

Reviewing the Electoral Processes in Ghana: Elections and the voting behaviour of Ghanaians in Perspective Collins Adu-Bempah Brobbey

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Abstract

This work focuses on the 'voting behaviour of Ghanaians and elections in Ghana.' It is worthy of note that the world over, particularly in democratic nations, elections are held periodically to either change the incumbent government or retained it. Most of the time, when elections are seen to be unduly manipulated to the advantage of a particular party or candidate, then the people become disillusioned in the electoral process. This study explores the rationale behind the voting behaviour of Ghanaians. Specifically the study seeks to unearth the ethics or principles i.e. (voting behaviour) in general, on one hand, and the Ghanaians conception of elections With special emphasis on the preadolescent. Consequently, the study looks at the correlation between a Ghanaian's voting behaviour and participatory democracy. Using the descriptive approach in general and the triangulation method involving quantitative and qualitative analysis. The study concludes that the voting behaviour of Ghanaians is informed by paternalism, partisanship or neo-patrimonialism. Finally, the work sets standard or criteria for the selection of both presidential and parliamentary candidates

Introduction

Politics, according to Aristotle, is 'a problem solving tool, (Ebenstein W.1951, pp.103-104). Similarly, J.D.B. Miller is of the view that at 'the core of politics is the resolution of societal conflicts, (1965;67). There is no gain- saying that conflict are endemic in every society. Thus, politics, the world over, is essentially about conflict and conflicts resolution in order to create stable and peaceful co-existence. No wonder therefore that since independence, Ghana has been in search for a more viable political system that would ensure the greater happiness for the greater number of Ghanaians. Ebenstein W.(1951).

Democracy, tried and tested is by far the best form of government in the world. Democracy brings about equal representation, opportunity for participation, good governance with its inherent characteristics of consensus orientation, accountability, transparency, responsiveness, effectiveness and efficiency, an all inclusion, the rule of law and periodic elections. Ebenstein W.(1951)

Frequent elections, a tenet of participatory democracy seeks to formalize and equalize popular influence in the political process. They are therefore one of the means by which citizens have the opportunity to endorse or reject the performance of the incumbent government or to put into effect a system of government of their choices. (Ebenstein W.1951)

In addition to determining who is elected, Wayne et al (1995 p.358) believe that "elections influence what government will do." Contrary to the popular belief of elections, again, Wayne et al (1995) see the understanding of election as more crucial because to them, campaign promises and party platforms do get translated into public policy.

More so, media scrutiny, frequent elections, and the desire to be elected tend to provide incentives for redeeming campaign promises and staying responsive to the electorates. One critical issue this study identifies is that though elections are rarely clear mandates, public officials, particularly the president, may claim them. This is because people tend to vote for the same candidate for different reasons, and different candidates for the same reasons. Ebenstein W.(1951)

Elections in Ghana are no exception. In Ghana, many elections for many positions are conducted on the same day, consequently, judgment of the electorates is likely to be mixed and may produce

seemingly contradictory results, such as a legislature controlled by one party and an executive controlled by the other, (the case of Kenyan's power sharing between Kibaki and Odinga).

In contemporary Ghanaian politics, divided partisan control has been the rule, not the exception between 1992 and 2008 at the national level. This had made governing more difficult, because the parties proposed different and often competing priorities and policy agenda. And when a government failed to realize these priorities and agenda, the public tends to decry the performance of the government in the form of public outcry- insult, queries and sometimes open protests. (Wayne J.B 1995)

Furthermore, O'Brien and Cole (1995 p.360) argue that elections reflect popular sentiment imperfectly, because for the most part, they force voters to decide between people rather than between policy positions. Moreover, they argue, differing on national, state, and local constituencies often tend to provide outcomes that mirror the decentralized character of the political system more than they reflect a national perspective. This situation is pervasive in Ghana; indeed, the length of the electoral process and the promises made by candidates to obtain and retain office have increased public expectations of government performance and, consequently, made those expectations harder to live up to.

