

## **Vote Buying as Obstacle to Free and Fair Election: A Study of the Role of Independent National Electoral Commission in the 2017 Gubernatorial Election in Anambra State**

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### **Abstract**

*The conduct of elections in Nigeria since return to democracy by the electoral umpires and democratic governments are being negated by several factors which undermine the attainment of free and fair elections. This study interrogated the Independent National Electoral Commission's cosmetic approach to vote buying and how it contributed to the failure to achieve free and fair election in the 2017 gubernatorial election in Anambra State. The study adopted descriptive survey research design and utilized questionnaire as the instrument of data collection. 400 respondents were interviewed using the well-structured 5-point scale questionnaire. Collected data were presented using frequency tables and percentages while chi-square test was used for data analysis. The outcome of the study indicated that the position assumed by the electoral umpire vis-à-vis vote buying and voter's inducement contributed significantly to her inability to achieve their major goal in the 2017 gubernatorial election in Anambra State which was ultimately, a free and fair election.*

**Keywords:** Democracy, Free and Fair Election, INEC, Money Politics, Vote-buying.

### **Introduction**

Election is one of the basic factors that sustains and promotes democracy. It serves as a litmus test through which the success or failure of a democratic nation is measured. It avails the electorate an opportunity to take part in governance, thus, electing the leader of their choice. Separation of power, rule of law, judicial independence which are the basic necessities of a true democracy are also strengthened and sustained through periodic free and fair election. Democracy which is adjudged to be the best form of Government all over the world is also being constantly assaulted in Nigeria due to the phenomenon of vote buying (Ovwasa, 2014), this, negates the principle of free and fair election and consequently the growth of democracy. Although Nigeria returned to democratic governance in the Fourth Republic on May 29<sup>th</sup> 1999, the dividends of democracy to the people are very scanty. This is because the concept and practice of democracy appears to be at variance in Nigeria (Nwankwo, Okafor and Asuoha, 2017).

Conducting free and fair elections in Nigeria since our return to democracy by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and democratic government is being negated by several factors such as multiple registration of voters, manipulation of electoral rules, thuggery, ballot snatching and stuffing, violence and vote buying and these factors limit the existence of free and fair election. It is important to note that political parties have a great role to play in a competitive environment in ensuring a free and fair election, thus, when they resort to vote buying political officers who do not represent the interest of the electorate are elected into position of authority where they authoritatively decide who gets what, when and how to the detriment of the electorate. Money seems to have taken the centre stage in the political process in most African countries and Nigeria is not an exception, vote buying is now playing an increasing critical role to such an extent that the word "vote buying" with a pejorative connotation, have crept into the country's political

lexicon (Davies, 2006). This has led to election not being free and fair and the electorate being induced to vote in candidates they would not have voted for in a normal contesting scenario, bad policies are often times been implemented and basic democratic dividends like good and accessible roads, good hospitals, water supply, quality education and employment opportunities are farfetched. The Nigerian Electoral Act stipulates the extent to which candidate's political interest can be financed but the application of this Act is quite a mirage. While the Independent National Electoral Commission is almost always faced with the challenges of having some of their officials induced financially to manipulate and falsify election results; the commission had most unfortunately lamented over their lack of absolute powers to enforce electoral laws as well as swiftly prosecute electoral offenders in Nigeria (Okwuadimma and Biereenu-Nnabugwu, 2021: 71).

Political aspirants source funds from any available source and spend lavishly during political campaigns and elections and this promotes vote buying (Sakariyau, Aliu and Adamu, 2015). Though, money is needed for democracy to thrive because much of its poll activity simply could not take place without it. Money cannot be kept aside in the political process; Campaigns cost money, as political office aspirants need funds to properly remunerate their staff. Fox (1994) pointed out that money is needed to print brochures, pamphlets, radio and television adverts and renting space for campaign office. Actually, free and fair election has been marred by the phenomenon of vote buying thus; vitiating the good qualities of democracy in the country, the destructive power of vote buying has been fingered as one of the factors that undermine good governance in Nigeria.

