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Cash and ballots: Unearthing the nexus between conditional cash transfers (CCTs) and voter's electoral behavior in Nigeria

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Abstract

Conditional cash transfers (CCTs) have become one of the dominant strategies of governments in developing countries to deliver social safety nets for the poor. These programs generally aim to alleviate poverty both in the short and long term, the former through cash transfers and the latter through increasing investments in human capital. Apart from these primary aims, CCTs have also shown to influence political behavior of households. The study attempts to examine the impact of CCTs on voter's electoral behavior in Nigeria. The rational choice theory of Anthony Downs was used as the theoretical underpinning of the study. Survey research design was adopted. Data was obtained through questionnaires while data analysis was done using descriptive statistics. Findings of the study revealed that CCTs influence political behavior of beneficiaries in the form of decision to vote; enrolment and turnout; voting preferences; incumbent party support; and satisfaction with public services among others.

Keywords: Conditional cash transfers, elections, electoral behavior, politics, poverty, voters

1. Introduction

Conditional cash transfers (CCTs) have become one of the dominant strategies of governments in developing countries to deliver social safety nets for the poor. These programs generally aim to exert an immediate effect on poverty by raising income, while at the same time contributing to a longer-term reduction of poverty by improving beneficiaries' future potential to earn a living. Their underlying principle is that human capital can be enhanced as a development vehicle by providing money to families to persuade them to invest in themselves through greater participation in education and health services (D'addato, 2015) [17].

CCTs are central to the concept of social protection, which aims to reduce risk and vulnerability by strengthening the abilities of the poor to avoid, cope with, and/or recover from unfavorable shocks. Importantly, it acknowledges that poverty can be either transient, transitory, or chronic and that it is a dynamic state as opposed to a static one. Given the complexity of the factors that contribute to poverty and deprivation, analysts disagree on how vulnerability and risk should be defined, with approaches ranging from a narrow focus on economics and livelihoods to a broad definition that encompasses equity, non-discrimination, empowerment, and socio-cultural and political rights (Devereux & Sabates-Wheeler, 2004; Jones, Vargas & Villar, 2008; Shepherd, Marcus & Barrientos, 2001) [19, 33, 51]. Advocates claim that CCTs represent a step towards broad social-protection systems based on inclusion and universal rights because the programs reach groups that previously had little or no access to state services (Bastagli 2009; Cookson, 2016; Hanlon, Barrientos & Hulme, 2010) [5, 15, 29]. By fostering children's human capital through a "co-responsible" collaboration between the household and the state, CCTs aim to end the intergenerational cycle of poverty. The programs encourage low-income households to comply with specific health and educational requirements, sometimes referred to as "co-responsibilities," by offering minor cash incentives. High compliance rates are guaranteed by the conditionality mechanism, but long-term CCT effects depend on the caliber of these services (Cecchini & Soares, 2015; Cookson, 2016; Fiszbein, Schady & Ferreira, 2009) [11, 15, 24].

Apart from meeting the aims for which it was established, CCTs have shown to also influence household behavior in other ways including political preferences (Conover, Zarate, Camacho & Baez, 2018) ^[14]. It has been demonstrated that cash transfers significantly influence citizens' political participation and their choice of candidates for office in many developing nations in South America, Africa, and Asia where CCTs programs are widely used. A large body of research makes the assumption that voters are rational and should reward those who improve their lives, whether through programmatic redistribution (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2006; Boix, 2003; Zucco, 2011) ^[1, 7, 54], good economic performance (Hibbs Jr., 2008; Lewis-Beck & Stegmeier, 2000; Samuels, 2004; Zucco, 2011) ^[31, 36, 49, 54], or both.

2. Objectives of the study

The study aims to determine the relationship between CCTs and voter's electoral behavior in Nigeria. In specific terms, the study aims to:

1. Examine the role of CCTs on voter's pre-election behavioral patterns in Nigeria.
2. Assess the effect of CCTs on voter's participation in elections in Nigeria.
3. Establish the impact of CCTs on voter's electoral preferences in Nigeria.

3. Conceptual review

3.1 Conditional Cash Transfers (CCTs)

CCTs are cash transfers given to low-income households in exchange for compliance which is based on specific requirements related to human capital investment, such as meeting the minimum standards for children's education, health, and nutrition, (Bloom, Mahal, Rosenberg & Sevilla, 2010; Chenge, Ofuebe & Jev, 2019; European Union, 2014; Jones, Vargas & Villar, 2008) ^[6, 12, 23, 33]. Through an incentive system that combines the short-term goal of safety-nets with the long-term goals of building human capital targeted at breaking the vicious intergenerational circle of poverty traps, CCTs attempt to address demand side constraints for structural poverty reduction (Britto, 2005; Chenge & Mba, 2019; De la Briere & Rawlings, 2006; Fiszbein & Schady, 2009; Maite, 2012) ^[8, 12, 18, 24, 37].

