

## ELECTORAL FRAUDS: IMPLICATIONS FOR CREDIBLE ELECTION IN EBONYI STATE GUBERNATORIAL ELECTION 2019

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### Abstract

*It is disturbing that most of the elections conducted in Ebonyi State and other numerous states in Nigeria has not met the necessary requirements for a democratic election. hence the essence of this paper in it's broad objective to examine the impact of electoral frauds on the outcome of 2019 gubernatorial election in Ebonyi State. The study in its theoretical foundation was based on Fragile State Theory by Star (2000). The study employed a survey design. A detailed questionnaire was used as the main data collection tool..Sample size were 371 while frequency table, percentages and chi-square statistical tools were used in data analysis. From the findings, it was revealed among others that vote buying, intimidation and harassment of electoral/INEC officials and voters, diversion and snatching of electoral materials were witnessed in some of the polling units. Also revealed was that financial inducement and gratification were given to some INEC officials and security operatives to favour a particular party in some polling units. In the light of the findings, it was recommended among others that gubernatorial candidate whose party was found wanting of massive practice of electoral frauds should either not be declared winner by INEC or be sacked by the election tribunal. Also security and INEC officials found collecting bribe should be prosecuted.*

**Keywords:** Elections, Electoral Malpractices, Credible Elections, Vote Buying, Election Violence.

### Introduction

In every democratic structure, elections remain a stabilising tool. They are a vital part of any transitory phase, particularly from one civilian administration to another. Violence has always been present in elections in Nigeria, but since the country's return to democratic rule in 1999, its frequency and scale has reached disastrous proportions, especially in 2015, and threatens the country's democratic process. Nigeria's past and present efforts to introduce free democracy as a system of government have always been either frustrated or extremely limited by the problems associated with elections. The question has rather been how to ensure and guarantee the reliability and acceptance of elections and their results than if or when to conduct elections.

In Ebonyi State, governorship elections are normally regarded as a matter of life and death, to be won at all means and with all possible strategies, regardless of the possible repercussions. The political stakeholders had repeatedly failed to adhere to the rules of the game, mainly as a manifestation of the spoils of office, as Duru (2002) puts it. Political experts are beginning to argue on whether Ebonyi is functioning as a democratic state.

In the light of the above, the objective of this paper is to comprehensively investigate electoral malpractices: Implications for Credible Elections in Ebonyi State Governorship Election, 2019.

The aim of this paper is to address the following issues and research gaps.

- 1) Which actions comprised electoral malpractices in the 2019 Ebonyi State governorship election?
- 2) How did the politicians enforce their vote buying strategy in the Ebonyi State Gubernatorial elections 2019?
- 3) What challenges confronted the INEC in conducting credible elections in Ebonyi State

Gubernatorial Election 2019 owing to cases of electoral violence and vote buying?

**The specific objectives of this study are as follows:**

- 1) Identification of activities that breach electoral law in Ebonyi State Gubernatorial election 2019.
- 2) To examine how politicians enforce their vote buying strategy in the Ebonyi State Gubernatorial elections 2019.
- 3) To find out the challenges confronted by INEC in conducting credible elections in Ebonyi State Gubernatorial Election 2019 owing to cases of electoral violence and vote buying.

**To direct the research, the following null hypotheses were generated:**

- H<sub>01</sub>: Electoral malpractice and credible elections are not closely related in Ebonyi State Gubernatorial election 2019.
- H<sub>02</sub>: There are no cases of vote buying as a strategy adopted by gubernatorial aspirants in the Ebonyi State Gubernatorial elections 2019.
- H<sub>03</sub>: There are no challenges confronting INEC in conducting credible elections in Ebonyi State Gubernatorial Election 2019 owing to cases of electoral violence and vote buying.

**Theoretical Framework**

The work is based on Fragile State Theory by Starr (2000). It argued that the prolonged unabated crisis in any state structure result to further volatile situation. Also that the consistent policy failure, conspiracy of powerful few in manipulating state resources, exploitation; if unabated, creates scenarro for further conflict in line with the position of this theory, Nwoba, Anya, Nwabuko (2020:232) observed that conflict escalators who could be politicians harvest such opportunity to cause conflict by organizing and sponsoring political conflict hate speeches and so on to achieve their selfish ends.

