

Vote Pricing Spatial Probability Models in the Philippines

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Abstract

This paper seeks to look into the causes and factors that lead to the practice of vote buying in the Philippines. This also tries to examine the motivations of candidates who buy and sell their votes. The data were obtained from a combination of government data bases and informal sources. The findings revealed a significant correlation between poverty, literacy rate and the buying price of votes. Vote buying thrives where poverty incidence is high and where literacy is low. Due to the rather high incidence of poverty in the country, vote buying appeared to escalate over the years. The interplay of economic needs of the voters and their willingness to cast their votes to the highest bidders paint a rather glowing political scenario in the future.

Keywords: vote buying, elections, suffrage, electoral fraud, vote pricing

1.0 Introduction

Vote buying is a phenomenon that has plagued Philippine elections for decades wherein a voter assures a candidate of his vote after he/she receives cash or non-cash benefits from the said person seeking for elective post. Generally, this is experienced in the barangay level the night before the election. However, this practice has been observed earlier in this recent electoral exercise. In terms of geography, vote buying is more prevalent in the provincial area while in the city it is said to be experienced only by a limited group.

The manner of executing it is through an identified person or group that acts as "liaison" between the candidate and the community. They serve as the entry point and later as conduit or bagman for the exchange. The conduit will be in charge to receive the money from the candidate and to distribute it to the respective leaders of the family or the individual. The entry point can also be the barangay leaders or community leaders whom the candidate trusts to do the task.

Among the reasons seen to cause the

perpetuation of vote buying are the prevailing poverty level of the people. Also, the discovery, prosecution, and conviction of violators, meaning those who engage in vote buying are almost nil or even nonexistent. Worse, government structure and means are utilized to support the practice.

Unfortunately, the new voters have caught up with their predecessors. They, too, now look forward to receiving the election money. The buying price decades back was P20.00, but now, the amount has increased tremendously. The amount is also dependent on the level of the elections i.e. senatorial, mayoral/gubernatorial, presidential, or in the barangay level. Add to this, the honesty of the "gatekeepers" or the liaison in giving the money to the supposed recipients. Another factor that causes the increase in the vote price is the use of technology in the Philippine election. The Precinct Count Optical Scan (PCOS) has assured the trustworthiness of the results at the precinct level. Thus, the urgent necessity for the candidate to reach out to the voters by cash to maximize the high turnout of voters becomes more important.

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Besides, the opponent candidate is also doing it. Not engaging in such mechanism might give his/her opponent the edge.

As more and more people are involved in the practice, it will prove to be more difficult to eradicate it in future electoral processes. Therefore, there is an urgency to understand the root causes and their long term effects on the Filipinos' moral fiber. It is reasonable to assume that both the vote seller and the vote buyer and by extension the candidate responsible for this reprehensible practice will experience a gradual loss of respect for this civic duty and its ability for progressive transformation in a developing country. Eventually the exercise will just become an opportunity to temporarily enrich themselves at the expense of politicians who are perceived by the electorate as having acquired these funds in an underhanded way.

2.0 Conceptual Framework

As perceived by the electorate, vote buying relates to four different meanings (Schedler, et.al) ranging from payments which are part of a commercial relationship in which partners trade equivalent values; gifts that are voluntary unilateral transfers that do not originate legitimate expectations of reciprocity; retributions are payments for services rendered outside the 'electoral connection'; and signs that refer to the informational value that the voter attaches (Linberg, et.al as cited in Schedler, 2002) to the material given by the candidate.

In a randomized experiment conducted by Pedro C. Vicente (2007) during the presidential elections of July 2006 in Sao Tome and Principe, an oil rich West African country, he found out that vote buying may be thriving in settings with low political accountability, which is clearly the case in many developing countries just like the Philippines. The study quoted one anonymous

voter who justified his acceptance of the practice in this manner, "We like vote buying. It is essential. That is the only way we have to see anything good coming from the politicians. Anyway, I can vote for whoever I want."