In Ghana today, successful candidates owe less to their party leaders and organizations and more to themselves, their campaign organizations, and their constituencies. Once in office, they tend to behave independently, influenced the most by the people who elected them. At the national level, especially, 'the result is more people who wish to lead and fewer who are willing to follow'. This in turn has increased the difficulty of obtaining a consensus on public policy, particularly on the electoral ethics or principles. (Mackenzie et al, 1995 p.360)

Politics according to Friedrich (1988 p.281) " is not often a matter of concern to most citizens. The only time their interest becomes aroused is around Election Day", when people begin to take note of the campaigns and think about going to the polls to cast their votes. It is in the light of these revealing circumstances that a study like this becomes imperative especially, with its overt intentions or feasible objectives including, exploring the rationale behind the voting behaviour of Ghanaians., and specifically, to unearth the ethics or principles of elections in general, on one hand, and how these principles influence Ghanaians conception of elections on the other hand. Consequently, the study looks at the correlation between a Ghanaian's voting behaviour and participatory democracy. In more detail, the work offers clear explanations of certain key concepts such as political participation, elections, partisanship, neo-patrimonialism, and last but not the least, ethical voting behaviour, the Ghanaian perspective.

The guiding assumption of this study therefore, is that there is a positive correlation between Ghanaian conception of election and his or her voting attitude.

The unit of analysis is the participatory democracy (periodic elections), the independent variable (causal) is the Ghanaian conception of elections and the dependent variable (effect) is the voting behaviour of a Ghanaian.

As it is implied above, this study seeks to find a dynamic explanation to how the Ghanaian's conception of elections influences the Ghanaian voter's voting behaviour in general elections.

Quantitatively, the study sampled the opinions of 100 selected eligible Ghanaian voters made up of parties activists, the general public and the officers in the electoral commission. Statistically the study shows, in terms of frequency, the correlation between the voting patterns of Ghanaians and their political party affiliations.

Qualitatively, the study examined reasons or rationale for voting, the Ghanaian's conception of elections, the ethics or principles of elections and electoral procedures in electoral administration. The statistical techniques employed in this study are univariate descriptive statistics (tabular and graphic displays).

The data for this research was based on primary and secondary sources. The Primary data were obtained through two of the survey methods. First of all, the use of non probability sampling technique, particularly, the purposive sampling technique that select specific respondents who can give information relevant to the study was employed. In this case the sample size of 100 respondents comprised of 30 selected political parties' activists and 40 selected from the general public and 30 staff of the National Electoral Commission. Administration of questionnaires was done through Personal contacts i.e. Face-to-face interview.

The second method which is quantitative will employ statistical methods such as opinion surveys and aggregate-level analysis. The opinion surveys asked a representative sample of individuals a series of questions about their behavior, their attitudes about politics, their social status, and other individual characteristics. This study therefore employed aggregate-level statistical analysis, in which administrative entities such as Ghanaian electorates and the electoral process compose the units of analysis. Such analysis was used to test very broad theories—for example, the relationship between a Ghanaian voter's behaviour and his or her conception of election.

In addition, the analysis would be used to test the voting-strength of Ghanaians in changing incumbent government. culture of silence" leading to electoral fraud, manipulation, violence and boycotts (Truman's complaint's theory).

The second wave of political activism or interest occurred prior to the 2000 elections when the untold economic hardship which characterized the administration of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) assumed its peak proportion or level thereby leading to the formation of political alliances for political change (Mackenzie 1995). The period also marked an era of increasing political interest and the liberalization of nationwide communications. In addition to the proliferation of political interest groups is the professionalization of partisanship or partisan politics. This new surge has become a continuous trend and it seems to penetrate to December, 2008 elections too. The times also experience rapid rise of idea and issue groups focusing on basic beliefs and values (the main categories of political interest groups, their ideologies and their affiliations are listed in the Table below).

Category of Political Interest Groups and Ideology

Party	Ideology	Formation /Affiliation
New Patriotic Party NPP	Capitalist-Democrats	1947 UGCC, UGP, PP, PFP
Convention People's Party CPP	Socialists	1949
People's National Convention PNC	Socialist-Democrats	1978 Convention People's Party
National Democratic Congress NDC	Socialist-Democrats	1992 Provisional National Defense Council PNDC
New Reform Party NRP	Socialist-Democrats	1996 NDC
United Ghana Movement UGM	Capitalist-Democrats	1996 NPP
Every Accountable Ghanaian Living Elsewhere Party EAGLE	Socialist-Democrats	1996 NDC
Great Consolidated Popular Party GCPP	Socialists	1996 CPP
Alliance for Change	Change	2000 NPP, CPP, PNC

Source: EC, Ghana 1996-2000 election results, and Ghana Democracy and Political Participation 2007

