



## *RESEARCH ARTICLE*

### **INDEPENDENT NATIONAL ELECTORAL COMMISSION AND THE CONDUCT OF THE 2024 GOVERNORSHIP ELECTION IN EDO STATE, NIGERIA: A DISCOURSE**

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#### **ABSTRACT**

This study analyzes the conduct of the 2024 governorship election held in Edo State on 21<sup>st</sup> September. Perpetration of vote-buying by desperate politicians, poor turnout of voters during the election, availability of many rejected votes and others were examined in this paper. This paper adopts system theory propounded by David Easton and Gabriel Almond. The study also uses the qualitative method of research, relying exclusively on secondary source of data such as textbooks, newspapers, magazines, journals and other documentary materials relevant to the study. The data gathered were summarized. In the governorship election held in Edo State on 21<sup>st</sup> September 2024, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) declared All Progressive Congress (APC) as the winner. APC scored 291,667 votes and People Democratic Party (PDP) scored 247,274 votes. The study revealed that the problems encountered in the conduct of the election were; PDP rejected election results in three councils, downpour disrupted the conduct of the election in some places and the turnout of voters was 25.6 percent. The study recommends that the INEC, political parties and voters should adhere strictly to the laws, and rules governing the proper conduct of governorship elections.

**Keywords,** voters, political parties, governorship election, election, INEC

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) was constituted by General Abdulsalam Abubakar in 1998 and charged with the responsibility of conducting elections into various levels of government in Nigeria. The roles of INEC include, delimit the country into constituencies for the purpose of electing representatives into government, organize/conduct elections into various levels of government throughout the country, register political parties wishing to contest elections, register voters, recruit and deploy officials to different parts of the country to assist in the conduct and supervision of elections. The commission also enlightens the public on the system of voting, publishes regulations for the conduct of elections, fixes dates of elections, provides electoral materials, counts votes and announces results of elections (Ogu and Obikaonu, 2020:107). INEC conducted governorship elections in 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015, 2019, 2023 and 2024.

Election is the process by which citizens in democratic states elect their leaders into various arms of government. In Nigeria's democracy, voters elect their leaders into the executive and legislative arms of government once in every four years. The third arm of Nigeria's government (Judiciary) is not elected by the electorates. Election is one of the important features of a democracy. Election ought to ensure competition among political parties, helping to measure the level of citizens' political commitment to the political system, promoting a sense of belonging, serving as a means of ensuring that political sovereignty is vested in the electorates, promoting good governance and reducing dictatorial tendencies of the government (Ogu and Peter, 2023:254). Infact, it is expected to be a period of accountability among political office holders.

Nigeria operates a presidential system of government. In Nigeria's presidential democracy, Governors are elected by the electorates once in every four years. Nigeria presently is composed of thirty six states. Each state is headed by the elected governor. The tenure of the Governors is four years. A popular Governor can be re-elected into the second tenure. Elected Governor can be removed from the office through the process of impeachment by the members of the State House



of Assembly (1999 Constitution). The first governorship election in Nigeria's presidential system was conducted in 1979 by the Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO).

Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) conducted governorship election in Edo State, Nigeria on 21<sup>st</sup> September 2024. The conduct of governorship election in Edo State is the focus of this paper. Edo State is one of the states created in 1991 by General Ibrahim Babangida regime. Nigeria operates mass party and multi-party system. In preparation for the September 2024 governorship election in Edo State, many political parties embarked on their primary elections. Primary elections by political parties are expected to be monitored by INEC. According to Ikechukwu, Omeiza and Ozioruva (2024, p.7), "The Edo state political Firmament was astir, yesterday, as a Federal High Court sitting in Abuja, nullified the governorship primaries of the People' Democratic Party, PDP, which produced Dr. Asue Ighodalo as its candidate for the September 21 election in the State. The court in the judgement delivered by Justice Inyang Ekwo, held that the PDP primaries conducted on February 22, failed to meet therequirements of the Electoral Act 2022, guidelines for the conduct of the poll, as well as party's constitution".