Nonetheless, when explaining its costs and benefits it is important to point out that the misuse of money in politics can create some major problems for a government administration. Nigeria has a history of poor governance characterized by corruption, social injustice and political instability and this is unarguably caused by poor electoral system because the defective system practiced in the country cannot guarantee true dividends of democracy (Babayo and Mohammed, 2018). It is discovered and argued that money in Nigerian politics being an acceptable means of electoral financing, shifted to vote buying in the 1960s during the second republic and became more pervasive in 1999. However, some decades of military rule distorted democratic social values and undermined democratic institutions; corruption has become pervasive in all cycle of public and private lives. It is pertinent to note that it is not in any way suggested that the use of money by political Parties, person or group of persons in politics has inherent corruption influence (Davies, 2006). The truth is that money is needed for sundry services and logistics such as mobilisation for political campaigns and rallies, printing of posters and manifestoes, production of party emblems and other symbols, etc. (Ovwasa, 2013). However, the noticeable negative effect of vote buying on free and fair election and its aftermath which is bad governance has distorted all round positive development in the country.

Vote buying appears in different forms in every society, it may take the form of direct payments to voters to vote not according to their wish but based on monetary inducement, gifting of food stuffs, offering of employment before elections, provision of last-minute infrastructure to communities, conditional promises to individuals upon the election of a candidate, among others (Baidoo, Dankwa and Eshun, 2018).

According to Schaffer and Schedler (2005:5), "Vote buying in its literal sense is a simple economic exchange". Candidates "buy" and citizens "sell" votes, as they buy and sale apples, shoes or television sets. It also means gifts given to voters before elections in exchange for their votes. The phenomenon seems to obstruct free and fair election and does not reflect the intended choice of the electorate as a result of inducement the voters face on the hands of selfish party agents making them to vote not necessarily their choice candidate but the candidate that pays better, thereby turning the election poll into a bazaar

arena where the highest bidder takes it all, yet it remains pervasive in many developing democracies especially in Nigeria, as it was observed in 2015 General Elections in Nigeria, Anambra State 2017 Governorship Election, 2018 Ekiti State Election, Osun State Governorship Election and recently concluded 2019 General Election in Nigeria.

Though, there was reports of peaceful outcome of the 2017 Gubernatorial election in Anambra state, political elites in Anambra State and across the federation pointed out some lessons and issues that needs attention so as to sustain free and fair credible election so as to sustain democracy in the polity, one of such issues to be addressed is the issue of vote buying which to a very extent retards the conduct of free and fair election and popular representation of the citizen's political interest (Egburuonu,2017).

### **Review of Related Literature**

*Money Politics, Vote Buying and Voting Behaviour* So many reasons can be adduced to be responsible for the persistent and increasing level of money politics, vote-buying and its incessant effect on free and fair election in Nigeria. Some of these factors include ignorance on the part of the electorates, apathy, poverty, inadequate information or lack of awareness and inadequate sensitization, willingness on the part of the voters and deceit by politicians. There is also attitudinal problem on the side of the people involved in both buying and selling. Our attitude toward politics is not good because most politicians view it as a call to investment from which huge benefits is expected and not a call to serve humanity. Electorate on their part see politics especially during election as an opportunity to sell their votes to represent their own share of national cake since they do not have access to where the national cake is being shared (Ovwasa, 2013). Going further, Davies (2006) identified other factors that give room for vote buying like the inability of many political parties and contestants to put in place comprehensive and comprehensible manifestoes for scrutiny by voters, instead of clear-cut manifestoes that could enable electorate to make a rational political choice, meaningless slogans, demagogic and rabbleroxing speeches are made. Such speeches either over-estimate or underestimate the political perception of the voters, but are rarely educative and convincing. Many voters seem to be unimpressed by all the tricks the parties and the candidates employ, hence the need to bribe them for their votes.

Political cynicism on the part of voters who believe that political office holders are incurably corrupt, self-seeking and incompetent, that politics is a dirty and dishonourable enterprise, that the whole political process is a fraud and betrayal of public trust. This cynical view of politics is further accentuated by unfulfilled promises made by the winners of past elections. Thus, asking for pay-off is another way by which people receive their own share of the national cake. On the other hand, candidates who gave money to voters probably believe that they are investing against electoral failure.