Idea and issue groups include public interest groups such as the Inter-Party Advisory Committee (IPAC), and the media, both electronic and print: Others may include the Center for Democracy and Development (CDD) and Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA). The idea and issue groups differ from socio- economic and partisan interest groups in that material benefit is not their primary concern. Rather, they are organized and motivated by a belief or ideal about how society and government should be structured or what public policy is most desirable. Ideological group fits into this broad category of idea and issue organizations. This group may be called the "pro-life and pro-choice" groups and they are mostly organized around social and/or political issues. They are expressive groups; they reach out to the general public through the mass media. It is obvious that the NPP's liberalization policy gave impetus to these positive developments identified by the researcher. (Mackenzie G.C. *ibid*)

That notwithstanding, the New Patriotic Party (NPP)'s administration has seriously been criticized for social injustice, corruption, and electoral irregularities particularly of the 2004 elections, a situation which seems to dent the image of or bring the credibility of the Electoral Commission of Ghana into disrepute (Coleman's Blame Game Theory). In other words, to know on what issues does a Ghanaian voter votes, the answer to this question is intended to provide vivid explanations to the Truman's Complaints theory and Coleman's Blame Game Theory employed in the study. This and other relevant questions that the work would discover need a careful and a comprehensive explanation.

In what follows, we analyze the Ghanaian conception of elections relating it to how the Ghanaian voter behaves in the voting process.

Cole and Mackenzie, (1995 p.60), believe that 'elections are essential for a democratic society'; this is because they (elections) frame policy debates, select public officials, and influence the decisions of the public officials. On the contrary, most Ghanaians see elections as a mere "PATRONAGE", 'a traditional reservoir, which provides the party leaders with bargaining chips to use in the game of politics'. Usually, this conception brings detrimental effects on both voting politics and electoral process. What this study finds more critical in terms of voting behaviour is that whoever votes obviously influences the outcome of the election and, so do the political attitudes and social groupings of the electorates. Cole and Wayne (1995 p.331) have noted that unfortunately, most Ghanaian voters do not come to election with a completely open mind. Rather, they come with preexisting beliefs and attitudes. What Cole and Wayne found significant about this scenario was the partisan identification often found in situation where there is the need for one to exhibit purely electoral neutrality or non-partisan character.

In a worse scenario, people develop partisan attitudes and generally maintain and strengthen them as they get older. Cole and Wayne agreed that though partisan attitudes can change, they are not likely to vary from the positions on issues and perceptions of candidates. This, in effect, explains why when people drop their partisanship, they are more likely to think of themselves as independents than as supporters of another party. And that they are still more likely to vote for the candidates of their former party than for those of other parties irrespective of the consequences.

This work therefore argues that partisan predispositions directly affect the vote of those who feel strongly about their party and indirectly affect those who feel less strongly but still tend to view their party's nominees more preferably or favourably than they view the opposition. Predominantly, this depicts the general characteristic of a typical Ghanaian voter's behaviour. Indeed, the behaviour of a great number of Ghanaian voters is clearly seen in the light of their conception of what it is meant to 'elect'. Most Ghanaians' attitude towards voting is prompted by what this study identifies as 'Neo-patrimonialism' or 'Paternalism'.

Politicians, generally, behave and are encouraged to behave like fathers and uncles. It is therefore not unusual and uncommon to observe people irrespective of their ages address politicians like 'Uncle: 'Wofa', Old man, and 'Numoi' etc. Needless to say, the extent of nepotism in a great number of cases is justified by the fact of blood relationship. Like fathers and uncles to whom in a traditional family setting, reverence is due in an anticipation of some inheritance they 'blow hot and cold' or autocratic and leniency depending on their moods.

In this regard, when the politician who is being addressed as 'uncle' or 'father' is not deemed fit to be elected, there is no point resisting him. In most cases there may not exist any credible way of getting rid of him or her for incompetence. Where some way exists in which to get such politician out, one is not encouraged to make use of it. This is because it would mean that 'one is seeking confrontation with the 'Big man'.' But who are you to go to arbitration with the Big man and expect him to lose?' The way to survive then, is to reach the ear of the politician (Big man) particularly, at the moment when he or she is sympathetic (needs your vote). Indeed, this is detrimental to participatory democratic practice. (Ake Claude 1999, p5)

The researcher argues that trying to reach the ears of the politician, at the moment when he or she is sympathetic has resulted in the conduct of elections not in the ethics or principles of elections. What follows this practice which the researcher has identified is that politicians tend to purchase the votes of the electorates. Hence, the study concludes that 'the conduct of elections in most instances does not conform to the principles of elections' offered by Cole and Wayne (1995:360) as indicated earlier in this work. This study has clearly demonstrated that there is a positive correlation between a Ghanaians's voting behaviour and his or her conception of election.