3.2 Voter's electoral behavior

Voter's behavior, also known as voter's electoral behavior, are actions or inactions of citizens in relation to casting a ballot in elections for members of their local, regional, or national governments. The behavior results in either support for or against political candidates or parties, or abstention from the voting process. Voters' decisions can be attributed to the benefits or drawbacks they anticipate this will have on their quality of life. Statistics show that patterns in voting or abstention are tied to the socioeconomic make-up of an electorate and the geographic context in which its political indoctrination has occurred. These determinants constitute factors such as income levels, age groupings, ethnicities, religious affiliations or belief systems, urbanization, and regional constituencies (Hagerty, Naik & Tsai, 2000; Leigh, 2005; Rule, 2014) ^[28, 35, 48].

4. Review of related literature

4.1 Stimulus for Conditional Cash Transfers in modern economies

Anti-poverty initiatives exist in a wide range of forms, from

multifaceted, sophisticated initiatives to more straightforward ones. For choosing among the many anti-poverty programs, or combinations thereof, it is essential to articulate and comprehend the underlying issue driving governmental and nonprofit organization engagement. The final program that a country decides to implement – or a combination of programs – will be heavily influenced by its social objectives, institutional capacity, and financial resources. But even within each broad category of program, the precise design decisions and implementation strategies used may have an impact on whether these programs truly accomplish their claimed objectives (Hanna & Karlan, 2017) ^[30].

A crucial policy tool to combat poverty, vulnerability, and social exclusion is social protection measures. Cash transfers are a popular and prominent tool within the broad category of social protection, and they were developed primarily in Latin America. By focusing on the poor, it is hoped to encourage the development of human capital and break the cycle of poverty between generations by enhancing households' abilities to uphold children's rights to adequate nutrition, healthcare, and education (Barrientos, Hulme & Moore, 2006; Britto, 2005; Jones *et al.*, 2008; Moser & Antezana, 2003; UNDP, 2006) ^[4, 8, 33, 39, 52].

Low-income households are given cash right away under CCT programs when they meet certain defined criteria. The programs encourage homes to alter their behavior in conformity with social goals that are universally acknowledged. Technically, the objective of these initiatives is "to correct for market failures associated with non-internalized positive externalities" (Janvry & Sadoulet, 2004: 1) ^[32]. They are used to: (a) target vulnerable groups that are unable to access merit goods due to adverse income effects brought on by cyclical downturns and/or exogenous shocks; and (b) incentivize private behavior to secure positive externalities like increased consumption of merit goods like health and education (Prabhu, 2009) ^[43].

Thus, CCTs are the current fad in poverty-reduction policy much like micro-credits were a few years ago. Since the mid-1990 s, they have all had at least three things in common: they all involve a cash transfer (as opposed to in-kind assistance), they are all aimed at the very poor (However variously defined), and they all require that households meet pre-defined conditions. However, they are all designed to work differently. The conditional feature of CCTs, which enables them to address demand-side constraints for structural poverty reduction through an incentive scheme that combines the short-term goal of safety-nets with the long-term goals of building human capital and ending the vicious intergenerational cycle of poverty traps, is what really sets them apart from traditional social assistance programs (Britto, 2005; Maite, 2012) ^[8, 37].

4.2 The political facet of Conditional Cash Transfers

Social transfers have a political component to them. Anti-poverty initiatives like CCTs may have an impact on people's political views and voting behavior, enhancing democratic representation while also creating electoral benefits. Transfer receipts, for instance, may influence participant households to use their right to vote, by partially altering their economic conditions (Baez, Camacho, Conover & Zarate, 2012; Gleason, 2001) ^[2, 27]. In order to increase political support or influence recipients to vote in favor of the incumbent, politicians may also selectively distribute benefits to specific categories of individuals

(Camacho & Conover, 2011; Drazen & Eslava, 2012; Robinson & Verdier, 2002) ^[55, 21, 46]. Additionally, individuals may interpret social policy decisions as signals about the competence of politicians and their inclinations for redistribution (Baez, Camacho, Conover & Zarate, 2012; Banerjee, Kumar, Pande & Su, 2011; Drazen & Eslava, 2010; Gleason, 2001; Rogoff, 1990) ^[2, 3, 22, 27, 47].