His study tested whether vote buying actually changes the balance of power affecting the outcomes of elections. With Sao Tome and Principe's oil resources as a prize for the winning candidate, vote buying may be a channel to capture the political power to administer the disposal of such wealth.

It is not also an uncommon experience on the part of the politician saying that however nice his/her platform is, it still matters that he/she has the money, to be considered a good contender for a position. Hence, to win the election, a candidate must have the money.

For candidates who are seeking re-election, vote buying is done to perpetuate his/her grip on power. Oftentimes, persons who seek for elective posts do this with more zest when they are haunted by the offenses they committed while in office and the only way left for them to be sheltered from either humiliation or prosecution is for them to stay in power. This is even given more appeal among errant elective officials under the Philippine justice system known as the Aguinaldo doctrine that allows a re-elected official not to be held liable for his/her past misdeeds for it is presumed that the electorate under his/her constituency "condoned" his/her past misdeeds (1999). Since the decisions of the Supreme Court become part of the laws of the country, then, this doctrine has impacted a lot onto the incidence of vote buying because elective officials are made to remain free under the cloak of a highly debatable protection given the imprimatur from no less than the highest court.

On the part of the voter, he/she sells his/her votes to receive something. It is an act made by the voter to receive extra amount for his/her living

expenses. Another reason is to get even with those vote-buying candidates by receiving the money offered but voting for the opponents. To some vote sellers, the money used by the candidate is actually coming from the taxpayers like them. Thus, one will not be guilty of receiving the said money. For if one will not accept the money, others will.

Such erroneous mental schema exhibits extreme personalism that sees the person as the point of reference in determining what good is to be done. In Barbados, Leigh-Ann Worrel (2013), a Commonwealth correspondent from St. Thomas, reported that vote buying became an issue in the most recent Barbados election where a vote can garner the seller from a few dollars to an iPad or the promise of a cushy government job. The rate at which the practice has become prevalent has reached alarming proportions. In several newspaper reports, Barbadians willingly admitted to taking money from persons representing political parties in exchange for a vote. In fact, one man was arrested for trying to take a picture of his ballot as proof he voted for the party that lined his pockets. Integrity and pride in freely and fairly carrying out a civic duty clearly has lost the luster it used to have in previous decades. In this day and in these places, more than anything the order of the day is the self.

3.0 Methodology

To look into the phenomenon of vote buying in the Philippines, the online and community-based data on the subject were generated. For the buying price of votes, the following were utilized: the personal knowledge of the researchers on the matter, interview with those involved like runners/liasons, the vote sellers themselves who personally received the amount from one or more parties, and with those who have personal contact with politicians, and informal surveys through social networking sites like FB, and text

messaging. The key informants in each locality proved to be very valuable in this part of the study. The data were further validated using on line news articles from various leading national newspaper companies in the country who made use of their investigative reporters in the field. For price ranges in an area that are very much spread out, the researchers opted to use the lower limit for statistical computation purposes. Finally, only those data that are corroborated by at least two of the abovementioned sources are considered in the study.

For the poverty index, voting population, and literacy rate, the data were sourced using the databases of the National Statistics Coordination Board (NSCB), National Statistics Office (NSO) of the Philippines.

The data on the position of candidacy were based on informal interviews, and independent assumptions of the researchers with consideration on the financial capacity of the candidate, and the materiality of voters' turnout in the area.

The generated data were subjected to Histogram to acquire a graphical view on how the data were distributed. Further, the result was subjected to Normality test to determine the normal probability plot and to determine some patterns. After which, the appropriate function to be used for the variables involved was determined.

The data were ranked since not all of them are normally distributed. A correlation of these variables was made but it was further validated by using the Multivariate Cluster Analysis that generated a dendrogram. The graphic presentations of data provided a more comprehensive and vivid picture of the different variables and their relationship to each other that reinforced the researchers' assumptions.

