



VOTE-BUYING AND THE OUTCOME OF THE 2021 ANAMBRA STATE GUBERNATORIAL ELECTION

Celestine Ochu Udeh (Ph.D.)¹, Paul Nwaforagu Ekoyo², and Kelechi Okengwu³.

¹Department of Political Science, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu State, Nigeria.
Email: udehcelestine555@gmail.com; Tel.: +2348066614370

²Department of Political Science, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu State, Nigeria.
Email: nwaforagu@gmail.com; Tel.: +2347088923476

³Department of Peace and Conflict Studies, Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, Abia State, Nigeria.
Email: kelechi@mouau.edu.ng; Tel.: +2348108804741

Cite this article:

Udeh, C. O., Ekoyo, P. N., Okengwu, K. (2024), Vote-Buying and the Outcome of the 2021 Anambra State Gubernatorial Election. African Journal of Law, Political Research and Administration 7(4), 120-135. DOI: 10.52589/AJLPRA-XVFFEXY8

Manuscript History

Received: 10 Jul 2024

Accepted: 22 Aug 2024

Published: 26 Nov 2024

Copyright © 2024 The Author(s).

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0), which permits anyone to share, use, reproduce and redistribute in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

ABSTRACT: *The study examines vote-buying vis-à-vis the outcome of the 2021 gubernatorial election in Anambra State, to determine whether the unholy act of vote-buying influenced the general outcome of the 2021 governorship election in Anambra State. The study is anchored on the Marxian theory of the post-colonial state as its analytical framework of study. The study also adopted a documentary method of data collection and content analysis for analysing data generated through secondary sources. The study revealed that apart from the normal gift items which are the obvious features of vote-buying, voters were directly bought over with certain price in some local government areas, as against their preferred candidates during the 2021 gubernatorial election in Anambra State, which therefore influenced the general outcome of the result. We recommend amongst other things, the proper implementation and commitment to the Electoral Act 2010 (Amendment) Bill, which, therefore, specifies the limit amount sponsors, political party/candidate can spend during electioneering.*

KEYWORDS: Corruption, Elections, Political-parties, Rigging, Vote-buying.



INTRODUCTION

It is a widely recognised truism that election inducement is not only peculiar to the third-world countries of Asia, Latin America and Africa but also prevalent in other countries of the world, be it underdeveloped, developing or developed nations (Nkwede *et al.*, 2018). Therefore, elections which are conventional and legitimate processes of choosing who governs the people the world over are not only influenced by offers, gifts and favours but also marred by intimidation and coercion by either the contesting candidates or party agents (i.e. party militias) (Mares & Young, 2016). Thus, since the return to the democratic dispensation in 1999 till date, buying and selling of votes appears to have become an acceptable cultural norm in Nigeria's political system (Ezeador & Ezeani, 2021). The phenomenon has not only taken centre stage in Nigeria's political sphere but also has been internalised into the political system as a globally acceptable way of life. Therefore, vote-buying is defined as “a process consisting of an offer made to purchase the vote of an individual of voting age, who accepts the offer, receives compensation, shows up at the polling station, and then votes as paid” (Owen, 2013) (in Uwa, & Emeka, 2022, p. 67), has fundamentally grown in scale in Nigeria's political system. For instance, Onuohajide (2018) empirically observed that several videos and images have emerged, showing blatant sharing of cash, food and other gift items such as rice, bread, salt, onion and groundnut oil and trinkets in the form of umbrellas, T-shirts, caps, bags and other merchandise amongst the electorates by shameless politicians and parties agents during every election in Nigeria. This practice has manifested itself in many states of the federation in Nigeria, with particular reference to Ekiti, Edo, Ondo and Anambra States in the gubernatorial elections in 2017 on one hand (Nwankwo, 2018; Ezeador & Ezeani, 2021). Furthermore, there were also news reports of heavy voter inducements during the 2019 general elections in Nigeria where sharing of money and other valuables was the order of the day and later resulted in violence and mass killings in the process on the other hand (Ezeador & Ezeani, 2021). Upon this is the justification of the apt description of Nigeria's electoral process as “cash and carry democracy” by the electoral experts. Furthermore, it is worth noting that vote buying does not only happen in the wee hours of the election day but starts from the fee charged by political parties for application forms in party offices from the national to local level, party caucus meetings, congresses, conventions, campaigns grounds, party primaries, and then general elections (Olaito, 2018). This is why Matenga (2016) affirmatively maintained that “nearly 80% of voters from 36 African countries believe voters are bribed—either sometimes or always. He further contends that “16% of voters in African countries reported being offered money or goods in exchange for their votes during elections”. Similarly, the CLEEN Foundation also identified vote-buying as the leading risk factor that could generate tension or electoral violence during the 2019 general elections and future ones if not checked (Ejembi, 2019). The above-narrated electoral system in Nigeria thus often undermines the primary objective of an election, its integrity and credibility. In consonance, Nwanegbo (2015) maintained that often elections in Nigeria are usually characterised by massive fraud, intimidation and even assassination of political opponents.