Another factor according to Davis (2006) is focusing on personalities rather than on issues; by the mode of campaigns, most candidates draw the attention of the electorate away from the political parties to themselves. The consequence of this is that, the political parties and their messages become less important to the electorate. The candidates then take the centre stage and therefore, need to spend more than their party could afford in order to mobilize support for themselves. The people's perception is greatly reinforced by obscene display of opulence by public officers amassing wealth from the public treasury; this seems to have strengthened the resolve of voters to sell their votes to the highest bidder.

The penchant of politicians to strive to win elections, even at the primary level at all cost, makes desperate contestants to engage in all sort of malpractice including offering of financial and material inducements to both voters and electoral officials. Working on the poverty level of the people, Nigerian politicians have been known to distribute food stuffs

and other consumable material to voters shortly before the elections and sometimes, on the Election Day, contrary to the provision of the extant electoral law that prohibits such practice. Instances abound too, where candidates threw some money into the air during campaign rallies, making people to scramble for it and getting injured in the process (Ovwasa and Oupa, 2014).

The noticeable weakness in a party whip, characteristics of party politics in presidential system is when elected members exercise considerable degree of freedom when voting on legislative proposals. Such freedom makes legislators to be more susceptible to receive gratifications from the private interest groups. The interest groups employ what Shank calls legalized bribery. They make large donations of some spurious private gifts to the legislators or sponsor their overseas travel, etc., all in the name of public relations to secure votes of the legislators in the legislature.

The above reasons are greatly responsible for the increasing level of money politics, vote-buying and voting behaviour of politicians and electorate in Nigerian democratic dispensation which has hampered other essential aspects of elections and development in all ramifications. For instance, the resolve by the electorate to sell their votes to the highest bidder put their own lives and development of all kinds in serious jeopardy because that act of vote selling will continue to grant those who have accumulated their money primitively to continue to thrive over the credible ones with financial constraints, this to a very large extent hampers on elections being free and fair.

### **An Overview of Anambra State 2017 Gubernatorial Election**

Election in Nigeria represents procedures for choosing representatives to the Nigerian Federal Government composed of the President (the executive arm), the National assembly (the legislative arm), the 36 States Governors, Federal capital territory and 774 Local Government Areas (Amobi and Amobi, 2018). Anambra State Gubernatorial election is peculiar based on the premise of its peculiar date of election when compared to other states across the federation since Mr, Peter Obi's success in court in 2006. Gubernatorial elections are elections conducted by the Independent National Electoral Commission to select personae for the office of the Governor of a State in Nigeria. It comes every four years in all states across the federation.

The Anambra State 2017 Gubernatorial Election was held on Saturday, November 18, 2017. According to the Independent National Electoral Commission [INEC] (2017), 2,158,171 million people registered to vote during the election, with 325 ward and 4,608 polling unit. 50.3% were female while 49.6% were male. The highest voting population were students who make up 48% registered voters; Idemili North L.G.A had the highest number of registered voters.

Generally, there was 22% voter turnout of electorates on the Election Day. A close examination of the turnout margin by Local Government Area as captured by Okeke (2018) showed that Anambra East had 40% votes, Anyamelum 39.1%, Njikoka 1.9%, Awka North 29.9%, Dunukofia 29.2%, Anaocha 28.5%, Ekwusigo 27.46%, Nnewi South 25.8%, Anambra West 25.61, Orumba South 25.6%, Oyi 22.4%, Aguata 23%, Orumba North 23.2%, Ihiala 24.1%, Awka South had a turnout above the State level, 24.2%. Summarily, 457,511 electorates voted during the 2017 Anambra State Gubernatorial Election.

The Independent National Electoral Commission [INEC] (2018) stated that 37 parties registered to contest for the Governorship position amongst which 3 political parties had females as their party flag bearers. The election witnessed late opening of polls, with poll opening between 9am and 11am against the stipulated 8am. This could be attributed to the protest embarked upon by ad-hoc staff for non-payment of allowance and subsequent threats not to undertake Election Day work if not paid, absence of security personnel to escort ad-hoc staff and sensitive election materials to different polling units and the

challenges experienced in the transportation of materials to polling units by the contracted transporters due to fear of the Indigenous people of Biafra (IPOB) threat of election boycott and non-movement. The Centre for Democracy and Development [CDD] (2018), stated that the results of the polls reflected the valid votes cast and level of participation in the electoral contest though the election was marred by god-fatherism, late opening of polls, ballot box snatching as reported in Amaugochukwu, hall 1 polling unit in Idemili South Local Government. In Aguata, there was an incidence of a report from a returning officer that a presiding officer absconded with the election result.

