

Electorate Perception of Naira Redesign on Social Media and Its Implication on Vote Buying in the 2023 Presidential Election in Anambra State, Nigeria

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Abstract: This study examined the electorate perception of naira redesign on social media and its implications on vote buying in the 2023 presidential election. The study adopted survey research design with questionnaire as instrument of measurement. The sample of the study of 400 respondents was selected from the population of 2,656,437 registered voters in Anambra state through multi-stage technique. The work is hinged on the perception theory and reciprocal theory. The result of the study revealed that Anambra state electorate followed the naira redesign, vote buying in the 2023 presidential election on social media; attitude of the Anambra state electorate towards vote buying in the 2023 presidential election is that they like it; electorate perception of cash redesign during the 2023 presidential election is that it was a design to frustrate vote buying by political parties and political office seekers; the impact of naira redesign on 2023 presidential election in Anambra state was paucity of naira note; the major implication of naira redesign of vote buying in the 2023 presidential election in Anambra state was that it gave rise to voting in line with electoral candidate's character, competence and capacity. The study concludes that naira redesign minimized vote buying with its implication that electorates voted in line with their conscience and the candidate's characters, competence and capacity. We therefore suggest that beside naira redesign, government should always device authentic means to eradicate or eliminate the incidence of vote buying and other electoral malpractices. Electoral laws should be made more stringent in dealing with the menace of vote buying.

Keywords: Electorate Perception, Naira Redesign, Vote Buying, Electoral Malpractice, 2023 Presidential Election, Participatory Democracy

1. Introduction

Elections in the African continent has always been frost with one irregularities or another. Nearly 80% of voters from 36 African countries believed voters are bribed either sometimes or always. Electoral patronage over the world seems to make election candidates accumulate resources. This they use for election budgeting including vote buying. [1]

Nigeria in particular, elections have been compromised with vote buying. Vote buying is not fundamentally new to

Nigeria's electoral process. Since the return of democracy to Nigeria in May 1999, vote buying has steadily grown in magnitude [2]. Vote buying involves sharing of food, cash, and other valuable items among the electorate by politicians and / or parties during elections. This was also witnessed in the 2023 presidential election. Vote buying was prevalent in 2015 and 2019 general elections because the average Nigerian voter is poor and cannot resist charming effects of uncontrollable electoral bribes in cash or kind [3].

The Nigerian currency has undergone series of changes

since the creation of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) in March 1958 to serve as the Apex bank in Nigeria, by an Act of Parliament [4]. On 20th October of 2022, the governor of central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Godwin Emefiele announced a redesign of #1000.00, #500.00 and #200.00 notes. He gave 31st January 2023 as the deadline for the affected naira notes to be deposited in the banks for exchange of the redesigned notes. At the expiration of the deadline, the old notes had to be withdrawn from circulation and redesigned notes were in short supply. The governor adduced reasons for the redesign that the new note would curb corruption and currency fraud, tackle the growing menace of kidnapping for ransom, inflation and addiction, the problem of having too much money in circulation [5].

Many Nigerians complained then that they have not even had access to the new naira notes or had an idea of what it looks like because of the inability of the commercial banks to issue those new naira notes to the public. Some Nigerians began to reject the old naira note before the deadline which was contrary to the CBN directives while the bank was still issuing the old naira note to the customers.

The use of social media for political campaigns and by extension election followership grew rapidly since the 2008 United States of America presidential election [6]. In Nigeria, the use of social media has become much more pronounced since the 2015 general elections. The Social media during the 2023 presidential elections were awashed with political activities, comments, campaigns etc. The naira redesign came the same period and was also followed by some Nigerians through social media. This is not surprising as Poopola asserts that 'people depend to a very large extent, on the information obtained from the social media to create images, form opinions and find their ways in the midst of baffling statistics in politics, social, economic and cultural as well as other spheres of life'[7]

Perception of the three leading presidential candidates in the election towards the naira redesign differs. The presidential candidate of All Progressive Congress (APC) Ahmed Bola Tinubu condemned the naira redesign which he perceived as targeted at him to scuttle his presidential ambition. Atiku Abubaka, the presidential candidate of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) accepted with open heart. On the other hand, the presidential candidate of Labour Party (LP), Peter Obi and his supporters applauded the policy with the view that it would reduce the tendency for vote buying [8].

The perception of the electorate is the central process of this research work. It is the way they regard, understand and interpret an action. It is a psychological process that has to do with belief or opinion. In this context audience perception of naira redesign vary according to people's attitude towards it, the value developed over time, judgment, opinion, ideologies and so on. Electorate perception of naira redesign and its implication of vote buying in the 2023 presidential election in Anambra State focuses on information that meets the interest of the electorate.

The 2023 presidential election in Anambra was unique.

The redesign of naira, the Nigeria legal tender, affected it tremendously. The electorate did not have the cash to transport themselves to voting venues. The vote buyers, because of the dearth of naira notes occasioned by the redesign, had few to dispense. Some of them resort to vote buying through electronic transfer of money.