At this point, a careful analysis of the correlation of Ghanaian voting attitude and participatory democracy using the concepts of political participation and ethics or principles of voting becomes relevant. The intention of the researcher is to show the level of political participation of Ghanaians and also to establish the extent to which the Ghanaian voter applies the ethics or principles of voting in promoting participatory democracy.

Political Participation

Ghanaians participate in politics in different ways and for different reasons. This is because 'no Ghanaian is born political-at least not in the sense that understanding of the political system and interest in public affairs are genetic traits.' The Ghanaian interest in politics is inspired by the family, friend, and/or their life experiences; 'when that interest has been established, we are then prompted to function politically.'

A Ghanaian's political participation is therefore influenced by four factors. Namely; political socialization; party affiliation; political cynicism and major political events. (Magleby, 2002 p.179).

Political Socialization

Political socialization is an on-going process in which individuals acquired the information, beliefs, attitudes, and values that help them comprehend the workings of a political system and orient themselves within it. Political socialization plays a very major role in promoting political participation or participatory democracy. For instance, it identifies the characteristics of individuals and explains the politics of the government. Through political socialization, individual's desire to be a citizen is facilitated. It also casts light on citizens' feelings and concerns about their government. (Magleby 2002: 199)

Again, it reveals how attitudes and beliefs condition individuals' participation in the political process. However, political socialization and political participation are among the most complex areas to analyze. This is because, first of all, political socialization is an endless process. People keep learning as their life experiences accumulate and their circumstances change. The values they acquired early in life may not be adequate for their needs later in life. Thus, they refine their attitudes and values throughout their lives in response to the new needs they develop and the new information they acquire. Secondly, human motives are difficult enough to penetrate and explain. Furthermore, much of the research on political socialization does not focus on the adolescents who could learn about the political universe and develop a sense of their own place within it. These adolescents need cognitive and expressive skills necessary to permit sophisticated inquiry into their socialization processes. Unfortunately, even research on individual political behaviour is still shot through with large areas of uncertainty. (Mackenzie 1995 p.175).

In spite of the fact that consensus has emerged on some aspects of how socialization occurs and participation patterns unfold, many issues remain controversial. The majority of Ghanaian children in the preadolescent period should develop positive feelings about their nation's government and leaders as it exists elsewhere in the developed countries; for example, according to Mackenzie (1995 p.175), in USA, most preadolescents have a benign view of the police officer as helper and protector. Moreover, they see the president as a good and wise person who is interested in the welfare of the nation. And in most cases, they rate the president among the top favourite persons. It is also important to note that political socialization could bleed 'ethnic -biasism' if the adolescents are not groomed early enough on issues of civic responsibility. (Mackenzie 1995:175).

It is an acceptable fact, that positive view is not universal, for instance, children of military families may express more positive attitudes toward military government than the children of civilian families. However, the positive character of most children's early perceptions of the Ghanaian political system is an important development in that, it facilitates the bonding between citizens and government that is essential to the legitimacy of a government's right to rule. Thus, if citizens do not believe that a government is legitimate, they are unlikely to participate faithfully in its processes or support its decisions. Although these strongly positive feelings tend to be modified as children grow older, they play an important role in the maintenance and stability of Ghanaian political system by securing the support of most of its citizens early in their lives. A sense of the conflict of interest that pervades politics also emerges at this point. The adolescents begin to recognize that individuals may take sides in disagreements among candidates, political parties, and interest groups on controversial issues.

More so, they are confronted by the need to choose a side, to position themselves within the political universe. This is a critical stage in the political socialization process, because it shapes the lifelong political traits of many Ghanaians. Mackenzie G.C (1995)

Party Affiliation

Party affiliation also contributes to the shaping of political attitudes and participation. The most important of this is that of identifying with a particular political party. Although political attitudes take root early, and even schoolchildren often identify with a particular party, they have little understanding of ideological differences until adolescence. After that, their political attitudes and patterns of participation may last a lifetime. During the early part of the Fourth Republican Constitutional development in Ghana, many citizens did not joined a party in the way that they join a club or a church. They made no formal profession of membership, they received no membership cards, and they were not required to pay dues. What they tended to do instead, was simply to identify with a particular political party (or, in many cases, to identify themselves as independents), (Doe Ziorklui, 2004:28). However, of late, the concept of party identification has not only seen as important but has also become an integral part in the political participation process. In Ghanaian political analysis, political party identification has been a success story only for the adulthood. The adolescents therefore lack the orientation to politics throughout their lifetimes. Many adolescents in Ghana have a notion of existence of political parties, but they could not confidently identify themselves with any one because they are not given early orientation on party ideology. Ziorklui (2004: p28)

An interview conducted on adolescents' party preferences in 1996 indicated that more than half of the respondents had a party preference but could not express an ideological or issue-based explanation for choice or preference.