In the same vein, Anambra State is one of the epicentres of vote buying in the history of Nigeria's political election, particularly since the return to democratic rule in 1999. Again, the State has a questionable character in the political history of Nigeria through what may be termed as “professional rigging and technically vote buying” in 2003, which therefore, altered the national gubernatorial election schedule in the state. The state's elections both at the state and federal levels have been characterised by obvious riggings and vote buying since



1999. Particularly, between the 2013-2017 gubernatorial elections where there were pieces of evidence of vote-buying reported in the various polling units across the state. For instance, in 2013, the election was rigged according to Agiri and Morka (2022) through various electoral manipulations such as “corruption, a fraudulent or sinister motive to influence an election in favour of a candidate(s) by ways such as illegal voting, bribery, threatening and undue influence, intimidation and other forms of force exerted on the electorates, falsification of results, fraudulent announcement of a losing candidate as the winner (without altering the recorded results)”. They further maintained that it has been severally reported that all the political parties that participated in the Anambra State governorship election in 2010 were accused of engaging in the buying and selling of votes either before or during the election. It is a well-known fact that, vote-buying in any election whether at the local, state or federal level is not only a travesty or mockery of democracy, but also a rape of democracy and clear daylight robbery (Agiri & Morka, 2022). Consequently, vote-buying and selling in Nigeria has dealt a huge blow to sustainable democracy in Nigeria, as elections have often been bastardised due to various forms of electoral irregularities which have denied many Nigerians the opportunity for free and fair elections.

However, despite these spelt-out consequences many state actors still engaged in such unethical conduct during elections in the country. As a result, all the political parties that participated in the 2010 Anambra State gubernatorial election took advantage of Nigeria’s state of abject poverty and exploited the electorates in the form of vote-buying. This was obviously noticed in Aguata, Anaocha, Anambra East and West, Idemili North and Ekwusigo local government areas of Anambra State, with APC taking the lead in terms of cash for vote with a price tag of N2,000 (Odalón & Ogu, 2022).

In the same vein, the same played out again in the 2017 gubernatorial election which took place on the 18th November 2017. The election was commended by a consortium of election observers in Awka, Anambra State for its smooth and peaceful conduct on one hand; also commended the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) for the early distribution of materials and officials to the various local government areas for the exercise on one hand. The observers, the Independent Service Delivery Group (ISDMG), and the Nigeria Civil Society (NCS), however, expressed concern over the widespread reports from field observers indicating vote-buying and inducement of voters and security agents by political parties and their agents during the exercise on other hand (Vanguard, 2017). They further maintained that the “reports from our observers in the field on the widespread open selling of votes by citizens cast a major slur on the integrity of the votes...the trend of vote-buying which has become a major feature of recent elections, sadly repeated itself in Anambra”. In the same vein, the Situation Room Report has also expressed a degree of disappointment with some political leaders in the state whose conduct, carriage and disposition encouraged the blatant buying and selling of votes to their citizens (Vanguard, 2017). Many local government areas were involved, where party agents were distributing gift items to electorates with convincing evidence of having voted for their candidates. According to the report, while APGA and PDP were distributing gift items like rice and tomatoes to the electorates on one hand, APC also distributed such gift items in addition to N1,500 per voter on the other hand (Odalón & Ogu, 2022). According to ISDMG, this emerging impunity of vote-buying appears to be a dangerous trend in our elections and needs to be addressed urgently (Vanguard, 2017).



However, amid the obvious electoral irregularities in Anambra State, the INEC has in broad daylight been acclaimed for the seemingly seamless conduct of the November 18 2017, governorship election in Anambra State. The election was obviously marred with a lot of irregularities and illegalities in the form of intimidations, and cash for votes even in the face of the security personnel deployed for the electoral exercise (Vanguard, 2017b). The obvious irregularities in the form of corruption, fraud and highest bidder of vote-buying by the ruling party made the majority of the candidates resolve not to contest its outcome and grudgingly congratulated the winner of the election, Governor Willie Obiano. Similarly, the Transition Monitoring Group (TMG) maintained that “beyond the general acclaim, the level of commercialisation of the vote was an eyesore to our democracy...condemned the widespread vote-buying by agents of the candidates.” Furthermore, they maintained that:

Indeed, what happened in Anambra was a depressing commentary on the desperation of politicians to capture power by hook or crook. It was also a sad annotation to the willingness of the electorate to mortgage their future to filthy lucre. Voters who sell their votes do not have any moral right to expect good stewardship from those who purchase their mandates. Even more lamentable was the fact that the buying and selling of votes took place in the full glare of security men and election officials. It was simply a bazaar in which the election officials and security agencies were undoubtedly complicit (Odalonu & Ogu, 2022, p. 7).

However, despite the deteriorated security threat in Anambra State in 2021, upon which the gubernatorial election was conducted under high-security pressure, vote-buying never ceased to resurface amid the heavy security presence in 2021, even in an outrageous manner as voters were directly bought over with a certain price as against their preferred candidates. For instance, it was observed that there was an intense vote-buying in the Polling Units 010 and 011, Umunnachi II Ward, Dunukofia local government area of the state, where party agents allegedly the three leading political parties of the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA), the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and the All Progressives Congress (APC) were allegedly luring voters with N6,000 to N10,000 to vote for their candidates (Sahara Reporters, 2021). It was also reported that while APGA was initially offering the sum of N3,000, PDP came up with the sum of N5,000 to lead the bid. Thus, APGA having discovered the increase by the PDP, therefore, increased its bid to N10 000 to remain in the lead (Sahara Reporters, 2021). In the same vein, the APC is reportedly not left behind in the jostle for voters, as they also offered money between the range of N5,000 to N6,000. Therefore, this development according to the report automatically increased the initial low turnout of the voters just at the mere hearing of the parties’ splashing of money on the voters in the election, thus, increasing the number of voters in the queue. Similarly, other polling units in other local government areas were no exception in this regard, as one Mrs Adora at a Polling Unit at Awka South local government area was paid the sum of N2,500 after casting her vote, though it was, however, unclear which of political parties paid such an amount. In light of the above narratives, it is obvious that rigging and vote-buying are no longer new in Anambra State, but have already been internalised in the political culture of the state.