Brazil's 2006 elections resulted in a significant change in the nation's voting habits. Faced with a bewildered opposition, Lula da Silva was driven to victory by strong support in the country's poorer regions. He garnered more votes in the wealthier municipalities throughout each of his four prior presidential elections, which resulted in three losses and one victory. His support in the least developed regions of the nation stands in stark contrast to that. The Bolsa Familia Programme (BFP), a sizable CCT program developed and managed by the federal government, came to the forefront of those searching for urgent answers for this electoral realignment (Zucco, 2011) ^[54].

In the 2006 Mexican election, Felipe Calderon, the incumbent candidate, outperformed President Vicente Fox in the 2000 election in localities with greater coverage of the CCT program Oportunidades (Correa, 2015; Serdan, 2006) ^[16, 50]. Using exit poll data, Diaz-Cayeros, Estevez, and Magaloni (2009) ^[20] discovered that Oportunidades recipients were 11% more likely to have supported Calderon than non-beneficiaries. Also, beneficiaries of the Uruguayan CCT program Plan de Asistencia Nacional a la Emergencia Social (PANES) were found by Manacorda, Miguel, and Vigorito (2011) ^[38] to be more likely to support President Tabare Vazquez in the polls. Queirolo (2010) ^[45] discovered that they were also more likely to have supported the incumbent candidate Jose Mujica in the 2009 election. Nupia (2011) ^[42] and Correa (2015) ^[16] stated that in the 2010 Colombian presidential election, the incumbent candidate Juan Manuel Santos performed better in municipalities where the CCT programme Familias en Accion covered a larger proportion of the population than President Alvaro Uribe had done when he was reelected in 2006. Lastly, Layton and Smith (2011) examined poll data from 10 Latin American nations and discovered that CCT program beneficiaries consistently indicate their intention to vote for incumbents more frequently than non-beneficiaries.

5. Theoretical framework

The study's theoretical framework was the rational choice theory proposed by Anthony Downs in 1957. The concept that people have control over their decisions is the underlying premise of rational choice theory. Rather than making decisions based on unconscious motivations, customs, or environmental influences, they utilize reason to

balance risks and rewards. For a choice or action to be rational, the benefit must outweigh the cost (MSW Online Programs, 2022) ^[40]. Thus, the rational choice theory is founded on the idea that each person should maximize their own self-interested utility (Zey, 2001) ^[53].

According to Downs (quoted in Gandhi, 2006) ^[26], the fundamental tenet of the rational choice theory is that political activity is driven by self-interest. His thesis is an attempt to provide a rational rule for democratic government, in the way that economics can provide rules for rational consumers and producers. He acknowledges that there is no "a priori" reason to presume that human acts are logical, but contends that if we are to forecast and study human behavior, we must make this assumption. He contends that rationality is best understood in terms of rational means to achieve goals i.e. efficient means, such as "maximizing output for a given input or minimizing input for a given output," rather than "rational goals," or "rational objectives."

6. Methodology

A survey research designs was adopted for the study. Thus, data collection involved the use of primary sources. Data was obtained using questionnaire instruments. The population of the study was 9,987,415 representing the total number of persons captured in the National Beneficiaries Register (NBR) of the CCT program (National Cash Transfer Office [NCTO], 2023). Using the qualtrics (2023) sample size calculator, the sample size was derived as 385 at 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error. Quota, purposive and random sampling were used as the sampling techniques for the study. The quota represents the 6 geopolitical zones in Nigeria from which 6 states were purposively selected (i.e. Sokoto, Adamawa, Benue, Cross River, Anambra and Osun States). From the states selected, beneficiaries which constitute the respondents were randomly selected. Data analysis was done using descriptive statistics.

7. Data presentation and analysis

A total of 385 respondents were sampled for the study. In terms of sample size distribution, 385 questionnaires were distributed to 65 respondents in Sokoto State, and 64 respondents each in Adamawa, Benue, Cross River, Anambra and Osun States. However, the return rate of questionnaires was 55 for Sokoto State, 51 for Adamawa State, 51 for Benue State, 56 for Cross River State, 50 for Anambra State and 57 for Osun State. This sums up to 320 returned questionnaires representing 83% of total questionnaires administered.

