

Electoral Campaign Expectations and Post-election Behaviour Towards the Government: An Evaluation of Godwin Obaseki's Second Term in Office

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Abstract

The study was carried out to determine and evaluate the electoral campaign expectations and post-election behavior towards the government of Godwin Obaseki in his second term in office. The study adopted the survey method and used the questionnaire as instrument to generate data while simple frequency table was used to analyze the data generated. The sample size of the study was 450 and the study was anchored on the Social Exchange Theory. Findings from the study showed that Governor Godwin Obaseki has made good with some of his electoral campaign promises but has failed to meet the residents' expectations considering his promises of deepening reforms and diversifying the state's economy to consolidate on the progress recorded in his first term in office; hence, this has led to resentment on the part of some of the residents towards the government. It recommends that elected representatives should always make good their campaign promises to the electorates as this will make them have positive attitude towards government as well as encourage participatory democracy.

Introduction

Political campaign communication encapsulates three important areas in campaigns: providing reasons for voters to retain faith in the political system; providing citizens the freedom to select their leaders; and providing the opportunity to evaluate how their interests can be best served while conferring legitimacy on those elected to govern (Trent & Friedenberg 2004). In many parts of the world, the issues and debates of electoral campaigns provide insight into societies' priorities and aspirations (Svetlik 2018). Seeking voters' support during election campaigns should be an open debate with reasoned arguments about which particular political candidates are most competent for the office sought (Heywood 2007). This is better done by 'presenting programmes of public good to stake out competitive positions by persuading the median voters at the centre of the political spectrum' (Nichter 2008, p. 42).

A crucial factor in the legitimisation of modern democracies is the degree to which policies and programmes presented to the public before an election translate into tangible end



results once a political party wins power (Brouard, et al. 2018). This is because ‘periodic and genuine elections are generally seen as a key component for enhancing the legitimacy of a government and strengthening the social contract between the government and the governed’ (UNDP 2016, p.12). The primary reason for the existence of parties is to contest and capture state power– ideally through peaceful means – in regular multiparty elections (Matlosa2007) where pledges are made to the electorate. Existing empirical work indicates that campaign promises are important for voter evaluations, both prospectively and retrospectively (Bonilla, 2017). Suffice to say that party campaigns provide a platform for exposing the electorate to competing ideas about how to run the country for their wellbeing. This may be done through open rallies and organized debates among contestants for public office (The Guardian 2019).

Thus, the extent to which government actions fulfill election promises has continually raised an important scholarly debate (Petry & Collette 2009). While a manifesto may give government a mandate for its policies, it is likely to contain a host of commitments and most voters will be aware of only a small number (Bogdanor, 2015). Even politicians assume that manifestos are often not well suited for distribution to voters (Eder et al. 2017). The percentage of voters that reads party manifestos is negligible, perhaps because voters are frequently cynical about politicians’ promises.

Election promises have come to represent one of the fundamental elements of the representative democracy through which hopes and expectations are created and sustained in any society. It is also the larger context of the strategies which political parties adopt to stimulate voter turnout, motivate supporters to vote in an election and, ultimately, determine the outcome of the election. Manin et al. (1999) remarked that campaign promises stimulate and determine the level of voter participation and accountability in governance. Significantly, a political party does not only limit itself to the role of aggregating and articulating the conflicting interests of society, but it also takes proactive measures to convert these divergent demands into concrete terms. Thus, given the general distrust against election promises by the citizens, the tripod linkage between campaign promises, election outcomes and post-election governance have constantly remained the subject of scientific inquiry. Essentially, the crux of the inquest has revolved around: inspecting the electoral promises made by politicians and political parties before an election, determining how it largely influenced the outcome of the election and understanding the modalities on ground to faithfully convert these ideas into reality in the post-election governance. Existing studies have cross-examined campaign promises and the extent to which they are fulfilled after elections (Mansergh & Thomson, 2007; Naurin, 2013; Royed, 1996; Thomson et al., 2017). While some parties implemented the promises they made before the election, others were caught in the web of disowning their pledges after emerging victorious at the poll.