Consequently, the election is conventional and the most acceptable means of changing leadership in any given political system on one hand. The major pillars of democratic governance and the foundation of political activities ensuring political representation, facilitating accountability, and legitimising access to state power, have been marred by corruption, fraud, irregularities and illegalities in the form of vote-buying in Nigeria (Fjelde & Höglund, 2016; Uwa & Emeka, 2022). Therefore, in specific terms, the history of election



politics in Nigeria has relatively become the history of deadly elections (Angerbrandt, 2018), vote-buying and violence (Bratton, 2008), and prebendal politics of the belly or *stomach infrastructure*, with contentious roles of primary electoral institutions: electoral bodies, political parties, security agencies, and the courts (Obiagu, Udeji-Okpalaku & Udeh, 2021, p. 9). Election manipulation, rigging and vote-buying have remained dominant features of Nigeria's electoral process, which often time, not only resulted in violent bloodshed but also marred the credibility of the elections (Obiagu, Udeji-Okpalaku and Udeh, 2021). Thus, often leading to the cancellation of ongoing elections and the declaration of inconclusive elections by the INEC. Above all, it undermines the integrity of the legal and legitimate process of choosing and changing leadership in political society. In view of the above, the study seeks to interrogate vote-buying vis-à-vis the outcome of the 2021 Anambra State gubernatorial election.

METHODOLOGY

This study is quantitatively based research. Sequel to the above, we adopted the documentary method of data collection, which is capable of providing us with relevant documented and written materials already in existence even though they were not produced precisely for the direct use of this study. To this end, we sourced data from documented materials such as books, book chapters, journal articles, official documents, newspapers, magazines, internet materials and unpublished papers.

Similarly, we also adopted content analysis for the purpose of analysing the documented materials generated through secondary sources of data collection. Accordingly, Udeh et al. (2021), argued that content analysis is a structured technique for valid analysis of documents in which the researchers first construct a set of mutually exclusive and exhaustive categories that can be used to analyse documents, and then record the frequency with which each of these categories is observed in the documents studied. Furthermore, content analysis is a research technique for objectivity, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication, thus very apt for this study.

Theoretical architecture

This study leveraged the prepositions of the Marxian theory of Post-colonial state propounded by Hamza Alavi's 1972 as its analytical blueprint of explanting how vote-buying influenced the outcome of the 2021 gubernatorial election in Anambra State vis-à-vis democratic governance in the State. The theory gained its inundated popularity through the works of emerging political-economic scholars—Ake (1981), and Idode (1989), amongst others (Udeh *et al.*, 2021). The following are the major assumptions of the theory, according to John Soul, these include amongst the following:

- The post-colonial African state was created by the metropolitan bourgeoisie, and because of that, it needed an administrative apparatus it could control. While the local administrative state is in turn controlled by the indigenous population.
- The post-colonial state has a specific role in promoting and manipulating indigenous policies (politics and economics).



- In post-colonial societies, political hegemony (leaders) must be maintained by the African state once it assumes political power (Udehet *al.*, 2021, p. 233).

The theory explained audibly that a post-colonial state like Africa in general and Nigeria, in particular, appears as the most precious value desirable to possess due to the weak nature of its members to politics, this, therefore, resulted in the state capture by the powerful individuals. With an obvious impression that *access to state power is the quickest and easiest means for family and friends' patronage in one hand; and also access to state power is seen as an instrument of inflicting pain, amassing wealth and survival strategy*, particularly to the state actors who control the state power on the other hand (Udeh *et al.*, 2021).

Therefore, the situation appears not only so worrisome but also arouses a question like “Why are leaders in most third world countries like Nigeria that are supposed to utilise their leadership positions to address the pressing needs of the citizens through the introduction and implementation of policies and programmes geared towards national development use their leadership positions for selfish, friend and family patronage? The answer to the above question may not be far-fetched, and is found within the ambit of the prepositions of the theory, which was misconstrued as ‘access to state power, the quickest means of amassing wealth and domination’ (Mbah & Obiagu, 2019). Furthermore, Ake argued that the contemporary African states are predominated by elements of dominant class, who sees its acceptance to the dominant political class as an opportunity of exhibiting its individualistic corrupt character, as against the primary purpose of leadership which entails dedication and selfless service, and service delivery to the people in society who confidently conferred their supports through a free, fair, transparent and credible elections (Udeh *et al.*, 2021).

In acceptance to the assumptions of the theory, scholars within the viewpoints of consequences of bad leadership argued that no meaningful development can thrive under such corrupt and hostile circumstances due to bad leadership and governance, instead, may create more social vices and social unrest, leadership distrust, insecurity, untold hardship, unemployment, kidnapping and banditry in the society as currently witnessed in Anambra State.

The application of theory

First and foremost, leadership is a pivotal and an integral unit in the society working together to ensure equilibrium and stability through introduction and implementation of policies and programmes that will engender and promote peace, unity and development in the society. It also entails envisioning a desirable future, promoting a clear purpose or mission, supportive values and intelligent strategies, empowering and engaging all those concerned for the purpose of national development in the society. Failure in this direction leads to corruption, embezzlement, abandonment of projects, amongst others. It is also observed that the success, survival, and progress of any business, organisation or state depends largely on good leadership of such State or establishment, through very credible, transparent, fair and free elections. Similarly, the failure, collapse and retrogression of a business, organisation or state also depend largely on bad leadership who may be wrongly selected. Upon this, election is conventionally conceived as the legal and legitimate avenue through which leadership of people's choice emerges.