One of the problems that characterized the primaries and general elections in Nigeria is the inability of political parties to adhere strictly to the laws, rules and regulations governing the proper conduct of elections. Political parties are expected to carry out their activities according to the provisions of the laws. INEC is expected to monitor the primary elections by political parties and supervise their national conventions. In preparation for September 21<sup>st</sup> governorship election, political parties in Edo State embarked on political campaign. Political campaign is the period the registered political parties make their manifestoes known to the electorates and solicit their votes. Manifesto is the cardinal programme a political party would implement when voted into power. The citizens or voters are expected to assess the manifestoes of political parties before voting them into power.

According to James and Alafuro (2009:102), political sovereignty reside with the electorates. The voters determine who should be the Governor of Edo State through their votes. In preparation for the conduct of 2024 governorship election in Edo State, INEC called all the political parties and



candidates to sign peace accord. According to Amodu (2024, p. 23), “leadership of political parties and their candidates for Edo State governorship election will sign peace Accord on September 12. Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) Professor Mahmud Yakubu, disclosed this on Thursday in his opening remarks at a meeting he held with the leadership of the political parties on Thursday in Abuja. The INEC chairman also revealed that a stakeholders meeting between his commission, the political parties and the security agents would precede the signing of the peace accord”. According to Adedipe, Habib and Francis (2024:2), “The People Democratic Party decision on Thursday not to sign the peace accord ahead of Edo State governorship election September 21 has sparked reactions and concern in the state, ahead of the poll, the Punch reports. Of the 17 political parties contesting the poll, 16 signed the treaty with the ruling PDP the only party which decline to be part of the agreement”.

Signing of peace accord among the political parties and candidates is necessary because Nigeria, right from the first republic has been witnessing electoral violence during and after elections. Electoral violence in various dimensions is an undemocratic attitude. Nigeria operates multi-party system. Multi-party system is prone to electoral violence. Electoral violence led to the military intervention in Nigerian politics in 1966. Electoral violence is evil that should be uprooted out of Nigerian elections.

In preparation for the conduct of the Edo governorship election (2024), INEC printed electoral materials, constructed polling units and trained their staff. INEC staff and security agents were deployed to the various polling units in Edo State for the conduct of 2024 governorship election. The major political parties that contested the election are, People’s Democratic Party (PDP), All Progressive Congress (APC), Labour Party (LP) among others. Seventeen political parties contested the governorship election in Edo State. One of the problems encountered in the conduct of the election was vote buying by desperate politicians. This study is aimed at achieving the following objectives:

To assess the conduct of the 2024 Governorship election in Edo State,  
examine the problems encountered in the conduct of the 2024 Governorship



election in Edo State and recommend measures that can ease the problems encountered so as to ensure credible conduct of future governorship elections in Edo State.

The problems of the study were vote-buying by desperate politicians and poor turnout of voters in the election. There was vote buying in some polling units during the governorship election held in Edo State on 21<sup>st</sup> September 2024. The turnout of voters was 25.6 percent.

## **2.0. THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK AND CONCEPTUALIZATIONS**

### **2.1. Theoretical Framework: System Theory**

The system theory propounded by David Easton, Gabriel Almond and Von Bentallafy was adopted in this study. The theory was propounded in 1953. “The central and guiding concept in the general system theory is the concept of system. systems are generally relationship and not individuals. The three elements that guide the understanding of this approach include following:

- (a) Parts,
- (b) The parts must be related to the whole and
- (c) Each part makes certain contribution towards the survival of the whole. This third element is called the functions. This is the essence of functionalism.

The central guiding principle of the approach is the assumption of equilibrium, that is, the whole will need the co-operation of the parts to keep it mobile. In relation to human society, any named political party is made up of several sub-groups economic, political, cultural, educational, social etc. These sub-groups perform different functions and it is a combination of these functions that keep the entire system moving” (Olaniyi, 2001: 57).