Meanwhile, the festive atmosphere in Nigeria and Edo state that greeted the second term re-election victory of Governor Godwin Obaseki in September 19, 2020, governorship election was laced with intense campaign promises as well as intense conversation on the high





expectations of Edo people in his second term in office. The governor made several promises ranging from fighting godfatherism and elite control as well clean the system of corruption. It was the promises of unflinching commitment to the implementation of uncommon resolutions by the governor that endeared him to Edo people and had enabled him win the public confidence of the people in his re-election in the state. Meanwhile, it is a year now since Governor Obaseki and his campaign train berthed in every nook and cranny, wooed Edo people with countless promises in exchange for votes and, ultimately, got the peoples' trust and confidence to pilot the affairs of the state for a tenure of four-years. From the Northern axis to the Southern region, it was promises galore to deliver good dividends of democracy to residents of the state. It is on this premise this that study was conducted to evaluate the electoral campaign expectations and post-election behavior of Edo people towards Governor Obaseki's second term in office.

Statement of the Problem

Fulfilling electoral pledges is an important aspect of the envisaged congruence between the pre- and post-electoral policy contents of political parties' manifestos. Over the years, Edo state electoral promises are often not kept, which is an obvious challenge to the sanctity of the electoral process in the state. Unfulfilled campaign promises remain a seemingly intractable challenge, perhaps because the process itself is vulnerable to manipulation. Ambushing voters with plans of action on the eve of every election year in the state remains a constant ritual to formally legitimise party campaigns in the digital media and at heavily mobilised rallies, often with limited substance. Each election precipitates a mobilisation of the people but the promised social contract is ephemeral. Hence, successive government project policy blueprints but continually fail to represent the concerns or meet the needs of Edo people.

The re-election victory of Governor Godwin Obaseki in September 19, 2020, governorship election was laced with intense campaign promises as well as intense conversation on the high expectations of Edo people in his second term in office to enable him consolidate on his achievements in his first four-year term. The governor made several promises to Edo people during his electioneering campaign and the people expected him to live up to his campaign promises. The governor anchored his vision towards raising hopes and expectations of Edo people on a catchphrase, "Making Edo Great Again" (MEGA). Navigating Edo on the part of progress, Godwin Obaseki said his plans was to leave a lasting legacy that will provide a roadmap required to meet the development plan of the state by 2050, upon completion of his second term in office. Despite all these campaign promises, has the government been able to make good his promises to Edo people months after his re-election into office? The answer to this question tends to tilt more in the negative, a development which has motivated this study and energize us to set to work to evaluate the electoral campaign expectations and post-election behavior of the Edo people towards Obaseki's second term in office.

Objectives of the study

The objectives of this study are to:



1. Find out the level at which Governor Godwin Obaseki is making good his campaign promises to the people.
2. Find out if Edo people's expectations from the governor affect their post-election behaviour.
3. Examine Edo people's perception of post-election policy implementation by the governor.
4. Explore practicable ways of committing political candidates to fulfill their campaign promises to the people.

Research Questions

The study seeks to address the following research questions:

1. To what extent has governor Obaseki fulfilled his electoral campaign promises to Edo people?
2. Does the people's expectation from the governor affect their post-election behaviour?
3. What is the people's perception of the post-election policy implementation by the governor?
4. In what specific ways can we commit political candidates to fulfill their campaign promises to the people?