This means that most of these early partisan attachments are based on very little substantive knowledge national issues. In some cases they can cite a prominent political personage as a reference for their choice. For example, they may identify President Nkrumah, Busia, Kuffour etc because they admire them or they may not admire President Rawlings because they dislike something they hear about him. Few, however, are able to go beyond a superficial knowledge of individual political figures in explaining their preference for a particular party. Awareness of substantive differences between the parties rarely comes at preadolescent stage, and even less than ten percent (10%) of the adolescents can make distinctions based on issues or ideology. Party affiliation is a necessity in Ghanaian political processes because political party identification provides political parties a basis for determining their success or failure in elections. Ziorklui (2004 p.29)

Political Cynicism

Along with the increase in knowledge about politics and partisanship that occurs in the adolescent years comes a modification of the positive attitudes held in earlier years. Preadolescents' political views become more realistic and begin to perceive political figures in less heroic terms as they begin to understand the complexities and controversies of politics. It is also during the adolescent years that most people begin to perceive government as a constraint to personal behaviour by means of local curfews, minimum ages for driving and voting. Cynicism in political attitudes tends to develop in early adulthood and to increase, in varying degrees, throughout the remainder of the life cycle. This delayed development is not surprising, for adolescents are not encouraged to participate in Ghanaian Politics.

With adulthood comes broader exposure to the daily realities of politics, government, and public policy. The first significant opportunities to participate in politics also emerge at this time. Some adults remain unaffected, but for many this new perspective on the political world yields diminishing faith in the effectiveness of political institutions and decreasing trust in political leaders and their motives. Ake Claude (1999).

Major Political Events

The acquisition of political attitudes and attachments is further complicated by the major political events that occur during a person's lifetime. Each generation of Ghanaians is exposed to a different set of stimuli because each lives through a different period of history. Major events, especially those occurring during the formative years, may have a lifelong impact on the generation that experiences them. The generation of Ghanaian citizens who came of age during Nkrumah's term of office learned to view the CPP administration as the villain of dictatorship. (Ziorklui, 2004 p.30). Similarly, the generation of Ghanaians who reached adulthood during the 31st December 1981 coup d'état, could find many reasons to blame the economic depression on Jerry Rawlings and the PNDC members. Many younger people who have come of age politically during the 1982 and 1991 have been affected more by the general political turmoil and may feel like moving away from strong political movement orientations that have been the characteristics of this period.

Recent studies have discovered significant increases in political alienation in the past few decades. This is especially notable in the attitudes of young people. Having come of age at a time of scandals, assassinations, and firing squads, most of the youth never developed comfortable attachments to political parties or to other aspects of mainstream politics. Their political socialization therefore has been significantly different from that of the preceding generations. And because there are so many of them, their alienation from traditional politics has had a major effect on public life in Ghana. So far, we have discussed the various factors that are responsible for shaping the attitudes of Ghanaian voters. We now, turn our attention to examine the ethical issues of voting.

The sources of our views are immensely varied in the pluralistic political culture of Ghana. Therefore, political attitudes or ethics may stem from religious, gender, ethnic, or economic values.

From these diverse political ethics, we can make at least one generalization safely: our political ethics or principles are formed in groups, particularly in close-knit groups like the family. And, when we are identified closely with the attitudes and interests of a particular group, we then, tend to see politics through the "eyes" of that group. Thus, one of the principles of elections is cognitive and it boards on a particular knowledge about the electoral processes.

This principle presupposes that "no one is born with a political view. "Therefore citizens should be taught to develop political attitudes, values and beliefs in their preadolescent period in order to be able to reshape their political culture as they mature.

Another principle is the respect for an individual's view or opinion. One of the significant elements of elections is 'consensus.' Consensus is developed through aggregation of individual's opinion. And this gives rise to Public Opinion. According to James B. Macgregor "everybody claims to speak for "the public." "And, yet everybody has individual preferences for, or evaluations of, a given issue, candidate, or institution within a specific population." In the view of Macgregor, "lack of respect for individual's opinion means lack of consensus and therefore may render the conduct of public elections impossible.

Intensity is also a principle of elections. This deals with the recognition of the extent to which the fervor of the people's beliefs varies. For example, some individuals mildly favour tax legislation and others mildly oppose it; some people are emphatically for or against it; and some have no interest in the matter at all; still others may not even have heard of it. Intensity is typically measured by asking citizens how strongly they feel about an issue or about a politician.