Vote buying escalated to a high extent during the 2017 Anambra State gubernatorial election when compared to previous elections. As captured by Centre for democracy and Development [CDD] (2018), the political behaviour exhibited by leadership of political parties, party supporters, security agents and voters during the 18 November 2017 gubernatorial election was a representation of a day to day market affair. Voters as witnessed voluntarily demanded for their votes to be bought while all-time ready agents to the major political parties offered gift items, food and cash at polling units, the voters voted based on how much party agents offered. Voters were offered between N5,000, N 3,000, N 2,000 by party agents who adopted “eye-mark and pay” approach. For example, at Okija ward 2, PU009, Umuohi community primary school voters were wooed by cash by major party agents in exchange of their votes, at Lilo Abito Square Nsugbe people received cooked rice as an incentive to vote. Also, party supporters shared gala sausage and malt drink at polling unit 020 and unit 021, at Community Primary School Abatete. The incumbent Governor of Anambra State, Chief. Willie Obiano of the All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA) won the election with 55% of the votes cast. Obiano topped the poll in all the 21 local government areas, polled a total of 24,071 votes to beat his closest rival, Dr Tony Nwoye of the All Progressive Congress (APC), who got 98,752 votes. Mr. Oseloka Obaze of the People’s Democratic Party (PDP) polled 70,293 votes to come third, while Osita Chidoka of the United Progressive Party (UPP) polled 7,903 votes to come fourth (Onyenwe, Nwagbo, Mgbeledogu and Onyednma 2020:5).

## Research Method

**Research Design** The study employed a descriptive survey research design. This design was adopted in order to enable the researcher gather wide range of data on how vote buying affects the conduct of free and fair election in Nigeria: A study of the 2017 gubernatorial election in Anambra State.

**Method and Instrument of Data Collection** The study employed the Quantitative (ex-post-facto) Research Methodological approach of data collection. Instrument of data collection was questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed using homogenized questions to ensure uniformity of responses for easy data collection and analysis. The questions were structured in a closed-ended format for easy understanding and responses. Copies of the questionnaire were administered with the help of three research assistants who were trained for one week on how to carry out the exercise. While in the field, questions were explained to the respondents before they filled the questionnaire. Those who couldn’t read nor write were assisted by the research assistants to interpret and complete the questionnaire.

**Population of the Study** According to the National Population Census that was held in (2006), Anambra State has a population of 4, 177,828. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, the population projection of 13 years using an annual growth rate of 3.2 percent (UNDP) as suggested by Owuamalam (2012) was utilized.

Projected population for Anambra State

$$PP = GP \times PI \times PT$$

Where PP = Projected population

GP = Given population

PI = Population increase index

PT = Period between given population and the year of study (PT = 2006 to 2019 = 13)

Therefore, PP =?

$$GP = 4,177,828 \times 3.2 \times 13$$

Therefore, PP =?

$$GP =$$

$$PI = 3.2/100 = 0.032$$

$$PT = 2006 \text{ to } 2019 = 13$$

$$PP = 4,177,828 \times 0.032 \times 13$$

$$= 1,737,976.448$$

Therefore, PP + GP

$$= 4,177,828 + 1,737,976.448$$

$$= 5,915,804.448 \text{ (Actual population).}$$

**Sample Size and Sampling Technique** The sample of the population of this study was arrived at using Taro Yamane formula thus:

$$n = N / (1 + N (e)^2)$$

Where: n = desired sample size

N = population size under study

e = error margin which is 0.05

1 = unity and is always constant

$$\text{Therefore: } n = 5,915,804.448 / 1 + 5,915,804.448 (0.05)^2$$

$$n = 5,915,804.448 / 1 + 5,915,804.448 \times 0.0025$$

$$n = 5,915,804.448 / 1 + 14,789.51112$$

$$n = 5,915,804.448 / 14,790.51112$$

$$n = 399.9$$

Therefore, n = 400 (sample size)

For this study, multi-stage sampling method was used. This was to allow the respondents from Anambra State to have equal chances of being selected. Anambra State has 3 senatorial districts which are: Anambra Central, Anambra North and Anambra South, the State has 21 local Government Area. The selection was divided into three stages. The first stage of sampling involved the use of cluster sampling. Anambra State was clustered into three senatorial zones and each of these zones has 7 local government areas, which include: (a) **Anambra Central:** (Anaocha, Njikoka, Awka North, Awka South, Dunukofia, Idemili North and Idemili South) (a) **Anambra North:** Ayamelum, Anambra East, Anambra West, Onitsha North, Onitsha South, Ogbaru and Oyi, (c) **Anambra South:** Aguata, Ekwusigo, Ihiala, Nnewi North, Nnewi South, Orumba North and Orumba South).