4.0 Results and Discussion

Histogram

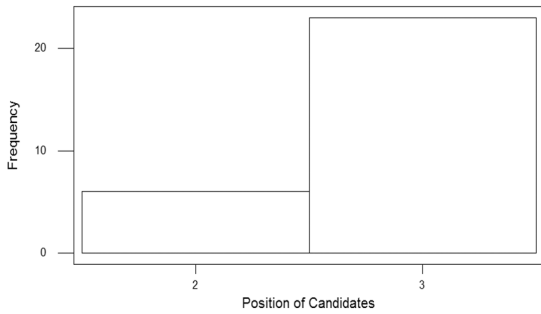


Figure 1

Figure 1 presents the position of candidates on the X plane. Number 2 is assigned to those elective positions for the municipal or local level, while number 3 is assigned to the elective positions in the national level particularly, those seeking to be elected in the legislative office of government. This variable is important in setting the buying price for the votes in the area. In the recently concluded May 2013 election, the “vote market” practice of “packaged pricing” was very popular. Unlike in the past where vote-buys are for single bets, observations abound like in Lanao del Norte and Misamis Occidental that a certain amount is offered for a “straight six” vote for the mayor, vice mayor and four councillors, or for a slate from Congressional representative down to the last councillor.

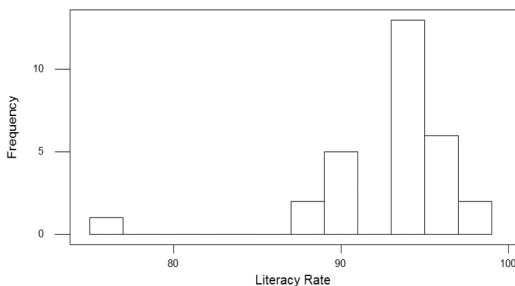


Figure 2

The Literacy rate is considered in the study because the researchers believe that the educational background of the voters will have an

impact on their decision to sell their votes. The data from the National Statistics Coordination Board and the National Statistics Office of the Philippines, and informal surveys, showed that the higher the Literacy Rate of a place, the lower also is the Buying Price of votes.

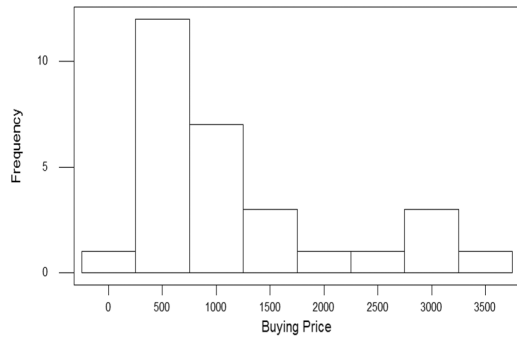


Figure 3

Buying Price data were obtained from informal interviews and surveys from those who experienced vote buying. These were further verified with data that came out from newspaper articles after the May 2013 election. Factors like the financial capacity of the candidates, economic status and educational attainment of voters, geographic location and accessibility of the voters’ residence and the level of elective posts due for election determine the buying rate. Although candidates and the political parties they belong to may have a set price for a particular area, this certainly is very tentative since the bidding price of the opponent candidate will certainly be considered.

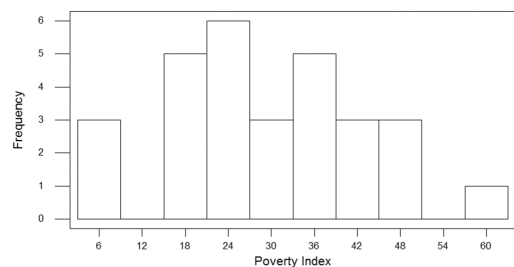


Figure 4

The cycle of vote buying in Philippine elections has always been attributed to high incidence of poverty among the electorate. The poverty index is factored in the study because when people are poor, the provision of basic needs is more often important than exercising their right of suffrage.