Review of Related Literature

Politicians seeking office make promises they intend to fulfill if elected in the belief that such promises will engender voters' trust in their capabilities (Aragonès et al. 2007). Due to the improvement in information and communication technology, digital and multi-media are used to inform and persuade the public. During special events such as election campaigns, politicians and political parties spend fortunes on advertising slogans such as 'make Nigeria work again', 'put smile on the faces of the poor', 'make life meaningful for our people', 'take Nigerians to the next level', or 'bring back our lost glory'. Such slogans are largely platitudes not backed with ideological or policy development contents. On capturing state power, these politicians felt no obligation to implement vague statements of intent; nor did the electorate call them to account. Vaguer promises and vituperative comments about opponents are made by political parties in every round of elections in what had become a periodic ritual. A cynical electorate tried to get the dividends of democracy upfront by demanding gratification at every step of the process. Needless to say, political parties in Nigeria today are among the least trusted institutions. Van Reybrouck's (2016) submission in this regard is apt: Since we have reduced democracy to selecting representatives, and reduced representative democracy to mean simply voting, a valuable system is now mired in deep difficulties. Winning the next election has become more important than fulfilling the promises made in the last.

In developing democracies, electoral campaigns tend to involve electing political leaders on the basis of personal characteristics. Another significant driver 'in electoral dynamics can be



identity-based backgrounds that link competing parties to groups of voters on grounds other than issues, such as patrimonial relationships (inheritances) or clientelism (patronage)' (Jansen et al. 2016). In Africa, where accountability in governance processes remains elusive, many political leaders may overlook or ignore their electoral mandate once they are elected into office (Maphunye 2016). Politics in Nigeria specifically is dominated by personality, not by issues, and politicians frequently and easily shift from one party to the other (Campbell 2018). The social media space in the country is vulnerable to manipulation by influential politicians who are ready to deploy their agents on social media in order to confuse and divide the people along ethnic, religious or other fault-lines to serve their vested interests (Hassan 2018).

Ideally, election manifestos should represent values and opportunities for progress and change in the society. Manifestos are ideally a product of a negotiated process by different actors and groups within each political party and offer an official statement of a party's policy proposals' (Mubanga 2016). Manifestos should also outline the problems and issues which a political party presents to the public during the elections. But on close examination, the manifestos of political parties in Nigeria are not distinctive from each other in their approach to the core issues, policies and programmes.

Before the September 19 Governorship election in Edo state, Edo people were bombarded with various pledges and promises from Governor Obaseki. The governor attempted to present his different programmes through rallies, statements to the media, party manifestoes and in televised campaign programmes. After he became a consensus candidate of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) millions of party members and supporters both those that defected from the APC with the governor and those he met at the PDP embarked on a massive campaign that galvanised support for him in the state. The governor, his deputy as well as their campaign train berthed every nook and cranny, wooed Edo people with countless promises in exchange for votes from over one million eligible voters and ultimately, got the nod to pilot the political affairs of the state for another tenure of four years (Business Day, 2021)

Navigating Edo on the part of progress, Godwin Obaseki said his plans was to leave a lasting legacy that will provide a roadmap required to meet the development plan of the state by 2050, upon completion of his second term in office. No doubt the manifesto which is anchored on 12 pillars is a development-oriented programme of progress for Edo, and a step forward in building on his first term achievement. In unveiling his manifesto, Governor Obaseki outlined his 12-point MEGA agenda to include Social sector (Education, Health system, Pension and Social Security, Housing, Lands and Survey); Critical infrastructure and Energy; Economy and industrialisation, Trade and Investment; Environment and Public Utilities; Peace and Security. Others are Agriculture and Natural Resources; Public Service, Public Finance and Public Revenue; Women, Children Youth and Sports; Law, Judiciary and Legal Reforms; Chieftaincy and Religious Affairs; Arts and Culture and Transport. (Business Day, 2021).

Governor Obaseki had said in the course of his campaigns and interactions, that a better life has to be provided for the people with renewed vigour. According to him, his government





will achieve it by placing high premium on rapid and sustained economic growth and development, which is expected to continue at peace in the second term (Vanguard, 2020). For many, the time has come for the governor to compensate and repay the people for the huge sacrifices they made to re-elect him for a second term. According to the governor in his inaugural speech, his administration would be committed to deepening reforms and diversifying the state's economy to consolidate on the progress recorded in his first term in office. The governor further said that his re-election marks the restoration of hope in the democracy of Nigeria and across the globe in the face of unprecedented challenges that have beset the world, adding that his second term was a time to heal and develop a template to foster inclusive growth and development (Business Day, 2021).