Therefore, the prevalence of vote-buying in Anambra State since the return to democracy in 1999 is an illegitimate means of selecting leadership, particularly in the 2021 gubernatorial election in the State appears worrisome. As its outcome led to the victorious emergence of Prof. Charles Soludo of the ruling party—APGA, through a highly mutilated electoral process of vote-buying, which is capable of undermining democratic governance in the state. Again, its outcome is not only an indicator of state capture, as some state actors and the ruling party want to permanently remain in power, but also a sign of leadership failure and possible means of installing bad leadership who are only interested in capturing state power for personal, friends and family interest. Also, they see state power as the quickest, and instrument of amassing wealth and survival strategy through undue domination of the people on the other hand. This therefore undermined democratic governance through abandonment of projects, corruption, untold hardship, unemployment, kidnapping and banditry, and overall social unrest in Anambra State in the present administration of Charles Chukwuma Soludo.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Vote-buying and the outcome of the 2021 gubernatorial election in Anambra State

Obviously, vote-buying, which is synonymous with voters' inducement, electoral treating, vote-trading, vote-selling, and money exchange hand politics, amongst others is age long phenomenon, but a most recent development in most third world countries, with particular reference to Africa in general and Nigeria in particular (Nkwede, Nweke, Moliki, & Dauda, 2018), as its wave inundated in the recent time. The aforementioned concept which denotes the exchange of electoral rights for monetary value, or any form of incentives has become a viral reoccurring or prominent practice in most countries' electoral systems. It could further be viewed according to Matenga (2016); and Beetseh and Akpoo (2015) as the act in which votes are purchased for an economic exchange or contract or auction through which voters dispose their votes to the highest bidder during an election period. More so, vote-buying could be seen as an unethical culture of desperate politicians financially inducing the citizens or electorates/voters for the purpose of achieving their political aims/objectives (Nkwede *et al.*, 2018). Vote-buying in a broad context includes the act of clientelism through which electorates/voters support a particular candidate based on the ability of such candidate to provide to the electorates the much needed immediate needs or satisfactions and futuristic, which in most cases remained unrealistic (Finan & Schchter, 2012) (cited in Nkwede *et al.*, 2018). According to the above statement, it is obvious to infer that the unethical act of vote-buying often involves two distinct parties of voters/electorates and candidates who share similar philosophies or ideologies in non-binding agreements. In agreement with the above, Finan and Schchter (2012, p. 867) argued that the act often involves two parties that are in non-binding agreement, "that is, those who sell their franchise for monetary or other non-monetary values on the one hand, and those who buy them in the hope of regaining their investments when they get into power on the other". In other words, Ubi (2020) contends that in the process of vote-buying dealings, "voters are usually offered money, commodities (such as food or clothing) or jobs".

Consequently, there are some obvious factors responsible for this unethical act of vote-buying in every political system, some of such factors according to Nkwede *et al.* (2018, p. 98) include amongst the following such as "poverty, political corruption, compromised



electoral management body (EMB), militarised politics, nature and character of Nigerian politics, lack of trust and confidence in the electoral process, perceived election rigging, and ignorance or illiteracy”. This is the prevailing situation in most third-world nations in general, with particular reference to Africa, in which Nigeria is no exception in such practice due to the compromised nature of its political system. In furtherance, Anambra State appears the obvious epicentre of this unethical and unholy act of vote-buying since the return to democratic rule in Nigeria in 1999, as documented evidence awash proving inundated testimonies of the uncontrollable nature of the situation in the State, with particular reference to 2021 gubernatorial election in Anambra State. For instance, vote-buying in the 2021 gubernatorial election appeared as a major blight in Anambra State. This is so due to its overwhelming influence in determining the outcome of the just concluded State’s governorship election in 2021. This unholy practice emerged in two different forms according to an eyewitness; *cash for vote* and *vote for cash* (Olaniyi, 2022, p. 389), which is also known as ‘prepaid’ and ‘post-paid’. He further expressed that:

Under the prepaid or cash-for-vote strategy, prospective voters are given some money before the election with the trust that the receivers will deliver on their promise...the voting pattern is monitored by agents of the giver. This pattern of contract is based on hope and trust. The problem with this strategy is that there is a limitation to the amount of punishment the money giver can muster in the event of a breach of contract by the receiver (Olaniyi, 2022, p. 389).

Furthermore, in contrast to the aforementioned form—the prepaid approach, it was argued that:

The post-paid method involves giving money only after voting is done. Under this approach, money is not given until it is proven that the voter actually voted for the party of the patron. It is always preceded by a gentlemen’s agreement between the patron and the client. To show evidence, the voter either stylishly displays a thumb-printed ballot paper for party agents to see or uses a smartphone to take a photo of the ballot paper after thumb-printing, which will be presented to collect an agreed amount at designated places located within the vicinity of the polling station or inside the house of the party leader. Another expression for the postpaid option is ‘see and buy’ meaning paying for what you have verified. Here, evidence of the thumb-printed ballot paper must be seen before payment is made to the voter (Olaniyi, 2022, p. 389).