The conduct of governorship election in Edo State is the function of INEC. The other stakeholders in Nigerian politics also contribute to the conduct of governorship election in Edo State. The stakeholders include the Legislature, Executive, Judiciary and other adhoc staff. For



free and fair election to be conducted in Edo State, it needs effective cooperation of INEC and other stakeholders. Democracy and conduct of election is a system.

## **2.2. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION AND LITERATURE REVIEW**

Election is the process which the citizens in democratic states elect their leaders/representatives into the various arms of government periodically. Governorship election is the period in which Nigerian citizens elect their Governors once in every four years. Nigeria is composed of thirty six states and every state is headed by an Executive Governor. The post of Governor is one of the elective positions in Nigerian democracy. The Governors are directly elected by the electorates/voters. The electorates or the voters are Nigerian citizens who are eighteen years old and above, registered by INEC who must have collected their Permanent Voters Card (PVC). (Ogu and Peter, 2023:257). Such citizens are qualified to participate in voting during governorship election and general elections. A political party is an organized group of people seeking to takeover government through constitutional means. The constitutional means is through free and fair election (Ogu, 2021:201). Nigerian citizens wishing to contest elective positions in Nigerian democracy must be members of registered political parties. In Nigerian democracy, the elective positions include president, Governors, the Senate, House of Representatives, State House of Assembly, Local Government Chairmen and Local Government Counselors. INEC, means Independent National Electoral Commission. It was constituted in 1998 and charged with the responsibility of conducting free and fair elections in Nigeria.

According to Achinulo (2020:237), “electoral violence controversially refers to the physical and non-physical harm caused by people involved in the selection of representatives in government. It is violence associated with election process”. Electoral violence is undemocratic. Nigeria operates a presidential system of government. The first governorship election in Nigeria (under presidential system of government) was conducted by the Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO) in 1979. In the governorship election conducted in the nineteen states of the federation in 1979 by FEDECO, the results were as follows:





The National Party of Nigeria (NPN) won 7 states, Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) won 5 states, Nigerian Peoples Party (NPP) won 3 states, Great Nigerian Peoples Party (GNPP) won 2 states while Peoples Redemption Party (PRP) won 2 states (Ogu, 2018: 249). According to Ogu (2021: 103), “the activities of National Party of Nigeria, Great Nigerian Peoples’ party and People Redemption Party demonstrated clearly how the five parties competed using any means available to get into power”. The truth of the matter is that there are rules and regulations governing the proper conduct of governorship elections. Political parties and their candidates are expected to adhere strictly to the rules guiding the conduct of elections. The five political parties that contested the governorship elections in 1979 were national in outlook. The number of political parties were not so many when compared with 2019 when Nigeria had a total of 91 political parties. The number of political parties existing in Nigeria presently is eighteen.

(INEC) conducted the first election in 1999. In the governorship elections conducted in Nigeria by INEC in 1999, People Democratic Party (PDP) controlled 21 states, All Nigerian Peoples’ Party (ANPP) controlled 9 states, while Alliance for Democracy (AD) controlled 6 states (Dibie, 2007). Many years of military rule adversely affected the turnout of voters in 1999 elections.

### **3.0 METHODOLOGY**

This study adopts qualitative method of research. “The qualitative technique involves the collection of extensive narrative data in order to gain insight into phenomena of interest” (Peter, 2023: 63). The qualitative method is critical to the appreciation of the issues in this study. The qualitative data was obtained from published documents such as newspapers, textbooks, journals, magazines and other documentary materials relevant to the study. The data gathered was also summarized.