Furthermore, we have the principle of latency. This examines the political opinions that exist merely as a potential and might not have been crystallized. It is a kind of political opinion that can be aroused by leaders and converted into political actions. Latent opinions set rough boundaries for leaders who know that if they take certain actions, they will trigger either opposition or support from millions of people. For instance, if leaders have some understanding of latent opinions i.e. unexpressed wants, needs and hopes- they will know how to mobilize them and draw them to the poll on Election Day. Also there is this principle called "salience." This principle examines the extent to which Ghanaians' voting behaviour reflects on issues that are considered to be relevant. The rationale behind the voting behaviour of Ghanaians has indicated that most people are concerned with personal issues like securing a 'few Ghana Cedis to spend on consumable items;' jobs and contracts than about national issues. Except a few Ghanaians who see national issues as a threat to their security or safety, most Ghanaians do possess the inertia in voting on salient national issues.

It is significant to note however, that saliency may change over time. For instance during the 2000 elections Ghanaians were concerned mainly about 'voting for change.' But, as at 2004 elections and today, matters of 'salient issues' have come to the fore particularly, "drugs, crime, health care, education, and the state of the environment had become salient issues." Moreover, Party identification is very crucial. Group affiliation is very necessary. This provides the platform for an individual member to bring his or her own emotions, feelings, memories, and support to the group.

However, the principle of party affiliation is indeed, a running argument among scholars from different disciplines. First of all, Sociologists for instance, tend to emphasize the pervasive influence of groups over their members. But psychologists rather focus more on the developmental stages within individuals that prompt them to be joiners or loners. Interestingly, Political scientists have, traditionally, tended to agree more with the sociological perspective.

The main thrust of party affiliation boards on the idiosyncrasy and / or ideology of a particular party to be affiliated with. It is important to emphasize that Ghanaians should tend at an early age to identify and adopt common values and ideology of a particular party that provides continuity with the past and legitimize the Ghanaian political system. It is of a great significance too, for Ghanaians to know what country they live in, and to develop their loyalty to the nation at an early age.

Although the details of our political system may still elude them, Ghanaians should deem it a civic responsibility to respect the constitution and the concept of participatory democracy, as well as cultivating an initial positive view of the most visible figures in our democracy, particularly, the president, the parliamentarians and the Electoral Commissioner.

Another principle is that every Ghanaian voter should at the learning stage form his or her picture of the world around him or her, and develop positive basic political opinions or attitudes toward the neighbours, political parties, other classes or type of people, particular leaders, and society in general. It is essential to admit that there is a high correlation between the political party of the parents and the partisan choice of their children. And, that this relatively high degree of correspondence continues throughout life though, there is an instance where disagreement is bound to occur. But this

disagreement should not lead to any form of violence and / or family and societal divide. (Doe Ziorklui, 2004:30).

In what follows, I discuss the findings in the light of the hypothesis and objectives of the study, then, I draw my conclusions and also make some recommendations for immediate and future actions. The researcher assumes that there is a positive correlation between Ghanaian voter's conception of elections and his or her voting behaviour.

My major concern has been to unearth the ethics or principles (voting behaviour) of Ghanaians and to redefine the Ghanaian conception of elections. At this point, it is only right to do some prognosis in the light of my hypothesis and findings. A number of factors stood out quite strongly from the study, and which are summarized as follows:

First of all, I begin with the discussion of the background of the respondents. The Greater Accra region was selected for the conduct of the survey. In all, a sample size of 100 respondents was purposefully selected. This gave equal opportunity to all adult residents to be interviewed. The respondents were made up of 30 political activists, 30 staff of electoral commission, and 40 of the general public respectively.

Out of the total samples of 100 respondents selected, male respondents constituted 57.0%, female respondents constituted 40.0% and 3.0% of the respondents failed to indicate gender status. There was thus a gender balance. All the respondents (96.0%) were Ghanaian nationals. Some 4.0% respondents did not declare their nationality.

The age distribution was also somewhat balanced with respondents coming from all the age groups as table 2 below shows, even though the majority of the respondents came from the 42+ (50.0%) and 34-41 (23.0%) age groups. However, only a few respondents (3.0%) failed to mention a particular age group within which they belong.