In view of the above, there seems to be bulk passing concerning the failure of new naira redesign. This has in no small measure affected every sector, especially the 2023 presidential election. The way the electorate/audience perceive it is not known, hence audience perception of naira redesign and its implication on vote buying in the 2023 presidential election is what this study is all about.

1.1. Objectives of the Study

This study was guided by the following objectives:

1. To find out the extent, Anambra state electorate followed naira redesign and vote buying in the 2023 presidential election on social media.
2. To find out the attitude of the Anambra state electorate towards vote buying in the 2023 presidential election.
3. To ascertain the electorate perception on the redesign of naira note during the 2023 presidential election in Anambra state.
4. To find out the extent to which the redesign of naira notes has impacted on the 2023 presidential election in Anambra state.
5. To find out how the naira redesign has affected vote buying in 2023 presidential election in Anambra state.

1.2. Research Question

The study has the following research questions:

1. To what extent do the Anambra state electorate followed the naira redesign and vote buying in the 2023 presidential election on social media?
2. What is the attitude of the Anambra state electorate towards vote buying in the 2023 presidential election?
3. What is the electorate's perception of naira redesign notes during the 2023 presidential election in Anambra state?
4. To what extent does redesign of naira note notes impact on the 2023 presidential election in Anambra state?
5. How did the naira redesign affect vote buying in the 2023 presidential election in Anambra state?

2. Theoretical Framework

The work is hinged on the perception theory and reciprocal theory.

2.1. Perception Theory

The perception theory was propounded by Bereslon and Steiner in 1964. The tenets of the theory holds that audience of any communication pay attention to the message, learn the content of the message and make appropriate changes in attitude or belief or produce desired behavioral response [9].

Berelson and Steiner defined perception as “the complex process by which people select, organize and interpret sensory stimulation into a meaningful and coherent picture of the world”[9]. In the course of perception people given attention to issues select from the pool, organize and interpret the phenomenon for this action.

Perception is remarkably active. It involves the process of learning, updating perspective and interacting with the observed. This is to say that the perceiver observes the perceived, consciously studies and continuously studies him/her and sometimes interacts with him/her before framing an opinion about the perceived [10].

Perception, according to the study by Anaeto et al has a process; it starts with selective exposure, selective perception, selective attention and ends with selective retention. Selective exposure is the tendency of an individual to expose himself to communication that agrees with one existing attitude. This is in line with the Festinger theory of cognitive dissonance [11].

Selective attention, on the other hand, holds that an individual pays attention to those parts of message that are consonant with his strongly held attitudes, behavior or and avoids those part of the message that go against one's strongly held attitude, belief or behavior. Selective perception is the propensity for people's perception to be influenced by their wants, needs, attitude and other psychological factors. This implies that different people can react to the same message differently. Selective retention, on the other hand, is the propensity for the recall of information or message to be influenced by wants, need, attitude and other psychological factors.

The onus of the work is to investigate the perception of the electorate on Naira redesign vi-a-vis the 2023 presidential election, therefore the perception theory helps to explain the work.

2.2. Reciprocal Theory of Determinism

This theory was first propounded by Albert Dandura [12]. Another proponent that expanded on the theory was Judith Rich Harris in 1998. This theory postulates that the individual's behavior influences and is being influenced by both the personal characteristic and the social world. The theory is a model built around three major characteristics that influence behaviour- the environment, the individual and the behaviors [13].

The three models explain the interwoven nature of the three factors which made them independently working together to produce reflective responses. As the environment influences individuals, the individual reactions as well as influence the environment.

The focus of the theory is the assumption that a relationship exists between the environment and behavior of persons, in which the environment influences the behaviors of the people. In other words, the environmental factors which produce very poor conduct of elected public office holders will lead to abysmal performance of the government in power. This will lead to weak public service delivery

capacity, absence of infrastructural facilities and welfare of the public which is paramount in governance.

In conclusion perception theory and reciprocal theory of determinism were found adequate for this study. The perception theory shall be useful to explore perception of the audience and naira redesign while reciprocal theory of determinism shall explore how the Nigerian corruption and its poverty would influence or otherwise, vote buying which would in turn show the individual voter reaction to the situation.

2.3. Method

This research adopted a survey design method to analyze the electorate perception of naira redesign and its implication on vote buying in the 2023 presidential election. This design focuses on representatives of samples received from the entire population [14]. This research also deals with the character of the chosen set of people whose opinion, behavior and attitudes are essential for the collection of information, required by the study [15]. This researcher considered and adopted this method as appropriate in this study.

Anambra state is the area of study. In a population of 2,656,437 registered voters in the state [16]. A sample of 400 was selected using the Taro Yamani statistical method. The researcher adopted a probability sampling technique. Instrument for data collection questionnaire was used to answer research questions. The questionnaire was divided into two, section A and section B. The section A seeks to elicit information regarding the respondents' bio-data and B section asks questions boarding on the research questions and objectives. Thus this researcher adopted structured or close-ended questionnaires. It is chosen because it is a data collection tool mostly suited for descriptive surveys like this. This research instrument adopted was validated by three experts in communication.