### **4.0. DISCOURSES**



#### **4.1. The 2019 Governorship Election in Nigeria**

The 2019 governorship elections were held on 9<sup>th</sup> March. The governorship election took place in 29 states. According to Telegraph (2019, p.1), “the result released showed that Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) won gubernatorial election in Abia, Enugu, Ebonyi, Imo, Delta, Cross River, Akwa Ibom and Oyo state while All Progressive Congress (APC) won gubernatorial election in Borno, Gombe, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kebbi, Kwara, Lagos, Nasarawa, Niger, Ogun, Yobe and Zamfara State”. All Progressive Congress (APC) and Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) won gubernatorial election in twenty-one states. Other political parties did not win any state in the governorship election held on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2019. In view of the above, Nigeria seems to be heading towards a two party system.

Nigeria has been practicing multi-party system right from the colonial era to this present fourth republic. Multi-party system requires high level of political maturity, religious/cultural tolerance and understanding among the electorates. That may be one of the reasons why majority of the advanced nations like Europe and America are considered as fertile ground for the practice of multi-party system. Two party system is a political arrangement where two political parties are legally recognized in a country. That is, the party in power and the official opposition party. Two party system is less expensive to maintain when compared with multi-party system. The conduct of elections by the electoral body will be easier in two party system. For instance, the conduct of 2019 general election in Nigeria where we had 91 political parties cannot be the same as conduct of general elections where two or three political parties exist. The money and preparations needed cannot be the same. Political parties under two party will be interested in developing manifesto tailored in line with the yearnings and aspirations of the citizens. In a two party system, effective checks on the party in power by the official opposition party and effective political education to the electorates help to maintain political discipline thereby, reducing or curbing electoral violence. Adoption of two party system will make conduct of governorship or general elections easier and cheaper.





Some of the challenges encountered in the conduct of 2019 governorship and general elections were, the existence of 91 political parties, malfunction of some card-reader machines, electoral violence, availability of many invalid votes and poor turnout of voter's elections (Ogu, 2021:128). Is INEC monitoring effectively the activities of the political parties? Are the political parties and NEC adhering strictly to the rules and regulations governing the proper conduct of governorship elections in Nigeria?

#### **4.2. The conduct of 2023 Governorship Election in Nigeria**

INEC conducted governorship elections in Nigeria on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2023 in 28 states. The first stage of 2023 governorship election was held on 18<sup>th</sup> March and contested by eighteen political parties. The major political parties were, All Progressive Congress (APC), People Democratic Party (PDP), Labour Party (LP) and New Nigerian Peoples' Party (NNPP). The results of the election were released by INEC. The result of March 18<sup>th</sup> 2023 governorship election announced by INEC shows that All Progressive Congress (APC) won in 17 states, People Democratic Party (PDP) won in 9 states, New Nigerian Peoples Party (NNPP) won in one state and Labour Party (LP) won in one State. [inec\(http://inecnigeri.org/ng-content/uploads/2024/02/2023-general-election-report-1.pdf\)](http://inecnigeri.org/ng-content/uploads/2024/02/2023-general-election-report-1.pdf)

Some problems were encountered in the conduct of 2023 gubernatorial election. In the governorship election in River State, the total votes cast was 494,608, total valid votes was 483,934 while the total number of rejected votes was 10,670 (Okonkwo, 2023:8) the number of invalid or rejected votes were so high. INEC and political parties are expected to offer political education to the electorates. According to Clifford, Vincent, Samuel Ndahi, Umar, Nanlong, Bashir, Rotimi, Nwabueze and Musa (2023, p. 8), "some of the supplementary election for the two governorship, five senatorial, 31 House of Representatives and 57 State House of Assembly seats across 17 states were marred by violence, vote buying and other glitches leading to the death of no fewer than four persons yesterday. Indeed, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) arrested 12 persons in Kano and Kastina over alleged vote-buying". Vote-buying, vote selling and electoral violence are undemocratic.