Unfortunately, even though the 2021 governorship election in Anambra State was conducted under highly deteriorated security threat in an unanticipated manner by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), which therefore marred the political activities, more especially the seasonal political parties’ campaigns and the other arousing interest of election period in the State due to fear of attacks by the IPOB (Odalonu, & Ogu, 2022). Coupled with the prevailing unconstitutional one-week declaration of sit-at-home; and the earlier declaration of cancellation of the election by the IPOB; this which therefore prompted the federal government to deploy about 34,587 police personnel and thousands of other security agents (Yusuf & Onyeji, 2021). Despite this, the aforementioned forms of vote-buying methods were all employed during the 2021 gubernatorial election in Anambra State; these occurred obviously during the voting exercise on November 6 2021, particularly at Bridge Head II Ward, Polling Unit 007, Ugborimili Primary School III, where a party agent was detected in the viral video offering N5,000 to some voters (Yusuf & Onyeji, 2021). Similarly, it was also observed that the same was detected in Fegge 1 Ward, Polling Unit 004, Agulu Hall II, where



an All Progressive Congress (APC) party agent was captured offering the sum of N7,000 for voters who voted for the party and its candidate (Yusuf & Onyeji, 2021), this according to eyewitness was done even in the presence of the security personnel who were deployed and charged with the primary responsibility to maintained peace and order during electoral exercise. Furthermore, the vote-buying exercise during the 2021 gubernatorial election in Anambra State was never limited to Onitsha South LGAs only as seen above but was the order of the day during such electoral exercise in the State. For instance, other local government areas like Oyi and Aguata were no exception in this regard, as it was observed that Awkuzu 1 Ward, Polling Unit 002, Ama Akpu Village Square ii where agents of APGA, APC and PDP were in open battle for buying of votes with the highest bidder pooling more votes in this area. Again, also Aguata local government area, particularly Ekwulobia 1 Ward, Polling Unit 009, Umezennani Hall ii where APC pooled the highest bid with the sum of N10,000 for each vote cast in favour of the party; and PDP took a slight lead in the Polling Unit 031, Okpo Village Hall ii with N8,000, as against N6,000 of the ruling party--APGA (Olaniyi, 2022).

These, therefore, undermined the democratic process of validly electing true and people-oriented leaders into various political positions in general, as this is not limited to the governorship election only, but to other segments of Presidential, National Assembly members, and even to the local government elections in the various States of Federation. It is therefore condemnable due to its adverse effect in mutilating the processes of electing the right leadership into various leadership positions in the country in general, and other States such as Anambra and Ekiti in particular, as such practices remained predominant. Upon this, a coalition of over 70 civil society organisations, under the auspices of Nigeria Civil Society Organisation, after the Anambra State gubernatorial election on 6th November 2021 condemned the menace of vote-buying and vote-selling that characterised the just concluded gubernatorial election as obviously witnessed (Yusuf & Onyeji, 2021). This therefore not only influenced the credibility of the election on one hand, but also mutilated the outcome of the election in favour of a particular party which eventually won the election on the other hand.

Historical overview and manifestation of vote-buying in Nigerian political system

Rigging, vote-buying and electoral malpractices of all sorts are traceable to the historical background of the 1953 election in Nigeria, through which Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe was denied of his mandate as winner of house member in the western region of Nigeria. This therefore has become an integral part of the Nigerian political system in the recent time in diverse dimensions. For instance, Ezeador and Ezeani (2021, p. 35) argued that the act of vote-buying takes place in multidimensional stages in the Nigerian electoral circle, which includes amongst the following stages of “during voter registration, the nomination period, campaigning and election day”. But, appears more predominant during the Election Day, particularly shortly before or during the voting exercise (Ubi, 2020). He further posited as follows: “Like a typical market place, the politicians, political parties, and party agents are the vote buyers while prospective voters are the sellers. The commodity on sale is the vote to be cast while the medium of exchange could be monetary and non-monetary items such as bags of rice and other valuables” (Ubi, 2020, p. 32). In this scenario, it is the degree of desperation of the politicians or party stakeholders to win or deliver his/her wards or locality that determines the vote-buying market force or the value or price worth of the votes (Ezeador & Ezeani, 2021).



Ezeador and Ezeani (2021) argued that aside the very fact that money and other valuables could be used to effectuate vote-buying in the corrupt political system. However, he further maintained that political actors have devised two other approaches of vote-buying techniques for the purpose of achieving their political vested interest during the election. These include *cash-for-vote approach*; this automatically involves either immediate payment for the service rendered or promising the prospective voters/electorates some agreed amount of money before casting his/her votes (Adigun, 2019). But the buyers (party agent) in assurance often demand evidence of ownership of a voter's card, and an assurance that the voter will definitely vote for his/her (agent's party) before the payment could be made. The payment as stated above is usually done prior to the casting of the vote mainly within proximity of the polling unit or a distance away from it. An empirical evidence of this was exhibited during the gubernatorial election in Ondo State in 2020, obviously the wife of the incumbent governor—first lady as formerly addressed was captured distributing and sharing wrappers and other gift items to the women in the market two days prior to the election day (Ezeador & Ezeani, 2021). This type or approach of vote-buying is generally known as the prepaid vote-buying technique due to its unique nature of paying in advance.

Similarly, the second approach or technique of vote-buying is not completely different from the first approach, but direct opposite as it often operated in the nature of *vote for cash*, meaning that the voters are been paid or rewarded with certain agreed amount of money or gift items or materials after h/she must have performed the duty with valid evidence of having voted for the candidate or the party that contacted him/her (Ubi, 2020). This approach is usually prevalent or done on the day of the election, usually during the election exercise. This approach appears highly technical as voters in most cases are rewarded in confidence without doing the work for which they are been paid. Thus, to ensure total compliance, Ezeador and Ezeani (2021) enumerated several possible ways the buyers (party agents) of votes could ensure compliance on the part of the voters these include amongst others; firstly, the voter be sensible enough to display the ballot paper where he/she thumb printed in favour of the party, for the confirmation of the party agent who is strategically standing by close to the polling unit cubicle. Secondly, the voters are expected to snap their thumb-printed ballot papers as evidence; thereafter, he/she could be rewarded with the agreed deal in cash or in kind either immediately or at the end of the voting exercises (Ezeador & Ezeani, 2021), often time, the rewards or payments are usually within the vicinity of polling unit or at an agreed venue.