Table 1: Conditional Cash Transfers and voter’s pre-election behavioral patterns

S.N.	Items	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	I don’t have interest in politics	110 (34.4%)	98 (30.6%)	62 (19.4%)	50 (15.6%)
2.	I don’t maintain support for a political party	86 (26.9%)	94 (29.4%)	68 (21.3%)	72 (22.5%)
3.	I got enrolled in the voter’s registration exercise	167 (52.2%)	139 (43.4%)	10 (3.1%)	4 (1.3%)
4.	I collected my voter’s card during the dispatch exercise	126 (39.4%)	180 (56.3%)	3 (0.9%)	11 (3.4%)

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 1 presents data on pre-election behavioral patterns of respondents, who are beneficiaries of CCTs, in Nigeria. Four items were selected and considered in determining these behavioral patterns, they include: interest in politics, support for political parties, enrollment in voter’s

registration and collection of voter’s card. In item 1.1, 110 respondents representing 34.4% strongly agreed that they don’t have interest in politics, 98 respondents representing 30.6% agreed that they don’t have interest in politics, 62 respondents representing 19.4%

disagreed that they don't have interest in politics, and 50 respondents representing 15.6% strongly disagreed that they don't have interest in politics. From these responses, it can be deduced that a total of 208 respondents representing 65% agreed with the statement while a total of 112 respondents representing 35% disagreed with the statement. Thus, the conclusion can be drawn that beneficiaries of CCTs don't have interest in politics.

In item 1.2, 86 respondents representing 26.9% strongly agreed that they don't maintain support for a political party, 94 respondents representing 29.4% agreed that they don't maintain support for a political party, 68 respondents representing 21.3% disagreed that they don't maintain support for a political party, and 72 respondents representing 22.5% strongly disagreed that they don't maintain support for a political party. From these responses, it can be deduced that a total of 180 respondents representing 56.3% agreed with the statement while a total of 140 respondents representing 43.7% disagreed with the statement. Thus, the conclusion drawn here is that beneficiaries of CCTs don't maintain support for a political party.

In item 1.3, 167 respondents representing 52.2% strongly agreed that they got enrolled in the voter's registration exercise, 139 respondents representing 43.4% agreed that

they got enrolled in the voter's registration exercise, 10 respondents representing 3.1% disagreed that they got enrolled in the voter's registration exercise, and 4 respondents representing 1.3% strongly disagreed that they got enrolled in the voter's registration exercise. From these responses, it can be deduced that a total of 306 respondents representing 95.6% agreed with the statement while a total of 14 respondents representing 4.4% disagreed with the statement. Thus, the conclusion can be drawn that CCT beneficiaries got enrolled in the voter's registration exercise. In item 1.4, 126 respondents representing 39.4% strongly agreed that they collected their voter's card during the dispatch exercise, 180 respondents representing 56.3% agreed that they collected their voter's card during the dispatch exercise, 3 respondents representing 0.9% disagreed that they collected their voter's card during the dispatch exercise, and 11 respondents representing 3.4% strongly disagreed that they collected their voter's card during the dispatch exercise. From these responses, it can be deduced that a total of 306 respondents representing 95.6% agreed with the statement while a total of 14 respondents representing 4.4% disagreed with the statement. Thus, the conclusion can be drawn that CCT beneficiaries collected their voter's card during the dispatch exercise.

Table 2: Effect of CCTs on voter's participation in elections

S. N.	Items	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	I turned out to vote during the 2023 elections	145 (45.3%)	161 (50.3%)	6 (1.8%)	8 (2.5%)
2.	I was accredited to vote in the 2023 elections	122 (38.1%)	184 (57.5%)	2 (0.6%)	12 (3.8%)
3.	I exercised my voting right in the 2023 elections	106 (33.1%)	200 (62.5%)	7 (2.2%)	7 (2.2%)

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 2 shows data on the effect of CCTs on voter's participation in elections. Three items were selected and considered in examining these effects, they include: CCT beneficiaries turn out for elections, CCT beneficiaries engagement in accreditation for elections, and CCT beneficiaries voting in elections.

In item 2.1, 145 respondents representing 45.3% strongly agreed that they turned out to vote in the elections, 161 respondents representing 50.3% agreed that they turned out to vote in the elections, 6 respondents representing 1.8% disagreed that they turned out to vote in the elections, and 8 respondents representing 2.5% strongly disagreed that they turned out to vote in the elections. From these responses, it can be deduced that a total of 306 respondents representing 95.6% agreed with the statement while a total of 14 respondents representing 4.4% disagreed with the statement. Thus, the conclusion can be drawn that beneficiaries of CCTs turned out to vote in the elections.