The second stage of 2023 governorship election was conducted on November 11<sup>th</sup> in three states namely: Kogi, Imo and Bayelsa States. According to Uzoechi, Bashir, Onyibe and Iwuchukwu (2023, p.2), “Governor Hope Uzodimma of Imo State was yesterday declared winner of Saturday’s governorship election in the state by the Independent National Electoral Commission. Uzodimma who is the candidate of All Progressive Congress (APC) defeated 17 others to be re-elected for second term”. “In Kogi State Usman Ododo, also of APC was declared

winner. He polled 446,23 votes to defeat his closest rival, Muritala Ajaka of the Social Democratic Party (SDP), who scored 259,052, while Dino Melaye of the People Democratic Party (PDP) polled 46,363 votes.

The governorship election was also held in Bayelsa on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2023 and the result was announced. According to Ndujihe, Akinrefon, Oyadongha, Obahopo, Alozie and Idio (2023:14). Out of 1,056,862 registered voters in Bayelsa, only 372,000 were accredited to vote, 287,554 voted, 3,658 votes were rejected. According to the state governorship retuning officer and vice chancellor of the Federal University, Lafia, Prof. Farouk Kuta, the Governor polled 175,196 votes winning in six of the eight local councils of the state to emerge victorious. The Governor had the upper hand in Kolokuma-Opokuma, Yenogoa, Ogbia, Sagbama, Ekeremor and Southern Ijaw LGA’s. Sylva of the APC who came second won in two local council, Nembe and Brass, and got 110,108 votes”. Looking at the conduct of 2023 governorship election, there was poor turnout of voters and there were many invalid or rejected votes.

#### **4.3. The Conduct of the 2024 Governorship Election in Edo State, Nigeria.**

INEC conducted governorship election in Edo State on 21<sup>st</sup> September 2024. Edo State is made up of 18 Local Government Councils. INEC provided 4,519 polling units in Edo State and deployed about 35,000 policemen so as to ensure free and fair conduct of the governorship election. The number of the registered voters in Edo State was about 2.2 million citizens. Seventeen political parties contested the governorship position in Edo State. The major political parties were Peoples’ Democratic Party (PDP), All Progressive Congress (APC), and Labour



Party (LP). According to Mordi, Olaniyi, Otabor, Akowe and Omokhunu (2024:5), “results declared at the various polling units yesterday showed that Okpebholo got 102 votes at his unit, ward 2 Udomi Uwessan in Irru, Esan Central while Igbodalo got one and Akpata I. Okpebholo received 403 votes at ward 10, polling unit I, Iyamho, Etsako West Local Government Area base of APC leader, Comrade Adams Oshiomhole while the PDP and ADP had one vote each. Ighodalo won in his own booth too at unit 003 in Idinriro vocational centre, Okaegben-Ewohimi in Esan Southeast LGA with 200 votes, leaving 45 for Okpebholo. The APC governorship running mate, Dennis Idahosa, showed his strength in his Iguobazuwa West ward, polling unit 3, securing 131 votes for APC and leaving 12 for PDP. Governor Godwin Obaseki delivered his polling unit 19 at ward 4, Oredo LGA for Ighodalo, who got 127 votes as against 5 for the APC candidate and 11 for Akpata. Akpata was humbled in his polling unit 11, ward 6 Oredo LGA where he got only 31 votes as against 41 for Ighodalo”.

The truth of the matter is that the registered voters decide who should be the governor of Edo State through their votes. Election is the period of accountability among the political office holders. The educated voters assess the manifestoes of political parties and their candidates before casting their votes. Political parties wishing to win elections must develop favourable manifestoes tailored in line with the yearnings and aspirations of the citizens and the candidates of the parties must live up to the expectations of the masses. Political sovereignty belong to the electorates. The result of the September 21<sup>st</sup> governorship election in Edo state was announced by the Independent National Electoral Commission. According to Olaniyi, Otabor, Mordi, Abiodun, Benin, Ogundele, Onogu, Omokhunu and Akowe Abuja (2024:1), “Okpebholo won across the three senatorial districts, clinching 11 local governments of 18, PDP won the remaining seven”. The results of the governorship election in 18 Local Government Councils of Edo State was presented in table 1 of this research work.