Pitiably, this unholy act of vote-buying has, therefore, become a predominant feature in the Nigerian political system both in parties' congresses and in the general elections, particularly in recent times. In agreement with the above, it was recently observed with example that:

During the 2017 gubernatorial election held in Anambra state, the rate of vote trading was massive. The two ruling political parties APC and PDP were accused of giving out cash from N5, 000.00 to N10, 000.00 for votes in several polling units. Similarly in the 2019 general elections also held in Nigeria, it was observed that members of APGA, APC and the PDP were giving money to the voters at most polling stations across Anambra, Imo, Rivers, Enugu, Ibadan and Lagos states. In Anambra state precisely, some polling stations in Idemili North and South local government areas were giving out N5,000 to N10,000 voters each. Many law-abiding citizens and observers condemned the brazen incidences of vote buying as an eyesore to democracy (Ezeador & Ezeani, 2021, p. 36).



Consequently, this unholy act of vote-buying seemingly has the capacity to mutilate the democratic process in Nigeria by obstructing and hampering the civic rights of the law-abiding citizens of the country to freely choose or decide who governs them via election on one hand and also may undermine an expected democratic dividend, as people-oriented leaders may not be given the opportunity to contest favourably due to lack of finance on the other hand.

Furthermore, the widespread vote-buying was also observed in 2018 during the Ekiti State gubernatorial election, as empirically documented by the Punch Newspaper reporters who during the election observed such an unholy act by an APC party agent who offered retired teacher money to vote for the party (Ubi, 2020). Accordingly, the retired teacher who pleaded anonymity revealed as follows:

I was offered five thousand naira to vote for the party (APC) but I rejected it. I am a 73-year-old retired teacher. I cannot allow the future of my children to be bought by money bags. I don't know how we descended to this level when people brazenly offer money to people to secure their votes. It was not like this in the past. Will our votes count with this problem? (Ubi, 2020, p. 28).

However, both two contending parties—APC and PDP were brutally accused of openly engaging in the unethical act of vote-buying with N3,000 to N5,000 Naira during the just concluded gubernatorial election in the State. This however, influenced the outcome of the result, as Kayode Fayemi of APC polled a total of 197,459 votes (winner), against Kolapo Olusola who scored 178,114 votes as the second highest during the election (Ezeador & Ezeani, 2021) amidst the unholy act of vote-buying. This consequently turned the Nigerian political and election results into “highest bidder wins”. But, fundamental questions are, if this unholy act continues in the Nigerian political and electoral process, will the winners be willing to work for the general public having spent such a huge amount of money in the process? Secondly, will he not first concentrate on recovering all he spent with profit at the expense of the general public? Thus, this political impunity is becoming a widely accepted norm in the Nigerian political system with political parties struggling to edge each other in the amount to pay to voters during any election both at the national state and local level.

Consequently, this is undermining the Nigerian political system, as an election which is conventionally considered the true process of choosing who governs the people has therefore become a social contract between the candidates and the constituents who voted in the candidates with a common belief that they will manipulate the system/policies through their voted candidates. This unholy act of vote-buying, therefore, deters and discourages others who may be aspiring for any political position at different levels, because the process of vote-buying suggests money politics, rather than an idealistic and experience-oriented process. Supporting the above, Ezeador and Ezeani (2021, p. 37) argued that “there are good numbers of Nigerians who are willing and have the experience and passion to move the country forward, but those desperate and corrupt leaders who are at the corridor of power will never give such men of integrity the chance or privilege to occupy the seat”. They further contend with the citation of an ugly incident that took place in Rivers State prior to and after the 2019 general elections, which consequently claimed people’s lives in order to acquire and remain in power by candidates of the ruling and major opposition party against the choice and will of the people. Also, this is at the expense of the suffering, pain, poverty, and unemployment of the general public (Olaniyi, 2022).



Furthermore, such unholy act has in one way or another been practised in all the states of the federation of Nigeria. For instance, it was observed that Imo is one of the states in Nigeria where this act prevails, as a prominent and well-known politician was alleged pointed a gun at an electoral officer compelling him to announce him (the incumbent) the winner of the election (Ezeador & Ezeani, 2021). This obviously indicates that when such a person gets in there he would use his leadership position against the people because he was not validly voted for by the people in on hand, and also could use the state as a personal empire and for family patronage on the other hand. Speaking from the consequent viewpoint, this act also has the capacity to unconstitutionally increase the cost of elections, thus inhibiting willing contestants with little financial capacity and promoting corruption in the political system in the end. This is so because when victory is purchased as against fairly and transparently victory, its adverse implication manifests in the state capture, which might be unhealthy and unproductive to society. Similarly, it will lead to compromising of electoral credibility, legitimacy and integrity, as “winners are often the highest bidders and not necessarily the most popular or credible constants” (Ubi, 2020, p. 26). Also, vote buying discourages the general public or the electorate from losing hope and confidence in coming out en masse to vote for candidates of their right choice, as this was obviously witnessed in the 2019 general elections; because of the common belief that their votes will not be counted due to the obvious corrupt system (Ezeador & Ezeani, 2021).

In a similar vein, the unholy act of vote-buying has the capacity and tendency to entrench bad governance. In consonance with the aforementioned Ezeador and Ezeani (2021, p. 37) argued that:

When these politicians give out their resources to the voters in a bid to vote for them, when they win and get to their offices they will prefer to recover back the money they wasted during the election before they could begin to think about what they will do for the country. That is why in Nigeria today, there are so many abandoned road projects serving as death traps, high rates of poverty and hunger, political infighting, high death rate due to hardship and insurgency, high rate of unemployment which has given rise to kidnapping, internet fraud, illegal migration and women trafficking.