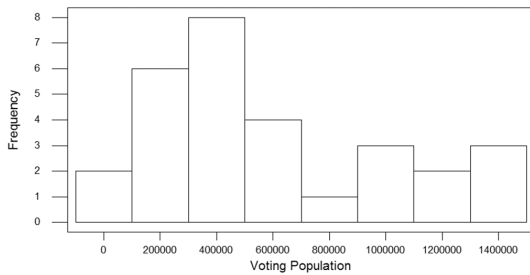


Figure 5

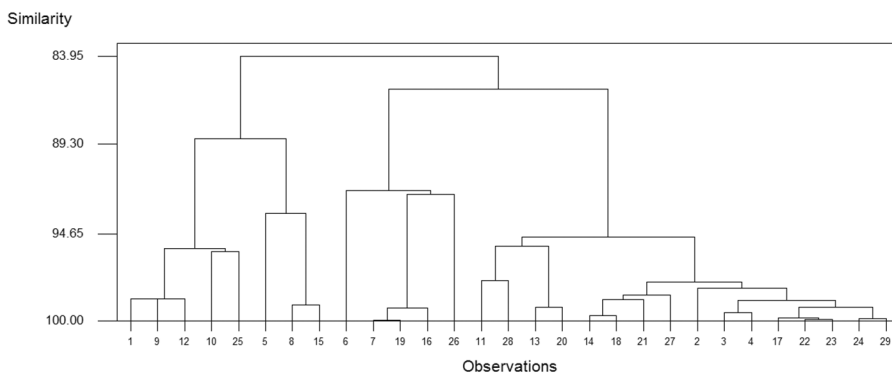
Voting population has a significant impact on the result of an election. That is why vote-rich regions are always prioritized in campaign sorties. A two-pronged approach can be utilized to appeal to both the issues of literacy and poverty by means of platform presentation and vote buying.

Candidates categorize the voting population to clusters in order to create a strategy that will cater to the priorities of a certain voting-block.

For better appreciation of the gathered data, the provinces were clustered according to registered voter population including poverty index and literacy rate.

As confirmed by the Cluster Analysis, there is a significant correlation of literacy rate, poverty index, buying price and voting population to the phenomenon of vote buying in the country.

Since the data of these variables are not normally distributed, they were ranked and then subjected to correlation test. The result showed that if the voting population is high, the buying price goes down. This is a result of the money allocated for that region to be spread thin among a larger number of receivers. Using the Pearson correlation, it was revealed that there is a weak correlation of the voting population and the buying price having $r = -0.462$ and $P\text{-Value} = 0.012$. This is possible since pricing is open to "bidding" as election day nears.



Cluster Analysis of Observations: Voting Population, Poverty Index, Literacy Rate, and Buying Price

Number of clusters: 3

Variable	Cluster1	Cluster2	Cluster3	Grand centrd
Voting Price	1199659.1250	249622.5000	682965.2000	586415.8276
Poverty	15.1250	34.8688	35.9200	29.6034
Literacy	93.9281	92.7844	93.0550	93.1466
Buying P	512.5000	1631.2500	710.0000	1163.7931

The buying price can go higher if the competition is perceived as stiff. It can also go lower if what is offered by the opponent is relatively lower than what's originally offered by the candidate.

Consequently, an examination of the correlation between the poverty index and the buying price using the same method provided that there is a significant correlation between the two variables because when people are poor, they will succumb to selling their votes over a certain amount which relieves them of being hungry. The Pearson showed that the value of $r = 0.312$ while the $P\text{-value} = 0.100$.