In item 2.2, 122 respondents representing 38.1% strongly agreed that they were accredited to vote in the elections, 184 respondents representing 57.5% agreed that they were accredited to vote in the elections, 2 respondents

representing 0.6% disagreed that they were accredited to vote in the elections, and 12 respondents representing 3.8% strongly disagreed that they were accredited to vote in the elections. From these responses, it can be deduced that a total of 306 respondents representing 95.6% agreed with the statement while a total of 14 respondents representing 4.4% disagreed with the statement. Thus, the conclusion can be drawn that beneficiaries of CCTs were accredited to vote in the elections.

In item 2.3, 106 respondents representing 33.1% strongly agreed that they exercised their voting rights in the elections, 200 respondents representing 62.5% agreed that they exercised their voting rights in the elections, 7 respondents representing 2.2% disagreed that they exercised their voting rights in the elections, and 7 respondents representing 2.2% strongly disagreed that they exercised their voting rights in the elections. From these responses, it can be deduced that a total of 306 respondents representing 95.6% agreed with the statement while a total of 14 respondents representing 4.4% disagreed with the statement. Thus, the conclusion drawn here is that beneficiaries of CCTs exercised their voting rights in the elections.

Table 3: Impact of Conditional Cash Transfers on voter's electoral preferences

S. N.	Items	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1.	I did not vote for the ruling party during the 2023 elections	8 (2.5%)	16 (5.0%)	112 (35.0%)	184 (57.5%)
2.	My choice of vote was not based on welfare benefits	9 (2.8%)	5 (1.6%)	95 (29.7%)	211 (65.9%)
3.	My choice of vote was not based on satisfaction with public service delivery	11 (3.4%)	3 (0.9%)	181 (56.6%)	125 (39.1%)

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 3 reveals data on the impact of CCTs on voter's electoral preferences. Three items were selected and

considered in assessing these impacts, they include: voting choice and ruling party, voting choice and welfare benefits, and voting choice and satisfaction with public service delivery.

In item 3.1, 8 respondents representing 2.5% strongly agreed that they didn't vote for the ruling party in the elections, 16 respondents representing 5.0% agreed that they didn't vote for the ruling party in the elections, 112 respondents representing 35.0% disagreed that they didn't vote for the ruling party in the elections, and 184 respondents representing 57.5% strongly disagreed that they didn't vote for the ruling party in the elections. From these responses, it can be deduced that a total of 24 respondents representing 7.5% agreed with the statement while a total of 296 respondents representing 92.5% disagreed with the statement. Thus, the conclusion can be drawn that beneficiaries of CCTs voted for the ruling party in the elections.

In item 3.2, 9 respondents representing 2.8% strongly agreed that their choice of vote was not based on welfare benefits, 5 respondents representing 1.6% agreed that their choice of vote was not based on welfare benefits, 95 respondents representing 29.7% disagreed that their choice of vote was not based on welfare benefits, and 211 respondents representing 65.9% strongly disagreed that their choice of vote was not based on welfare benefits. From these responses, it can be deduced that a total of 14 respondents representing 4.4% agreed with the statement while a total of 306 respondents representing 95.6% disagreed with the statement. Thus, the conclusion can be drawn that the choice of vote of CCT beneficiaries was based on welfare benefits.

In item 3.3, 11 respondents representing 3.4% strongly agreed that their choice of vote was not based on satisfaction with public service delivery, 3 respondents representing 0.9% agreed that their choice of vote was not based on satisfaction with public service delivery, 181 respondents representing 56.6% disagreed that their choice of vote was not based on satisfaction with public service delivery, and 125 respondents representing 39.1% strongly disagreed that their choice of vote was not based on satisfaction with public service delivery. From these responses, it can be deduced that a total of 14 respondents representing 4.4% agreed with the statement while a total of 306 respondents representing 95.6% disagreed with the statement. Thus, the conclusion drawn here is that the choice of vote of CCT beneficiaries was based on satisfaction with public service delivery.

8. Summary of findings

1. Beneficiaries of CCTs do not have interest in politics but are obliged to participate in elections to show gratitude to the government.
2. CCT program plays a significant role in influencing voter's participation in elections as evidenced from incidents of voter's turnout, voter's accreditation and actual voting process.
3. CCTs have shown to impact on electoral preferences of beneficiaries who tend to support the ruling party and justify their choices using parameters like satisfaction with welfare benefits and public services delivery.

9. Conclusion

CCTs are designed to alleviate poverty both in the short and long term, the former through cash transfers and the latter

through increasing investments in human capital. The rise of CCTs as a "magic bullet solution" for development has reemphasized the value of social safety nets, but also fostered patronage between recipients and ruling political parties, as seen in various Latin American nations. This study established that political undertones also play out in the relationship between CCTs and voter's electoral behavior in Nigeria.

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