Meanwhile, the social contract between voters and their elected representatives has long remained one of the foundations of democratic institutions (Transparency International 2019). The social contract is a fundamental principle of legitimizing governmental organisation, as it provides a starting point for a rational explanation of the origin of the state. The idea is that the authority of government over citizens derives originally from an agreement between ruler and ruled in which the former agrees to provide advantages such as peace, security and order in return for obedience from the latter. In a viable democracy, government statements and actions must have some degree of trust from the citizens as a prerequisite for an effective social contract (Gaskarth 2017). In other words, the contractual agreement that obtains between the citizenry and a constituted authority presupposes that elections should afford citizens the opportunity to periodically bargain with public office holders and decide whether to renew their mandate or vote an irresponsible government out of power. Citizens should continually hold public office holders and government institutions accountable, in order to prevent new governance and security challenges.

Theoretical framework

This study is anchored on the Social Exchange Theory. The key tenet of social exchange theory is that human behaviour is in essence an exchange, particularly of rewards (Homans, 1961) or resources of primarily material character (wealth) (Cook, 2000; Stolte et al., 2001) and secondarily of symbolic attributes. Presumably, such exchange transactions permeate all social phenomena (Coleman, 1990), including group processes and intergroup relations, which are conceived as sets or joint outcomes of voluntary individual actions induced by rewards (Blau, 1964). In this view, exchange transactions constitute the foundation and open secret (Homans, 1961) of social life, of group processes and relations. Exchange theorists have elaborated and summarized the above argument as follows. Arguably, social action is an exchange of (tangible or intangible) activities and rewards/costs between individuals on the grounds that people have always explained their conduct by means of its benefits and costs to them. Exchange represents the basis of human behaviour (Homans, 1961) and is pervasive throughout social life (Coleman, 1990). Social exchange theory views social life as consisting of exchanges among social actors (individuals or collectivities) of a variety of valuable resources, including material goods,



financial resources, and intangible social goods, (humor, respect, information) (Dowd,1975). Social exchange may happen on a variety of levels; individuals may exchange with organisations (such as exchanging work effort for a pay check) and governments with each other (such as foreign aid exchange for loyalty). Exchange theorists argue that social life is founded on these exchanges, in which the parties desire to maximize their returns on their exchange by getting as much or more than they give. If one party to the exchange is not receiving an equitable return, that party will withdraw and seek other exchanges.

In applying the concepts of exchange theory to voters’ expectation and post-election behaviour, we could examine the relative power of participants in the exchange which may be the various types of exchanges that are ongoing between the electorates and the elected governor and those undertaken under special conditions such as during campaigns or election periods. The principle of exchange and reciprocity are sometimes visible in the fulfillment of campaign promises. Therefore, according to the theory the governor is expected to fulfill his own side of the bargain during the electioneering campaign. The governor is expected to reciprocate to the electorates by making good his campaign promises to them.

In this sense, the norm of reciprocity is a special case of exchange theory operating between the various stakeholders. Morgan, et al (1998) suggest that keeping the exchange at least somewhat—even is important to the well-being of participants. Electorates who are recipients of both financial and material gifts often value the opportunity to support a particular candidate, even if that support involves simply campaigning for or voting for such candidate.

Methodology

This study adopted the survey research method of data gathering with questionnaire as the research instrument. The simple random sampling technique was used to administer 450 questionnaires among respondents in Edo state within the age bracket of 18 to 60 years with a view to eliciting information regarding the subject matter while the method of analysis was frequency table. Information from secondary sources includes library and archival documents, monographs, journals, materials from the Internet, government publications, newspapers and magazines.

Data presentation and Analysis

The data obtained were analysed using tables and simple percentages. These were adopted for the researcher to fully explain the data without the use of complex mathematical models. The analysed results are presented below.