**Table 1: The 2024 Governorship Election Result in Edo State**

Local Govt.	APC	PDP	LP
Igueben.	5,907.	8,470.	494.
Esan West.	12,952.	11,004.	342.
Owan West.	12,277.	11,284.	201.
Uhunmwonde.	8,776.	9,339.	769.
Ovia Northeast.	13,225.	15,311.	1,675.
Esan South East.	8,398.	14,199.	98.
Egor.	16,760.	14,658.	1,966.
Akoko-Edo.	34,847.	15,865.	2,239.
Esan Central.	10,990.	8,616.	418.
Esan Northeast	10,648.	12,522.	194.
Ovia Southwest.	10,150.	10,260.	849.
Orhionmwon.	16,059.	14,614.	556.
Owan East.	19,380.	14,189.	448.
Etsako East.	20,167.	9,683.	604.
Etsako Central.	11,906.	8,455.	381.
Etsako West.	32,107.	17,483.	2,116.
Oredo.	30,780.	24,938.	5,389.
Ikpoba Okha.	16,338.	26,382.	4,026.
<b>Total</b>	<b>291,667.</b>	<b>247,274.</b>	<b>22,763.</b>

**Source: Olaniyi et al, 2024:1)**

Table 1 above shows the 2024 governorship election results in 18 Local Government Councils, Edo State. Looking at the table 3, the APC candidate scored 291,667 votes and was declared the winner of the election, the PDP candidate scored 247,274 votes while LP candidate had 22,763 votes. The result shows that PDP and APC won in all the 18 Local Government Councils. Looking at the table 3 above, Nigeria seems to be heading towards two party system. How viable are the other political Parties? Labour party did not win any local government. The questions to ask now are: Was the September 21<sup>st</sup> 2024 governorship election in Edo State conducted according to the constitutional procedures, What were the challenges encountered in the conduct of the election?



**4.4. The challenges encountered in the conduct of 2024 Governorship Election in Edo State, Nigeria.** The challenges encountered in the conduct of the 2024 governorship election in Edo State which took place on September 21<sup>st</sup> are examine below:

#### **Poor Turnout of Voters**

The turnout of voters in 2024 governorship election in Edo was poor. According to Bello, Willie and Jimoh (2024:4), “of 2,249,780 eligible voters, 603,932 were accredited, 573,965 cast votes, while 13,275 votes were rejected”. Looking at the figure above, out of 2.2 million Nigerians that registered with INEC, only 573,965 voted. It means that the majority of the voters did not vote.

The poor turnout of voters has negative effects on Nigerian democracy. If the voters refuse to come out and vote in the candidates of their choice on the days of elections, our democracy will be in a serious problem. The electorates legitimize the electoral process. “Like previous elections before it, last Saturday election was characterized by low turnout of voters. Dr. Obire said it unfortunate that the country has been experiencing so-called voter apathy during one election cycle after another and has been spending a colossal amount of money because the electoral umpire spends money periodically printing ballot papers and procuring other election materials for some prospective voters that never show up”. (Mordi and Olaniyi, 2024:2). There are many factors that can cause apathy among voters. Are Nigerians having trust in the electoral process? Are the political elites adhering strictly to the rules and regulations governing the proper conduct of governorship election in Nigeria? To answer these questions, it must be insisted that for democracy to succeed, voters must be encouraged to be law-abiding. According to Okoh (2012:31):

*Many people have to believe that their vote do not count and sometime the performance of those elected do not encourage the ordinary Nigerians to see reason why he/she should vote notwithstanding these obstacle, there is serious need for every Nigerian especially the common man to see casting his/her votes as a duty to the country. We cannot expect to get the system right when the majority of the people refuse to participate in electioneering process (Okoh, 2012:31).*



Political apathy especially in voting during governorship elections should be discouraged. Transparency in the conduct of general election by INEC can go a long way in motivating the voters to perform their civic responsibilities. In September 12<sup>th</sup>, 2024, 16 political parties in Edo State signed peace accord as directed by INEC but the ruling party (PDP) did not sign. The reasons for not signing the peace accord may have been interpreted in different ways by the voters. Not signing the peace could send a wrong signal to the electorates because some of them may interpret it to mean that there could be problem if I move out on the day of the election. In Edo state, 2.2 million Nigerian registered with INEC and collected their voters' cards, but only 575,965 voted the majority of the registered voters did not vote. The percentage of those who voted was 25.6 percent. It means that 74.4 percent did not vote.