The second stage involved random picking of one local government from each senatorial district. For Anambra Central, Awka South local government was picked, for Anambra North, Oyi local government area was selected, while for Anambra South, Aguata local government area was picked. At the third stage one community was randomly picked from each local government area. In Oyi local government, Ogbunike town was picked, in Anaocha local government, Aguluzigbo community was picked and in Aguata local government area, Ekwulobia town was picked. At the fourth stage, purposive sampling was used to pick adult members who were aged 18 years and above from each of the communities and at this point, 400 copies of questionnaire were divided into 3 halves with figure (133.333).

**Method of Data Analysis** Frequency tables and percentages were used in the presentation of the raw data. That is, all information gathered in the course of the study were carefully analysed with descriptive statistical tools, and the precise tools are statistical tables, frequency distribution tables and bar charts with the view to provide solution or answer to key questions of the study, as well as validate or reject the hypotheses. Hypotheses and results were evaluated by decision rules anchored on chi-square test.

## Results and Discussion of Findings

**Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents** Out of the three hundred and eighty (380) respondents, two hundred and sixty (representing 68.4%) were males; one hundred and ten (representing 28.9%) were females, while ten respondents (representing 2.6%) didn't indicate their sex. Thirty of the respondents (representing 7.9%) possess only First School Leaving Certificate, one hundred and thirty-five (representing 35.5%) possess Senior School Certificate, one hundred and eleven (representing 29.2%) possess First Degree Certificate, fifty-four (representing 14.2%) possess degree higher than the First Degree, forty (representing 10.5%) do not possess any degree, while ten (representing 2.6%) opted not to give out that information about them. Also two hundred and fifty respondents (representing 65%) are single, one hundred and ten (representing 28.9%) are married, seven (representing 1.8%) are divorced, three (representing 0.8%) are widowed, while ten (representing 2.6%) chose not to give out that information about them.

**Research Question:** How has the Independent National Electoral Commission's cosmetic approach to vote buying contributed to the failure of the electoral body to achieve free and fair election in the conduct of the 2017 gubernatorial election in Anambra State?

Table 1: INEC MADE EFFORTS TO CHECKMATE VOTE BUYING IN THE 2017 GUBERNATORIAL ELECTION IN ANAMBRA STATE.

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	8	2.1
	Agree	60	15.8
	Undecided	20	5.3
	Disagree	110	28.9
	Strongly Disagree	180	47.4
	Total	378	99.5
Missing	999.00	2	0.5
Total		380	100.0