Table 2: Respondents age groups

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Non-response	3	3.0	3.0	3.0
	18-25	4	4.0	4.0	7.0
	26-33	20	20.0	20.0	27.0
	34-41	23	23.0	23.0	50.0
	42+	50	50.0	50.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Source: Questionnaire ID: A 2

Furthermore, 71.0% and 28% of the respondents were employed and unemployed respectively, whilst only a small minority of 1.0% did not respond to the question 'are you employed?' Again, at least, all the respondents have had a basic elementary education. About 59.0% of the respondents were married couples, 34.0% were singles, 6.0% were widowed whilst only about 1.0% were divorced. Then, only 45.0% indicated their party affiliation. However, of the majority of the respondents, about 97.0% expressed that they very often, voted for the party of their choice. Finally, all the various categories of respondents were covered in the survey.

The primary objective of the survey, as in any scientific research, is to gather data that would enable us to test our guiding hypothesis. Here, I discuss the findings to see whether my findings support or oppose my guiding hypothesis. A glance at the data analysis provides some useful insights into the Ghanaian conception of elections and the relationship with his or her voting behaviour. Factors that influence a Ghanaian's choice in an election and ethics in electoral processes.

Table 3: Respondents' views on the relationship between voting and...

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Non response	1	.1.0	.1.0	1.0
	Yes	35	35.0	35.0	36.0
	No	62	62.0	62.0	98.0
	Don't know	2	2.0	2.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.	100.	

Majority of the respondents, about 89.0% understood the concept of 'election,' but only about 11.0% did not express their opinions. A great number of the interviewees, that is, about 62.0% were of the opinion that Ghanaian's voting behaviour is not informed by electoral principles or ethics.

From the reasons provided by the respondents, about 67.0% indicated that most Ghanaian voters' voting behaviour is strongly influenced by very interesting and / or despicable factors. Such as personal effects like "chamber pots, roofing sheets, T-Shirts," and other items like physical cash, job security, and so on and so forth.

Table 4: The basis on which the Ghanaian Voter votes

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Non response	1	.1.0	.1.0	1.0
	National Interest	12	12.0	12.0	36.0
	Personal Interest	52	52.0	52.0	98.0
	Partisan Based/ Interest	35	35.0	35.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.	100.	

Source: Questionnaire ID: B4

Here, we notice that 52.0% of the respondents were of the opinion that the Ghanaian voter votes on the basis of personal interest whereas 35.0 % were of the view that voting is informed by partisan interests. One of the most striking findings of the survey is that in spite of the negative impact of 'votes buying', most respondents (53.0%) did not see it as an unethical practice and therefore do not also think a panacea is necessary at all. About 47.0% of the respondents thought that votes buying is inimical to participatory democracy. Particularly, it disfranchises each eligible voter.

As a further solution to this unacceptable practice, most Ghanaians (about 55.5% of the respondents) think the Electoral Commission (EC) ,the National Commission on Civic Education (NCCE) and the media should embark upon campaigns against such unethical behaviour in the body polity of Ghana. They suggested further that a constitutional mandate or provision should be made to enable the EC to ban any political party associated with such an act.

Table 5: Factors influencing a Ghanaian Voter's Choice

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Non response	1	.1.0	.1.0	1.0
	Campaign Messages	30	30.0	30.0	31.0
	Charismatic Personality	19	19.0	19.0	50.0
	Loyalty to one's Party	50	50.0	50.0	100.0
	Total	10	100.	100.	

Source: Questionnaire ID: B5

Thus, most of the findings have significantly established positive relationship between Ghanaian voter's conception of elections and the way he or she votes. First, the response of "Do you think that Ghanaian voter's behaviour is influenced by any issues at all? Received varied responses'. Here, it was revealed that voter's behaviour is strongly influenced by other issues. About 54.0% of the respondents answered 'Yes' as against 46.0% who responded 'No' and 'Don't know altogether. The table below shows the correlation between voter's attitude and their conception of elections.

Table 6(a). Symmetric Measures

		Value	Asymp. Std. Errora	Approx. Tb		
Interval by Interval	Pearson's R	.681			c	d
Ordinal by Ordinal	Spearman Correlation	.684			c	d
No of valid Cases		100				

Source: Questionnaire ID: B5

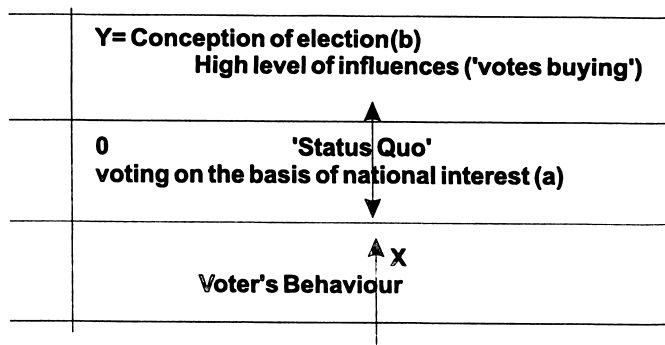
- a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.
- b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis
- c. Based on normal approximation.
- d. Based on 100 sampled tables with starting seed 1131884899.