This theory is relevance to this study because the social conflict arises at it's peak during general elections. The weak institutional capacity to ensure peace and order makes the politicians especially those in power to harvest the opportunity for political and economic gains at the detriment the holding of free, transparent and impartial elections in the state.

**Conceptual Clarifications**

**Election**

According to Laakso (2007), Election, understood as a representation of authority and independence, is used to vet governments for political propriety and authority. It guarantees that citizens maintain the power to appoint and dismiss political officials. For this to happen, an election must be conducted in a free and impartial manner, or at least be viewed as such. Laakso argued that elections are not merely the act of voting on election day, but the totality of the events that occur prior to and after the election. It is important to note, therefore, that elections must not be seen as a one-off event, but rather as a series of occurrences and choices that result in elections that have long-term implications once the post-election period has come to an end. According to Nnoli (1990), election is the process of choosing, by which a group of people can choose one or a select few from among many persons to hold one or more offices of leadership. Powell (2010) defines voting as a process for choosing individuals to serve as representatives of the public in various official government positions within a state. Voting gives people the opportunity to participate in public policy-making. In other words, electoral contests are viewed as a process of struggle between two or more individuals who are competing to obtain control of the political and economic power with the lawful endorsement of the voters or those with the lawful authority to

choose the representatives from those competing individuals.

### **Electoral Malpractices**

Election malpractices according to Nwabueze (2003) Electoral malpractice is defined as outright irregularities perpetrated with a dishonest, corrupt or malicious intention to sway an outcome of an election in a candidate's or candidates' favour, such as electoral malpractice, buying of votes, treating and influencing voters in an undue manner, bullying and other means of intimidation, tampering with the results, falsely announcing a defeated candidate as the successful candidate (without changing the results as recorded). In Nigeria, there are many facets to election manipulation. In recent times, monitors have noted some of the methods by which Nigeria's elections are manipulated. Ibrahim (2007) observes that rigging includes the following: Voter cards unlawfully printed; Unlawful custody of ballot boxes; Packing ballot boxes; Tampering with results; Illegal thumb-printing of ballot slips; Voting by young children; Adding imaginary names to the electoral roll; Separate voters' lists compiled unlawfully; Unlawful printing of forms used to collate and announce election outcomes; Intentional withholding of election resources from specific locations; Declaration of results in locations where there was no voting; Illegal declaration of poll results; Intimidation of aspirants, representatives and electorates; Change to the Register of Returning Officers and Swapping boxes and falsifying numbers.

In this context, some politicians who have the ascendance in the administration may, in an effort to achieve an electoral victory by any route, demand the unlawful detention and arrest of their opposition on or prior to polling day. This can make it very difficult for opponents to get out and vote. Powerful political figures often engage the services of thugs who roam the polling stations shooting randomly in the air to frighten away legitimate electorates, who in response flee for their safety, enabling these hoodlums to cart away the filled ballot boxes and swap them for empty ones. Whereas, the legitimate voters are being threatened that the polls will be a rubber stamp and the peaceful Nigerians will rather remain at their respective homes than be subjected to any form of unbridled insecurity, thus allowing the politicians the opportunity to rig the polls on a grand scale.

### **Vote buying**

There have been numerous efforts by authors and analysts to establish a definition of the phenomenon of bribery and influence peddling. The reason for this is that vote selling has varying meanings in different countries, based on the country's historical, political and cultural factors and its voting arrangements (Schaffer, 2007). Etzioni-Halevy (2018), who has defined vote selling as 'the trading of personal tangible gain for party endorsement', is one of the most frequently quoted descriptions of the practice. The concept emphasises voters receiving personal material favours in return for political endorsement. In essence, it is the provision of any kind of gift or reward to the electorate in exchange for the electorate's vote in favour of the recipient or candidate. Indeed, the electorate is presented with materials for their individual consumption and is required to reciprocate this act by voting for a candidate or party. It regards this practice as an element of reciprocity, in the sense that the items are provided to the electorate in the anticipation that the voters will appreciate the present they have been offered and cast their votes for them.