The above are the obvious adverse implication of vote-buying in a society where such acts prevail as widely accepted norms.

Historical background of Anambra State elections, 1999-2023

Obviously, elections in Anambra State which are generally considered as the legal and legitimate process of choosing the right leadership who represents or governs the people at various levels of government have been observed to be highly characterised by malpractices such as rigging and vote buying, amongst others since the return to the democratic rule in 1999 (Uwa & Emeka, 2022). This is so as the case of Anambra State has not only remained obviously worrisome, but puzzled since the dawn of democracy in 1999. As the state has empirically witnessed inundated vote-buying and rigging since 1999, and also the only state of the federation that has paraded five governors under controversial circumstances in the political dispensation of 1999-2007 (Gabriel, 2013) (cited in Uwa.& Emeka, 2022). According to Gabriel (2013, p. 1) “the following is the chronicle of its governors ranging from Chinweoke Mbadinuju as the first governor elected from 1999-2003”. Thereafter, there was an obvious diplomatic election malpractices in form of rigging and buying of the



gubernatorial election in 2003, that saw through the victorious emergence of Dr Chris Ngige “as the governor of the state from 2003 to 2006 on the same platform of PDP” (Ubi, 2020). However, he was incredibly removed from the office as the governor by the Court of Appeal in Enugu on March 2006 on the ground that the electoral victory that brought him into office was marred by rigged (Ubi, 2020). This therefore upheld Mr. Peter Obi of All Progressive Grand Alliance, APGA as the legitimate winner of the 2003 governorship, however, he was also edged out of the office by opposing faction of the Anambra State House of Assembly and was replaced by his Deputy, Virginia Etiaba on the 2nd November, 2006 (Gabriel, 2013). However, the situation became some worth dramatic, as his (Mr. Peter Obi) removal was nullified and re-installed by the Court of Appeal on the 9th February, 2007 (Gabriel, 2013). Thereafter, State had another governorship election on the 14th April, 2007 upon which Andy Uba, the candidate of the ruling PDP was illegally declared winner of the 2007 gubernatorial election, but was later removed by the Supreme Court of Nigeria on the ground of illegality on the 14th June, 2007 (Gabriel, 2013).

Therefore, the political epoch in the State of Anambra has remained the most dramatic one, particularly since the return to democratic rule in Nigeria, with particular reference to 2003 when Dr. Chris Ngige of the PDP became governor of the state on the vested interest and arrangement of the king makers (political godfather) of the state, upon which carnage and destruction became the order of the day (Ubi, 2020). During this period, the political destiny of Anambra State was obviously condensed to personal dispute between two powerful individuals of Chris Ngige and Chris Uba who allegedly sponsored Chris Ngige. Obviously, their political rift was traceable to the perceived breach of contract sworn before Okija shrine, the state could not effectively functioned until they were persuaded to bandage their swords (Gabriel, 2013). However, he was removed by Appeal Court in Enugu on the 17th March, 2006 as the governors of the state on the ground of irregularity barely after a year in the office, and upheld Mr. Peter Obi as the true winner of the election. In the same vein, Obi was removed from office after seven months in the office i.e. on the 3rd November, 2006 via PDP dominated House of Assembly on the ground of their internal rifts between them. Therefore, after the removal of Mr. Obi, another struggle begun as to who to fill the vacuum between Mrs. Dame Virginia Etiaba, the Deputy Governor and Mr. Mike Balonwu, the speaker of the House of Assembly, which finally went in favour of the Deputy Governor (Mrs. Dame Virginia Etiaba) through Federal High court ruling on the 3rd November 2006 (Gabriel, 2013). Obi, therefore regained his mandate through the Supreme Court’s nullification of his removal on the 9th of February 2007. Prior to the Supreme Court ruling, his party—APGA had before then fielded Etiaba as the governorship candidate for the 2007 governorship election, surprisingly his (Obi) tenure, therefore, became extended till 2010 through a court ruling (Ubi, 2020). In 2010, Obi contested again and won for a second tenure, which was thus plagued by a series of election petitions and court actions, not surprisingly he scared through and completed his second tenure in 2014. After this another political year began with the emergence of Willie Obiano of APGA, whose victory was characterised by electoral malpractices, rigging, and vote-buying, amongst others. This therefore continued even during the 2018 governorship election that saw through his second tenure till 2021 that brought Prof. Charles Soludo into power through an obvious degree of electoral irregularities, such as thugry, rigging, and vote-buying, amongst other things by the dominant political parties of APGA, APC and PDP.



CONCLUSION

Generally, vote-buying which encompasses direct or indirect, overt or covert buying of votes with money or other material incentives during the election has remained a prevailing political culture in the Nigerian political system, with particular reference to Anambra State elections, which are often contested amid the heavy influence of direct and overt exchange of vote for money. Therefore, its intensity in recent times is alarming, as it obviously influenced the general outcome in the just concluded 2021 gubernatorial election in the state. Consequently, this was not only a breeding ground for mediocrity and bad leadership in various leadership positions, as the process perhaps induced people to vote against conscience, merit and the right choice of candidates on one hand, and also undermined democratic principles and dividends on the other hand.

Therefore, the study was able to validate our hypothesis that:

- Vote-buying influenced the outcome of the 2021 gubernatorial election in Anambra State

In relation to the findings of the study, it recommends amongst other things the:

- Proper implementation and commitment to the Electoral Act 2010 (Amendment) Bill, which therefore specified the limit amount sponsors, political parties and candidates, can spend during electioneering, to avoid excessive spending that may mar democratic delivery and dividends.