Table 1: Governor Obaseki has met the expectations of the people by fulfilling his campaign promises

Options	Respondents	%
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Yes	211	47.1
No	239	53.1
Total	450	

The data in Table 1 above clearly showed that Edo Residents are of the opinion that the governor has not met the expectations of the people by not fulfilling all his campaign promises he had made to them during the electoral campaign. This is because majority of the respondents representing 53.1% answered to that effect.

Table 2: Ratings at which Governor Godwin Obaseki has fulfilled his campaign promises to Edo state

Options	Respondents	%
To a large extent	195	43.3
High	132	29.3
Low	86	19.1
Very low	37	8.22
Total	450	

The data in Table 2 above clearly shows that Governor Obaseki has made good some of his campaign promises to Edo people. This is because some of the respondents representing 29.3% rated him high. However, some respondents rated him very low which means that the governor is yet to fulfill all his campaign promises to the people.

Table 3: Areas the governor has fulfilled his campaign promises to the people.

Options	Respondents	%
Health	58	12.8
Education	127	28.2
Roads/infrastructure	69	15.3
Agriculture	43	9.55
Security	58	12.8
Economy	48	10.6
Others	47	10.4
Total	450	

The data presented in Table 3 above, vividly shows that Governor Obaseki has done well in the educational sector more than any other sector of the state as majority of the respondents representing 28.2% affirmed to it. The implication of the table above is that the governor is yet to make significance impact on other critical area aside education.

Table 4: The people's expectations affect their post-election behaviour towards the government

Options	Respondents	%
Yes	387	86.0
No	64	14.2
Total	450	

The data presented in Table 4 above, revealed that majority of the respondents representing 86.0% are of the opinion that the people’s expectations affect their post-election behaviour towards the government.

Discussion of Findings

The study was carried out to investigate and evaluate the electoral campaign expectations and post-election behavior towards the government of Godwin Obaseki’s second term in office. Findings from the study revealed that Governor Obaseki has made good some of his electoral campaign promises to Edo residents by executing some projects and programmes. This finding aligns with the Social Exchange Theory which says that the principle of exchange and reciprocity are sometimes visible in the fulfillment of campaign promises. Relatedly, the social contract between voters and their elected representatives has long remained one of the foundations of democratic institutions (Transparency International 2019). The contractual agreement that obtains between the citizenry and a constituted authority presupposes that elections should afford citizens the opportunity to periodically bargain with public office holders and decide whether to renew their mandate or vote an irresponsible government out of power. Citizens should continually hold public office holders and government institutions accountable, in order to prevent new governance and security challenges.

However, findings from the study revealed that some Edo residents are of the opinion that the governor has not met the expectations of the people by not fulfilling his campaign promises he made during his electoral campaign. This is in connection with some existing studies that cross-examined campaign promises and the extent to which they are fulfilled after elections (Mansergh & Thomson, 2007; Naurin, 2013; Royed, 1996; Thomson et al., 2017). They concluded that while some parties implemented the promises they made before the election, others were caught in the web of disowning their pledges after emerging victorious at the poll. Relatedly, this finding is in tandem with Maphunye (2016) who asserted that in Africa, where accountability in governance processes remains elusive, many political leaders may overlook or ignore their electoral mandate once they are elected into office. The findings further showed that the people’s expectations affect their post-election behaviour towards the government. This finding is in line with Manin et al. (1999) who submitted that fulfilled campaign promises stimulate and determine the level of voters’ participation and accountability in governance. Election promises have come to represent one of the fundamental elements of the representative democracy through which hopes and expectations are created and sustained in any society.



Conclusion and Recommendation

The study has established the ideal that fulfilled campaign promises stimulate and determine the level of voters' participation and accountability in governance and election promises have come to represent one of the fundamental elements of the representative democracy through which hopes and expectations are created and sustained in any society. Therefore, public office holders should always fulfill their own end of the bargain by honoring the social contract agreement they have with the citizens as this will build public trust the electorates have for the government. The study recommends that elected representatives should always make good their campaign promises to the electorates as this will make them have positive attitude towards government as well as encourage participatory democracy.

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