#### **An Analysis of the voters' turnout in Edo State Governorship Election**

Number of eligible voters - 2,249,780  
Total number of votes cast - 573,965  
Total number of rejected votes - 13,275  
**Percentage of voters who voted -  $\frac{573,965}{2,249,780} \times 100$**   
**= 25.6%**

The calculation above shows that the turnout of voters was 25.6 percent. The majority of the voters did not vote. The question now is; what was responsible for the poor turnout of voters in Edo State Governorship Election? The attitude of some elected political officers, many years of electoral violence in Nigeria, downpour on the day of the election among others may be responsible for poor turnout of voters.

#### **Many invalid votes**

There were many invalid votes during the 2024 governorship election in Edo State. According to Jimoh (2024:4) out of 573,965 votes cast, 13,275 votes were rejected during the 2024 governorship election in Edo State. The rejected or invalid votes were so high, indicating poor voters education. Voters education is very important before the conduct of governorship election.





It is the responsibility of INEC and political parties to offer political education to the electorates. Some voters are illiterates and they don't know how to cast their votes.

The voters should be sensitized/ educated and they must not sell their votes.

### **Vote Buying and Vote Selling**

Some desperate politicians and illiterate voters engaged in vote buying and selling during the governorship election which took place in Edo State on 21<sup>st</sup> September 2024. "Suspects connected to a larger network, were apprehended at a guest house in Ekpoma, where a substantial amount of cash and incriminating items were recovered. The items include: a list of voters' names with corresponding monetary value, a collection of pre-filled ballot papers, a set of fake identification cards. Six other suspects were all arrested at Aibotse secondary School, beside Meremu Hotel, Auchi for allegedly engaging in vote buying. This group was found with.

A large sum of money, a cache of weapons, a detail plan outlining strategies for voter intimidation" (Otabor, 2024:5). Vote-buying and selling are undemocratic attitudes.

*Where voters are bribed to vote for candidates they do not know of, or candidates whose pedigree is rife with corrupt practices, then it will be anomalous to expect such candidates to be responsive to their yearnings and aspirations after the elections (James and Alafuro, 2009:103).*

Voters must not sell their votes for any reason or reasons. Vote-buying and selling are undemocratic attitudes. According to Bello, Willie and Jimoh (2024:4), "In its preliminary report, the centre for Democracy and Development (CDD-West Africa alleged that widespread vote-buying marred the election. Professor Adele Jinadu, chair of the CDD Election Analysis Centre (EAC), disclosed that both the PDP and APC engaged in massive vote-buying, offering between N5,000 and N10,000 per vote in various LGAs". Incidents of vote buying were particularly recorded in Edo central especially in Orhionmwon LGA, Esan Central and Esan North East". Vote-buying is one of the evils that must be uprooted out from Nigerian elections. It is one of the



causes of political apathy. Vote-buying makes mockery of the election. Voters must not sell their votes.

### **Police Personnel at the Gate refused Journalist entry to monitor the electoral process:**

In Nigerian democracy, the accredited Journalists help in monitoring and reporting the electoral process. The mass media in Nigeria promotes democracy and exposes the ills of the society. According to Otabor (2024:5), “at the Oredo Ward II polling booth, police personnel at the gate refused Journalists entry to monitor the process even after they had presented INEC accredited tag and official identity card showing they had been cleared to cover the election”. Does it mean that law enforcement agents don’t know the importance of Journalists in Nigerian democracy? The accredited journalists are important personnel in the conduct of elections.