### **Electoral Violence**

Fischer refers to electoral (dispute) violence as any arbitrary or planned attempt to decide, obstruct or in any way compromise an outcome of an election by means of a threat, intimidation, hateful rhetoric, false information, attacks, forced " security ", coercion, racketeering, vandalism or murder (Fischer, 2002). This is comprehensive and encapsulates the core and emphasis of this research; hence, this

definition is used throughout the remainder of this research. All the factors mentioned in Fisher's description are now present in the Nigerian politics, resulting in both social media and physical violence. Election-related violence usually happens in the course of the campaign period - before, during or immediately after an election. In most cases, it is aimed at using violence to falsify, manipulate or distort the course of voting or to change the result of an election in the advantage of a specific candidate or a party (Ugoh, 2004).

Oxford Dictionary (2010) describes The use of violence is the physical or emotional application of power and strength. Violence is the result of physical strength that is used with the aim of hurting or murdering a person.

### Methodology

The work adopted a survey research design. Structured questionnaire which was the primary method used to obtain the data and was administered to 400 respondents derived through Taro Yameni method from Ebonyi State Population of 2,880,400 according to 2006 population census. Purposive sampling technique was adopted in sample distribution to two Local government representatives in each of the three senatorial zones of the state namely

- i. Ohaukwu LGA and Izzi LGA from Ebonyi North (exception of Abakaliki and Ebonyi LGAs)
- ii. Ikwo LGA and Ezza North LGA from Ebonyi Central (exception of Ezza South and Ishielu LGAs).
- iii. Ohaozara LGA and Afikpo South LGA from Ebonyi South (exception of Afikpo North, Ivo and onicha LGAs)

A 5-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (UD), Strongly Disagree (SD) and Disagree (D) was used as the response pattern in the questionnaire. Data analysis was done using simple percentages whereas Chi-square statistical tool was employed to validate the research hypotheses..

### Data Presentation and Analysis

**Table 1: Data presentation based on the Research Question 1 what actions constituted electoral frauds in Ebonyi State Gubernatorial election 2019?**

S/N	Research item	Point, frequency and percentages				
		SA (5)	A (4)	UD (3)	SD (2)	D (1)
1	There have been evident cases of shooting and harassment of officials and voters by political thugs at the election ground.	195 (52.6%)	106 (28.5%)	-	40 (10.8%)	30 (8.1%)
2	There were evident cases of intimidation of electoral/INEC officials at the Electoral ground.	70 (18.9%)	102 (27.5%)	22 (5.9%)	161 (43.4%)	16 (4.3%)
3	There were evident cases of box snatching at the electoral ground	-	-	-	276 (74.4%)	95 (25.6%)
4	There were evident cases of diversion of ballots boxes and other election materials.	65 (17.5%)	37 (10%)	19 (5.1%)	175 (47.2%)	75 (20.2%)
5	There is significant relationship between electoral fraud and credible elections in Ebonyi State gubernatorial election 2019.	195 (52.6%)	106(28.5 %)	-	40 (10.8%)	30 (8.1%)

Majority opinion from the respondents in research items 1,2,3,4 and 5 agreed respectively that there were evident cases of shooting, harassment of officials; intimidations of Electoral staff; theft and hijacking of ballot boxes and other voting materials.