Item 1

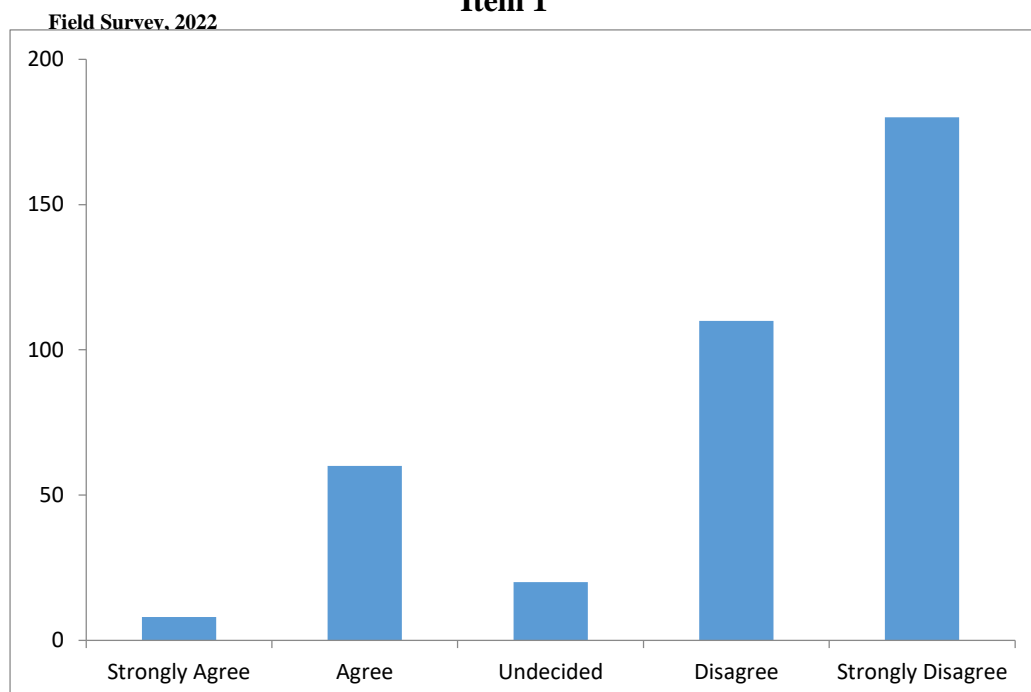


Table 1 shows that eight respondents strongly agreed that INEC made efforts to checkmate vote buying in the 2017 gubernatorial election in Anambra State, sixty respondents agreed, one hundred and ten disagreed, one hundred and eighty respondents

strongly disagreed and twenty were undecided while two withheld their answers to the question. From the field survey, it is evident that the Independent National Electoral Commission made little or no efforts to checkmate vote buying in the 2017 gubernatorial election in Anambra State.

**Table 2:** INEC INVESTIGATED THE REPORTS OF VOTE BUYING MADE AGAINST POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE 2017 GUBERNATORIAL ELECTION IN ANAMBRA STATE.

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	25	6.6
	Agree	48	12.6
	Undecided	23	6.1
	Disagree	130	34.2
	Strongly Disagree	150	39.5
	Total	376	98.9
Missing	999.00	4	1.1
Total		380	100.0

Table 2 shows that twenty-five respondents strongly agreed that the Independent National Electoral Commission investigated the reports of vote buying made against the political parties in 2017 gubernatorial election in Anambra State, forty-eight respondents agreed, one hundred and thirty respondents disagreed, one hundred and fifty strongly disagreed and twenty-three were undecided, while four withheld their answers to the question. The implication from the field study is that the Independent National Electoral Commission didn't investigate the reports of vote buying made against the political parties that participated in the 2017 gubernatorial election in Anambra State.

**Table 3:** THE INDEPENDENT NATIONAL ELECTORAL COMMISSION WORKED IN SYNERGY WITH THE POLITICAL PARTIES AND OTHER LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES IN ORDER TO ENSURE FREE AND FAIR ELECTION DEVOID OF VOTE BUYING IN THE 2017 GUBERNATORIAL ELECTION IN ANAMBRA STATE.

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	16	4.2
	Agree	70	18.4
	Undecided	20	5.3
	Disagree	150	39.5
	Strongly Disagree	120	31.6
	Total	376	98.9
Missing	999.00	4	1.1
Total		380	100.0

Table 3 shows that sixteen respondents strongly agreed that the Independent National Electoral Commission worked in synergy with the political parties and other law enforcement agencies in order to ensure free and fair election devoid of vote buying, seventy respondents agreed, one hundred and fifty respondents disagreed, one hundred and twenty strongly disagreed and twenty were undecided while four respondents withheld their answers to this question. The data from the field survey revealed that the Independent National Electoral Commission didn't work in synergy with the political



parties and other law enforcement agencies in order to ensure free and fair election devoid of vote buying in the 2017 gubernatorial election in Anambra State.

**Table 4:** THE STRUCTURES SUCH AS E- VOTING, USE OF E-COLLATION, USE OF DIGITAL SECURITY ERECTED BY INEC BEFORE AND DURING THE 2017 GUBERNATORIAL ELECTION IN ANAMBRA STATE WERE NOT STRONG ENOUGH TO CURB THE IMPEDING VOTE BUYING, THEREBY RESULTING IN ELECTION THAT WERE NOT FREE AND FAIR.