### **Down pour delays arrival of INEC officials in Okaegben**

Nigeria usually experience rainy season from April to October. “Some officials of the Independent National Electoral Commission got to their polling booths late as an early downpour disrupted movement in parts of the state. Voting in such places was delayed several hours and INEC had to extend accreditation and voting time in such areas” (Otabor, 2024:5). Rainfall is natural occurrence. INEC performed very well by extending the accreditation and voting time in such areas. The rainfall may have contributed to the poor turnout of voters in such areas.

### **PDP demands prosecution of Electoral Officials for Alleged vote Manipulation**

“The PDP had demanded the immediate arrest and prosecution of presiding officer in the election for allegedly brazenly allocating non-existent votes to the All Progressive Congress (APC). National Publicity Secretary of PDP, Debo Ologunagba, said in a statement in Abuja that the official criminally and fraudulently allocated 352 votes to the APC, 52 to the PDP and one the LP, given a total of 406 as vote cast on the result sheet for Osholo primary school polling unit, Weppa in Etsako East LGA” (Mordi, Olaniyi, Otabor, Akowe and Omokhunu, 2024:5). There are laws



and rules guiding the proper conduct of governorship election in Nigeria. The complaints or allegation made should be properly investigated by the INEC.

### **PDP rejects election results in three Councils**

According to Oladesu (2024:4), “The People Democratic Party (PDP) in Edo State yesterday rejected the results of the governorship election declared by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in three local government areas. The party alleged irregularities in the final collation of the results for Akoko Edo, Egor and Etsako West local Governments, saying that they did not reflect the outcome”. Election should be conducted according to the constitutional procedures. Anybody that felt offended in the conduct of election can seek for redress in the court. INEC, political parties and voters are expected to adhere strictly to the electoral laws.

## **5.0. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1. summary of the Findings**

Independent National Electoral Commission conducted governorship election in Edo State on 21<sup>st</sup> September 2024. INEC declared APC, the winner of the 2024 governorship election in Edo State. APC scored 291,667 votes, PDP scored 247,274 votes while LP scored 22,763 votes. APC won in 11 Local Government Councils while PDP won in 7. Edo State is made up of 18 Local Government Areas. 17 Political parties contested the governorship election. 16 political parties signed peace accord on 12<sup>th</sup> September 2024. PDP did not sign the pace accord. The problems encountered in the conduct of the election were; poor voters turnout, availability of many rejected votes, vote-buying in some places, heavy down pour disrupted the conduct of the election in some places, police personnel at the gate refused journalists entry to monitor electoral process in “Oredo ward. The results of the 2024 governorship election in Edo State was presented in table 1 of this paper. The voters’ turnout in the election was 25.6 percent.

### **5.2. Conclusion and Recommendations**



INEC conducted governorship election in Edo state on 21<sup>st</sup> September 2024. The election was contested by 17 political parties. INEC initiated peace accord which was signed by 16 political parties. PDP did not sign the peace accord. Peace accord signing was necessary in view of Nigeria's history of electoral violence. The results of the 2024 governorship election were declared by the INEC. The result was presented in table 1 of this research work. APC was declared the winner of the 2024 governorship election in Edo state. APC scored 291,667 votes, PDP scored 247,274 votes while LP scored 22,763 votes. The problems encountered in the conduct of the election were; availability of many rejected votes, there was poor turnout of voters in the governorship election. There was downpour in some places which disrupted the conduct of the election for some time. . In view of the findings of this study, the following recommendations are necessary.

INEC should embark on voter's education across the country. Political parties, INEC, voters and politicians should adhere strictly to the laws and regulations governing the proper conduct of elections in Edo State in particular and Nigeria generally. There should be effective monitoring of the activities of political parties by the INEC. The accredited journalists and mass media should be allowed to discharge their schedule of duties in the conduct of governorship or general election.

### **Competing Interest**

The author had declared that no conflicting interest existed regarding this paper.

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