Subsequently, on evaluation of the correlation between literacy rate and buying price, the Pearson Correlation of literacy and buying price revealed a value of 0.461 with a $P\text{-value}$ of 0.012. This positive correlation between the two variables shows that politicians acknowledge the fact that they need a bigger amount for the votes in order to entice the educated block. However, with a $P\text{-Value}$ of 0.012, the correlation is certainly a very weak one. This is possible because of the raised level of awareness among the educated population. Added to this, are the different campaigns launched by government and non-government entities to combat vote buying like "Boto Mo, Ipatrol Mo", "AkoAngSimulangPagbabago" to name a few. Thus, the lesser need to use money as a campaign tool among this kind of voters. Hence, vote buyers will no longer rely on the power of their peso on the decision making process of the voter but their capacity to sway the voters to their platforms, political party or individual track record. In fact, banking on the power of money might even be detrimental to a candidate's campaign for it will give a wrong impression to the educated voting population. Thus, this would explain why most of those in the academe did not experience receiving dirty money during election. Furthermore, when faced with an educated population, candidates and political parties will be able to save campaign

funds and can channel these for additional campaign materials instead.

Though vote buying and selling are, at a glance, actions that run counter to values, it is noteworthy that there is actually an ambivalence here. Integrity and honesty is compromised when one gets involved in the buying and selling of votes. After all, one entertains the idea of receiving an amount for one's principles in life. Yet, on deeper scrutiny, it will give a not-so-morbid scenario of the phenomenon since the one who receives the money feels bound to give his word and stand by it, by really voting for the candidate who gives him the money. This phenomenon can be viewed negatively when one just focuses on the vote buying activity. Yet, this could also be viewed positively by looking at this sense of integrity as point of entry for redirection of the people's moral compass.

The pathway towards this moral redirection is something that should be started early on in life. Of utmost importance here is the recognition of the family, education, and faith instruction in the shaping of the sense of right and wrong in the individual. Also, the collaboration of the institutions that impacts on the moral fiber of a person as they move towards a common vision of what a person and society should be is something to look into.

5.0 Conclusion

It is evident that there is a significant correlation between poverty, literacy rate and the buying price of votes. Vote buying thrives where poverty incidence is high and where literacy is low. Due to the rather high incidence of poverty in the country, vote buying appeared to escalate over the years. The interplay of economic needs of the voters and their willingness to cast their votes to the highest bidders paint a rather gloomy political scenario in the future.

APPENDIX

Table 1
Vote Buying

Places	*Voting Population	*Poverty Index	**Literacy Rate	Buying Price	Position of Candidates
NCR	1020144	3.8	96.575	500	2
Ilocos Sur	373,070	17.1	98.20	3000	3
Lanao del Norte	344,950	42.5	93.90	1500	3
Ilocos Norte	338,135	42.5	98.20	3500	3
Pangasinan	1330287	17.0	96.575	300	2
Cagayan Province	568,628	17.7	95.00	1000-5000	3
Albay	678,869	36.1	96.60	100-500	3
Aurora	1420798	6.7	94.925	1200	3
Nueva Ecija	1038713	23.0	94.925	500-2000	3
Batangas	1118425	19.4	94.925	500	3
Butuan	154,553	32.0	94.70	1000	3
Pampanga	1057339	6.4	94.925	500	3
Maasin	45,724	36.4	94.70	1000	3
Eastern Samar	251,859	59.4	93.60	2500	3
Cebu City	1434809	22.4	90.850	300	3
Bohol	690532	32.5	90.850	250	3
Northern Samar	316,769	43.7	93.60	3000-5000	3
Iloilo City	247,018	21.9	94.50	1500	3
Negros oriental	679,583	45.3	95.10	1000	3
Siquijor	57,523	24.6	95.10	3000	3
Davao Oriental	270,087	48.0	93.70	500	3
Agusan del Sur	319,415	38.6	94.70	1500	3
ZamboangaSibugay	320,710	36.8	93.90	2000	2
Agusan del Norte	305359	32.0	90.275	500	2
Davao del Sur	1176758	22.3	87.725	300	2
Davao City	797214	48.0	87.725	300	3
Cagayan de Oro	225188	25.0	89.450	500	3
Tawitawi	120455	20.8	76.575	100	3
Misamis Occidental	303145	36.6	89.450	1000	2

Legend: 1 Barangay 2 Municipal 3 District/Legislature

* Data from NSCB

** Data from NSO

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