Conventional explanations to values obtainable from this computation include:

- a. Zero correlation, where the value is less than or equal to .0 (0.0%). This implies that, there is no relationship at all.
- b. A weak correlation is represented by values .01 to .45 (1.0% to 40.0%). This implies, there is some kind of relationship yet, it is insignificant.
- c. A moderate correlation is assumed, where the value is equal to .5 (50.0%). The implication is that, there is a significant relationship yet, not strong.
- d. Values ranging from .6 (60.0%) and above assume or represent strong and very strong correlations respectively. These values indicate very close (positive) relationship.

The values obtained from both the Pearson's R and Spearman correlation computations above were .681 (68.1%) and .684(68.4%) respectively. These values give a clear indication of an existence of a strong (positive) correlation between the voter's perception of elections and the voting attitudes. This finding maintains the guiding hypothesis, Ghanaian's conception of elections differs from how he or she votes is confirmed by the tested, for instance, at (.05 significant level) B2 a). 'Do you think there is any relationship between the way a Ghanaian voter votes and his or her understanding of elections' and B3. 'On what basis does a Ghanaian voter vote?' Indeed, all these findings inveterate my guiding hypothesis.

Furthermore, the following graph provides a vivid explanation of the correlation between the Ghanaian conception of elections and the voting attitudes of the Ghanaian voter.



From the graphical representation above, Y represents the Independent Variable (Conception of election, personal issues), X stands for the Dependent Variable (Voter's Behaviour, votes selling) whereas '0' denotes 'status quo, (a state of normalcy).

The assumption is that, at a point '0' (status quo), the voter's vote is based on issues and that all things being equal, the Ghanaian electoral system is insulated from unethical practices. However, any shift from point '0' will bring about a paradigm shift. Thus, a downward shift will mean that there is (Low level) or minimal unethical practices, or voting on the basis of national interest or issues. Consequently, there would be a complete absence of 'votes buying.'

On the other hand, if there should be an upward shift, then the assumption is that there is (High level) or excessive unethical practices in the electoral processes. The implication is however, that the credibility and reliability of the electoral system would be jeopardized. Or put differently, there is high probability of electoral malpractices occurring.

Conclusion

The study concludes that the voting behaviour of Ghanaians is informed by paternalism, partisanship or neo-patrimonialism. However, attributing the probable influence of Ghanaian voter's behaviour to one particular factor is rather perilous for the reason that it cannot be done with a high degree of exactitude. Notwithstanding the evidence or facts at hand, there will be a certain degree of error in our prognosis. It must be pointed out, however, that the conclusions arrived at in this study are based on hard data, and that, even though not necessarily valid or true, must be useful to students of communication studies and politics in Ghana, politicians and policymakers. To that extent, it is my wish that the ideas expressed in this work would not be ignored.

To conclude this part of the work there is the need to express a caveat. The research concedes both the data and the reasoning behind the analysis may be debateable. The work only seeks to provide a background and platform for further research and praxis in Ghanaian politics.

Recommendations

This study, as a diagnosis, has revealed certain unethical practices in the electoral process. It is our hope that the ideas expressed here will not go unnoticed, and that the government and the good people of Ghana will implement some of the solutions suggested in this study. Three sets of recommendations are offered.

First in the course of the study it came to light that in the world over, hardly is 'Free and Fair election' attainable. It is therefore suggested that future research should focus on strategies for ensuring 'Free and Fair elections.'

Second recommendation for future research relates to the establishment of electoral colleges for politicians and thirdly, introduction of political science course in both the Junior and Senior High schools. I proceed to provide the recommendation for governmental actions.

The study recommends further that government should provide the EC, the NCCE and the state owned Media with logistics to campaign against unacceptable practices in the electoral system. It is also imperative for the government to review the legislative Instrument of the EC in order to make it more effective and efficient in managing the electoral system.

The study therefore, attempts to devise a strategy to discourage and to discontinue unethical practices in Ghanaian electoral processes. Moreover, it is recommended that government should consider national needs as a matter of priority. And to pursue electoral agenda as means to ensure national cohesion-nationalism or national unity.

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