REFERENCES

- Adigun, O. W. (2019). Vote buying: Examining the manifestations, motivation, ad effects of an merging dimension of election rigging in Nigeria (2015-2019). *Canadian Social Science*, 15(11), 20-28.
- Agiri, E. J. & Morka, B. C. (2022). X-ray of Ekiti State governorship election in Nigeria, 2022. *African Journal of Humanities and Contemporary Education Research* 5(1); 147-156.
- Chukwuma, A. N. & Okpala, A. B. (2018). Voter turnout and the quest for free and fair elections in Nigeria: A study of 2017 Anambra gubernatorial election. *Journal of the Social Sciences and Humanities*, 3(3), 70-87.
- Ejembi, R. (The Sun, January 29, 2019). Voting buying, leading risk factor–CLEEN Foundation. Retrieved from: [https:// www.sunnewsonline.com/2019-voting-buying-leading-riskfactor-cleen-foundation/](https://www.sunnewsonline.com/2019-voting-buying-leading-riskfactor-cleen-foundation/) On 14th October, 2022.
- Ezeador, C. N. & Ezeani, K. O. (2021). Philosophical reflection on the dangers of vote-buying to Niigeria’s democracy. *Nnamdi Azikiwe Journal of Philosophy*, 12(2); 31-40.
- Finan, F. & Schechter, L. (2012). Vote-buying and reciprocity. *Econometrica*, 80(2), 863-881.
- Fjelde, H. & Höglund, K. (2016). Electoral institutions and electoral violence in sub-Saharan Africa. *British Journal of Political Science*, 46(2), 297-320.



- Gabriel, C. (Vanguard News, 16th March, 2013). Anambra elections: The past, present and future. Retrieved from: <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2013/03/anambra-elections-the-past-present-and-future/> on 19th July, 2023.
- Mares, I. & Young, L.E. (2016). The core voter's curse: Coercion and clientelism in Hungarian elections. Retrieved from: <https://isabelamares.files.wordpress.com> on 13th October, 2022.
- Matenga, G. (2016). *Cash for votes: political legitimacy in Nigeria*. Retrieved from: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/gram-matenga/cash-for-votes-political-legitimacy-in-nigeria> On 14th October, 2022.
- Mbah, P. O. & Obiagu, U. C. (2019). The quest for community development in Nigeria: interrogating the utility of fourth-tier system of government in Imo Stat. *International Journal of Public Administration* 1-12.
- Nkwede, J. O., Nweke, K., Moliki, A. O. & Dauda, K. O. (2018). Elections and vote-buying in Nigeria: A study of 2018 gubernatorial election in Ekiti State. *Calabar Journal of Politics and Administration*, 5(1); 94-115.
- Nwankwo, C. F. (2018). Vote buying in the 2018 governorship election in Ekiti State, Nigeria. *Open Political Science*, 1(1), 93-97.
- Obiagu, U. C., Udeji-Okpalaku, C. O. & Udeh, C. O. (2021). The undermining consequences of inconclusive elections on democratic consolidation in Africa: Interrogating Nigerian elections, 2011-2019. *African Journal of Democracy and Election Research*, 1(2), 7-40.
- Odalonu, B. H. & Ogu, H. N. (2022). Voting behaviour and pattern of voting in 2021 gubernatorial election in Anambra State, Nigeria. *African Journal of Humanities and Contemporary Education Research* 4(1); 1-17.
- Olaito, Y. (2018). Nigerian politicians, electorate and vote-buying. Retrieved from: <https://www.thccable.ng/nigerianpoliticians-electorate-vote-buyin/> on 13th October, 2022.
- Olaniyi, A. (2020). Election sophistication and the changing contours of vote buying in Nigeria's 2019 general elections. *The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs*, 109(4); 386-395.
- Olokor, F. (Punch News 13 November, 2021). We witnessed vote-buying in Anambra, perpetrators deserve arrest, prosecution-Situation Room. Retrieved from: <https://punchng.com/we-witnessed-vote-buying-in-anambra-perpetrators-deserve-arrest-prosecution-situation-room/> on 14th October, 2022.
- Onohajide, F. O. (2018). Practical and perils of vote buying in Nigeria's recent elections. Retrieved from: <https://www.accord.org.2a/conflicts-trends/practice-and-peril-of-vote-buying-in-nigeria-recent-elections/> on 13th October, 2022.
- Sahara Reporters (November 6, 2021). Anambra election: Political parties raise vote-buying to N10, 000 per voter. Retrieved from: <https://saharareporters.com/2021/11/06/anambra-election-political-parties-raise-vote-buying-n10000-voter> On 14th October, 2022.
- Udeh, C. O., Eyikorogha, Q, Ekoyo, P. N., & Obiagu, U. C. (2021). Banditry-herdsmen activities in Nigeria and national development. *Covenant University Journal of Politics and International Affairs*, 9(2), 3732-3752.
- Udeh, C. O., Eyikorogha, Q, Ekoyo, P. N., Madu, C. P. & Oguwuike, I. F. (2021). Character of leadership and national development in contemporary Nigerian society. *FUWukari Journal of Politics and Development*, 5(1), 231-244.



- Uwa, O. G.& Emeka, I. C. (2022). Vote-buying, voting behavior and democratic consolidation in Nigeria. *International Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Science*, 3(3), 64-75.
- Vanguard (November 19, 2017). Anambra election: Consortium decries vote-buying. Retrieved from: <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2017/11/anambra-election-consortium-decries-vote-buying/> on 14th October, 2022.
- Vanguard (November 30, 2017). Anambra poll and the evil of vote-buying. Retrieved from: <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2017/11/anambra-poll-evil-vote-buying/> on 14th October, 2022.