**Table 2: Data presentation based on the research Question 2 how did politicians enforce their vote buying strategy in Ebonyi state gubernatorial elections 2019?**

S/N	Research item	Point, frequency and percentages				
		SA (5)	A (4)	UD(3)	SD (2)	D (1)
6	Politicians impose their vote -buying scheme by offering or guaranteeing the potential elector an established sum of cash long before the elector votes at the polling booth.	154 (41.4%)	187 (50.4%)	-	26 (7%)	4 (1.1%)
7	Providing or offering to pay the voter the specified monetary or non -monetary reward in return for proof that the voter has voted for the party is one of the strategies adopted by politicians to enforce their vote buying strategy.	166 (44.7%)	97 (26.2%)	21 (57%)	54 (14.6%)	33 (8.8%)
8	There are cases of vote buying as a strategy adopted by gubernatorial aspirants in Ebonyi State gubernatorial elections 2019	154 (41.5%)	187 (50.4%)	-	26 (7%)	4 (1.1%)
9	Photographing the voter's thumb impression on the ballot paper as proof is another method used by politicians to implement their vote-buying tactics.	144 (38.8%)	66 (17.8%)	-	87 (23.4%)	74 (20%)
10	Relying on ethnic connections, politicians concentrate on certain social stratifications and buy votes in order to consolidate their own bases and weaken those of the opponents.	159 (42.9%)	127 (34.3%)	27 (7.3%)	36 (9.7%)	22 (5.9%)
11	Using pressure groups as channels for purchasing votes, interest groups in turn bargain their links with parties in the intermediate election phase.	132 (35.6%)	144 (38.8%)	44 (11.8%)	26 (7%)	55 (14.8%)

### Field Work, 2021

Majority opinion from the respondents in research items 6,7,8,9, 10 and 11 agreed respectively that all manners of vote buying strategies was employed by the politicians.

**Table 3: Data presentation based on the research question 3 what challenges confronted the INEC in conducting credible in Ebonyi State Gubernatorial Election 2019 owing to cases of electoral violence and vote buying**

S/N	Research item	Point, frequency and percentages				
		SA (5)	A (4)	UD(3)	SD (2)	D (1)
12	Poor voters turn out owing to electoral violence and vote buying is one of the challenges confronting INEC in conducting free and fair Election in 2019 Ebonyi State Governorship Election	201 (54.2%)	98 (26.4%)	-	44 (11.9%)	28 (7.5%)
13	Financial induce ment to INEC officials constitutes a challenge to conducting credible Election in 2019 Ebonyi State Gubernatorial Election	139 (37.5%)	159 (46.2%)	12 (3.1%)	46 (12.4%)	15(4%)
14	Financial gratification to security personnel on duty is one of the challenges faced by INEC in conducting credible Election in 2019 Ebonyi State Gubernatorial Election	252 (67.9%)	119 (32.1%)	-	-	-
15	Intimidations by political Thugs is one of the challenges confronted by INEC in conducting credible Election in 2019 Ebonyi State Governorship Election	128 (34.5%)	167 (45%)	8 (2.2%)	46 (12.4%)	22 (5.9%)
16	Hijacking of election materials by politicians constitutes one of the challenges confronted by INEC in conducting credible Election in 2019 Ebonyi State Gubernatorial Election	153 (41.2%)	185 (49.9%)	9 (2.4%)	19 (5.1%)	5 (1.4%)

**Field Work, 2021**

Majority opinion from the respondents in research items 12,13,14,15 and 16 agreed respectively that part of the challenges that confronted INEC at delivering were poor voter turn out attempts to financially induce INEC officials, financial gratifications to security personnels for possible compromise; and intimidations to electoral officials by thugs through hijacking of election materials.

**Test of Hypotheses**

**Hypothesis One (1)**

**H<sub>0</sub>:** In the Ebonyi State governorship election 2019, there is no appreciable association of election irregularities with reliable polls.

The research item 5 was used to test the hypothesis 1.

**There is significant relationship between electoral fraud and credible elections in Ebonyi State gubernatorial election 2019.**

Option	Respondents	Percentage
Strongly agree	195	52.6%
Agree	106	28.5%
Undecided	-	-
Strongly disagree	40	10.8%
Disagree	30	8.1%
Total	371	100%

**Field Work, 2021**

This technique implies that the null hypothesis is not accepted if the calculated value of chi-square is greater than the value of chi-square in the table at the 5% or (0.05) significance level.

Chi-squared  $X^2$  calculation formular

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{(O_i - E_i)^2}{E_i}$$

Where  $X^2$  = chi-square value

$O_i$  = Observed frequency

$E_i$  = Expected frequency

$\Sigma$  : Summation sign.