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	160	42.1
	Agree	140	36.8
	Undecided	29	7.6
	Disagree	20	5.3
	Strongly Disagree	28	7.4
	Total	377	99.2
Missing	999.00	3	0.8
Total		380	100.0

Table 4 shows that one hundred and sixty respondents strongly agreed that the structures erected by the Independent National Electoral Commission before and during the 2017 gubernatorial election in Anambra State were not strong enough to curb the impeding vote buying, thereby resulting in election that was not free and fair. One hundred and forty respondents agreed, twenty disagreed, twenty-eight respondents strongly disagreed and twenty-nine were undecided while three withheld their answers to the question. From the above, it's obvious that the structures erected by the Independent National Electoral Commission before and during the 2017 gubernatorial election in Anambra State were not strong enough to curb the impeding vote buying, thereby resulting in election that was not free and fair.

**Hypothesis:** The Independent National Electoral Commission's approach to vote buying contributed to the failure of the electoral body to achieve free and fair election in the 2017 gubernatorial election in Anambra State.

### Chi-Square Test

**Table 5:** FREQUENCIES ON THE TEST OF HYPOTHESIS

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual (Obs-Exp)	(Obs-Exp) <sup>2</sup>	Component (Obs-Exp) <sup>2</sup> /Exp
3.00	1	27.14	-26.14	683.300	25.177
4.00	4	27.14	-23.14	535.460	19.730
5.00	20	27.14	-7.14	50.980	1.878
6.00	40	27.14	12.86	165.380	6.094
7.00	10	27.14	-17.14	293.780	10.825
8.00	48	27.14	20.86	435.140	16.33
9.00	105	27.14	77.86	6,062.180	223.367
10.00	64	27.14	36.86	1,358.660	50.061
11.00	44	27.14	16.86	284.260	10.474
12.00	25	27.14	-2.14	4.580	0.169
13.00	13	27.14	-14.14	199.940	7.367
14.00	3	27.14	-24.14	582.740	21.472
15.00	1	27.14	-26.14	683.300	25.177
16.00	2	27.14	-25.14	632.020	23.287
Total					441.111

**Table 6:** STATISTICAL TEST OF HYPOTHESIS

	INEC's Approach	to vote buying
Chi-Square		441.111
Df		13
Table Value(0.05)		22.362

Table 6 provides the actual result of the chi-square goodness-of-fit test. We can see from the table that our chi-square value is statistically significant with  $X^2=441.1$ ,  $p<.0005$ . The alternate hypothesis is hereby accepted and the null rejected. We conclude that the Independent National Electoral Commission's approach to vote buying contributed to the failure of the electoral body to achieve free and fair election in the 2017 gubernatorial election in Anambra State.

### Conclusion

Free and fair election is indeed a sine qua non in every democracy. No government can be adjudged democratic if elections are conducted outside the laws governing them. The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended), the Electoral Act 2010 (as amended) and the Independent National Electoral Commission Rules and Guidelines form part of the legal frameworks that put checks on the electoral processes in Nigeria. Specifically, section 117 of the Electoral Act 2010 (as amended) listed a number of actions that constitute electoral offences and their penalties among which are unlawful possession of a voter's card, selling or buying of voter's card. Section 124 of the Electoral Act 2010 (as amended) also stressed on paying money to any person for bribery at any election and receiving any money or gift for voting or to refrain from voting at any election. Despite these seemingly sophisticated legal frameworks to ensure sanity within the electoral system, the snag however, remains that in Nigeria and several African countries elections are far from being fair (Ozekhome, 2020).

While the Independent National Electoral Commission is almost always faced with the challenges of having some of their officials induced financially to manipulate and falsify election results; the commission had most unfortunately lamented over their lack of absolute powers to enforce electoral laws as well as swiftly prosecute electoral offenders in Nigeria (Okwuadimma and Biereenu-Nnabugwu, 2021: 71). This study made a modest attempt to interrogate the Independent National Electoral Commission's cosmetic approach to vote buying and how it contributed to the failure to achieve free and fair election in the 2017 gubernatorial election in Anambra State. The outcome of the study indicated that the position assumed by the electoral umpire vis-à-vis vote buying and voter's inducement contributed significantly to her inability to achieve their major goal in the 2017 gubernatorial election in Anambra State which was ultimately, a free and fair election.

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