do you believe that poverty is the effect of vote buying?	3.55	Strongly Agree
Do you believe that low performances in the government are the effect of vote buying?	3.51	Strongly Agree
Total Mean	**3.51**	**Strongly Agree**

Table 5. The Possible Effects of Vote Buying

Table 5 shows the possible effects of vote buying. The data reveal that most of the respondents strongly agree that corruption, poverty and low performances are the possible effects of vote buying. The respondents also believe that candidates who help them find a stable job and health related problems are not really sincere of their philanthropic way of helping but only for votes they desired from the voters. Another major reason is poverty, as reflected in answers such as ignorance of the law and people's miserable lives. For one, people tend to accept fraud for socio-economic reasons. That voter get benefits from the act of cheating or vote-buying in election is another frequent answer to the question. Again this factor is related to the socioeconomic situation of the electorate. Responses under this category are: "because of money"; "benefit received'', "self-interest", "to help relatives', "favors', "practically" and "received as a bribe''

The over-all result shows that most of the respondents are strongly agreed, with the total mean of 3.51 regarding with the possible effects of vote buying.

Questions	Mean	Adjectival Description
1. What are the factors that lead to vote buying?	3.05	Agree
2. What are the preferences of voters in selecting candidates?	2.86	Agree
3. How vote buying changes the perspective of the voters?	2.86	Agree
4.What are the possible effects of vote buying?	3.51	Strongly Agree
Total Mean:	**3.07**	**Agree**

Table 6.Summary of the Vote Buying practices in Tago, Surigaodel Sur

Table 6 shows the over-all result as summary of the effect of vote buying as to demographic profile of the respondents where most of them agreed that vote buying practices in their Barangay considered the income of the respondents and their educational level. This will really lead to vote buying to take an opportunity of a once in three years opportunity to exercise their right to suffrage.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings, it can be conducted that residents of the municipality of Tago, Surigaodel Sur have acquired proper awareness on the effects of vote buying so they can vote the right candidates for the good of our country. Although they all agreed that money and materials incentives are the factors that

lead to vote buying, the preference in selecting candidates are based in behavior, educational qualification and popularity/fame. Giving money and materials incentives are the reasons why many voters change their perspective in selecting candidates. And based on our respondents, poverty, corruption, lack of job are the effects of vote buying so there is a possibility that people will take an opportunity to accept any from benefits.

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