Level of significance 5% or (0.05)

Degree of freedom R x C

Row (R - 1)

Column (C - 1)

Degree of freedom = (5-1) - (3-1) = 4x2 = 8

Expected frequency ( $E_i$ ) = 371/8 = 46

Option	$O_1$	$E_1$	$(O_1 - E_1)$	$(O_1 - E_1)^2$	$\frac{(O_1 - E_1)^2}{E_1}$
Strongly agree	195	46	149	22201	482.6
Agree	106	46	60	3600	78.3
Undecided	-	-	-	-	-
Strongly disagree	40	46	-6	36	0.8
Disagree	30	46	-16	256	5.6
Total	371				567.3

**Reference: As computed by the author.**

The computed result is 567.3 while the critical value of  $X^2$  for d/f at 0.05 chi-square table is 2.733. The computed value  $X^2$  is greater than the table value  $X_e^2 (X_o^2 > X_e^2)$

**Decision Rule:**

$X^2$  computed is 567.3 and is greater than the chi-square table at 5% level of significance using one (1) degree of freedom (V) which is 2.733 based on the decision rule, we reject the null hypothesis.

In other terms, we adopt the other hypothesis that stated that there is significant relationship between electoral frauds and credible elections in Ebonyi State gubernatorial election 2019.



**Hypothesis Two (2)**

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There are cases of vote buying as a strategy adopted by gubernatorial aspirants in Ebonyi State gubernatorial elections 2019.

The research item 5 was used to test the hypothesis 2.

**There are cases of vote buying as a strategy adopted by gubernatorial aspirants in Ebonyi State gubernatorial elections 2019.**

Option	Respondents	Percentage
Strongly agree	154	41.5%
Agree	187	50.4%
Undecided	-	-
Strongly disagree	26	7%
Disagree	4	1.1%
Total	371	100%

This procedure specifies that if the computed chi-square value is higher than the chi-square value in the table at the 5% or (0.05) significance level, the null hypothesis is not accepted. Degree of freedom = (5-1) – (3-1) = 4x2 = 8

Expected frequency (E<sub>i</sub>) = 371/8 = 46

Option	O <sub>1</sub>	E <sub>1</sub>	(O <sub>1</sub> – E <sub>1</sub> )	(O <sub>1</sub> – E <sub>1</sub> ) <sup>2</sup>	$\frac{(O_1 - E_1)^2}{E_1}$
Strongly agree	154	46	108	11664	253.7
Agree	187	46	141	19881	432.2
Undecided	-	-	-	-	-
Strongly disagree	26	46	-20	400	8.7
Disagree	4	46	-42	1764	38.4
Total	371				733

**Source: As calculated by the researcher.**

The calculated value is 733 while the critical value X<sup>2</sup> for d/f at 0.05 chi-square table is 2.733. The calculated value X<sup>2</sup> of is greater than the table value X<sub>e</sub><sup>2</sup> (X<sub>o</sub><sup>2</sup> > X<sub>e</sub><sup>2</sup>)

**Decision Rule**

X<sup>2</sup> is 733 and is higher than the chi-square table at 5% level of significance using one (1) degree of freedom (V) which is 2.733 due to the decision rule, we discard the null hypothesis.

In other words, we accept the alternate hypothesis H<sub>1</sub>: There are cases of vote buying as a strategy adopted by gubernatorial aspirants in Ebonyi State gubernatorial elections 2019.

**Hypothesis Three (3)**

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There are challenges confronting INEC in conducting credible election in Ebonyi State gubernatorial election 2019 owing to cases of electoral violence and vote buying.



The research item 5 was used to test the hypothesis 3.

**Poor voters turn out owing to electoral violence and vote buying is one of the challenges confronting INEC in conducting credible election in 2019 Ebonyi State gubernatorial election.**

Option	Respondents	Percentage
Strongly agree	201	54.2%
Agree	98	26.4%
Undecided	-	-
Strongly disagree	44	11.9%
Disagree	28	7.5%
Total	371	100%

This procedure specifies that if the computed chi-square value is higher than the chi-square value in the table at the 5% or (0.05) significance level, the null hypothesis is not accepted.

Degree of freedom =  $(5-1) - (3-1) = 4 \times 2 = 8$

Expected frequency ( $E_i$ ) =  $371/8 = 46$

Option	$O_1$	$E_1$	$(O_1 - E_1)$	$(O_1 - E_1)^2$	$\frac{(O_1 - E_1)^2}{E_1}$
Strongly agree	201	46	155	24025	522.3
Agree	98	46	52	2704	58.8
Undecided	-	-	-	-	-
Strongly disagree	44	46	-2	4	0.1
Disagree	28	46	-18	324	7
Total	371				558.2

**Source: As calculated by the researcher.**

The calculated value is 558.2 while the critical value  $X^2$  for d/f at 0.05 chi-square table is 2.733. The calculated value  $X^2$  of is greater than the table value  $X_e^2 (X_o^2 > X_e^2)$

**Decision Rule:**

$X^2$  computed is 558.2 and is greater than the chi-square table at 5% level of significance using one (1) degree of freedom (V) which is 2.733 based on the decision rule, we reject the null hypothesis.

In other words, we accept the alternate hypothesis: there are challenges confronting INEC in conducting credible election in Ebonyi State gubernatorial election 2019 owing to cases of electoral violence and vote buying.

**Major Conclusions**

The analysis and examination of the established hypothesis led to the following findings:

1. The study revealed that there have been reports of shooting and assault of officers and electors at the polling station by political thugs and that there were evident cases of intimidation of

- electoral/INEC officials at the electoral ground.
2. The study also established that there were evident cases of diversion of ballots boxes and other election materials and that there were cases of box snatching at the electoral ground.
  3. In addition, it was found that politicians impose their vote-buying tactics by offering or guaranteeing an agreeable sum of money to voters long before they cast their ballot at the polls, and that politicians impose their vote-buying tactics by requesting voters to photograph their thumbprint on the ballot paper as proof.
  4. The research also revealed that politicians depend on community connections and concentrate vote buying on specific ethnic community bases in a bid to galvanise their own bases and neutralise those of the opponents, and that they use interest associations as channels for vote buying, and that the associations, in return, bargain their connections with the parties throughout the period of the elections.
  5. Another problem of electoral frauds in 2019 gubernatorial election in Ebonyi State discovered by this study is poor voters turn out which also challenged INEC in conducting credible election in 2019 Ebonyi State gubernatorial election.
  6. The study has shown that financial inducement to INEC officials constitutes a challenge to conducting credible election in 2019 Ebonyi State Election.
  7. The study also revealed that financial gratification to security personnel on duty is one of the challenges faced by INEC in conducting credible election in 2019 Ebonyi State gubernatorial election.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The core of democracy is that the people must have the ultimate choice of who rules them, and that leaders must represent and execute the collective wishes of the governed. In any genuine democratic society, voting is the essence of the democracy process. It is thus a tragic statement on Nigeria's democracy evolution that the electorate no more counts in the nation's democracy, even as ugly as the 2019 gubernatorial election in Ebonyi State has shown.

Hence the following recommendations were given:

- i. The issue of political thuggery should be discouraged by the indigenes of Ebonyi state so as to ensure a violence free election and the cases of intimidation of electoral/INEC officials reduced to the lowest minimum.
- ii. Punishment should be giving to anyone found snatching boxes or any electoral material before, during and after election.
- iii. The electoral body (INEC) should disqualify any politician caught providing or guaranteeing an amount of money to a potential elector during an election.
- iv. INEC should not allow any voter showing evidence of his or her vote cast to any individual so as not to allow violence and vote buying in an election.
- v. Voters should be educated on the need to shun political apathy and help INEC to guarantee of freedom and the integrity of electoral processes in the country.
- vi. There should be a law guiding any INEC official who in any form collect money and any incentives from any political party or politicians.
- vii. Finally, security personnel should be adequately armed and properly motivated so as not to collect any form of financial gratification from any political party or politician.

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