3. Results

The method of data analysis used in this research work was frequency table and simple percentage. A total of four hundred (400) copies of the questionnaire was administered and retrieved.

Table 1. Bio data Distribution of Respondents.

Bio Data	Cluster	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	226	57
	Female	174	43
Marital Status		400	100%
	Married	128	32
	Singles	233	58
	Divorced	28	7
	Widow/Widower	11	3
Age Distribution		400	100%
	18-30	201	52
	31-40	126	31
	46-60	55	14
	61 and above	18	5
Education		400	100%
	FSLs/O'level	209	52

Bio Data	Cluster	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Occupation	OND/NCE	52	13
	HND/BA/BSC/PGD	128	32
	MSC/MA/PHD	12	3
		400	100%
	Public Servant	104	26
	Business men/women	64	16
	Student	212	53
	Artisan/Technician	20	5
		400	100%

Table 1 on the demographic characteristics of the respondents shows that among four hundred (400) respondents 226 (57%) were male while 174 (43%) were female. Also, 128 (32%) of the respondents are married; 233 (58%) were not married; 28 (7%) were divorced while 11 (3%) were widows/widowers. In age distribution, 201 (52%) of the respondents were within 18 - 30 years; 126 (31%) were within 31 - 45 years; 55 (14%) were within 46 - 60 years while 18 (5%) were from 61 years and above. In educational distribution of respondents, 208 (52%) respondents hold first school leaving certificate or ordinary level certificate; 52 (13%) of the respondents hold OND/NCE certificate; 128 (32%) of the respondents hold HND/B.A/B.SC/B.ED/PGD degrees; while 12 respondents hold M.Sc/M.A/MED/PHD degrees. In occupational distribution of respondents, 104 (26%) respondents were public servants; 64 (16%) of the respondents were business men/women; 212 (53%) of the respondents were students while 20 (5%) of the respondents were artisans/technicians. The implication of this is that there were more male audiences/electorates in Anambra state. The singles who constituted more youths were more in the population and sample. Both the first school leaving certificate/ O level followed by first degree holders were more among the respondents. Closely related to age distribution, there were more students in the samples.

Table 2. Naira Redesign and Vote Buying Respondents Followership on Social Media.

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	400	100
No	-	-
Indifferent	-	-

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Not sure	-	-
Total	400	100

Table 2 shows naira redesign and vote buying followership as indicated by the respondents. All the respondents 400 (100%) followed the event during the 2023 presidential election on social media.

Table 3. Extent of Naira Redesign and Vote Buying Respondents Followership on Social Media.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Consciously	152	38
Carefully	51	13
Subconsciously	102	25
Haphazardly	95	24
Total	400	100

Table 3 shows the extent the respondents followed the naira redesign and vote buying by Anambra state audience on social media. The result indicated that 152 (38%) respondents followed them consciously; 51 (13%) of the respondents followed them carefully; 102 (25%) of the respondents followed them subconsciously while 95 (24%) followed them haphazardly. The result above implies that the majority of Anambra state audience consciously followed naira redesign and vote buying in the 2023 election.

Table 4. Respondents Attitude towards Vote Buying in the Election.

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
I like it	201	50
I don't like it	125	31
Indifferent	56	14
Undecided	18	5
Total	100	100

Table 4 displays respondent's attitude toward vote buying in the 2023 presidential election in Anambra state. It shows that 201 (50%) respondents like vote buying; 125 (31%) of the respondents did not like it; 56 (14%) of the respondents were indifferent to vote buying while 18 (5%) of the respondents were undecided on the position to take. This implies that about half of the population of the Anambra state electorate would prefer or accept vote buying.

Table 5. Respondents Perception of Naira Redesign in 2023 Presidential Election.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
To frustrate vote buying generally	207	52
Buhari's design to stop Tinubu vote buying and his presidential ambition	92	23
Design to aid APC access to cash and deny other political parties for vote buying	80	20
APC design to frustrate Nigerian from voting so as to rig election	21	5
Total	400	100

Table 5 shows respondents' perception of naira redesign in the 2023 presidential election. It is evident that 207 (52%) of the respondents perceived the naira redesign as a ploy to frustrate vote buying from all candidates and parties; 92 (23%) of the respondents see it as president Buhari's design to stop Ahmed Tinubu vote buying and his presidential ambition. Also, 80 (20%) respondents feel it was designed to

aid APC the ruling party only to have access to cash for vote buying. Others understand it as a design of APC, the ruling party to create scarcity of naira cash which would discourage electorates coming out to vote; hence, it will rig the election in its favor. The implication of this is that the majority of the respondents perceived the naira redesign during the 2023 presidential election was to frustrate votes by all parties and

office seekers.

Table 6. *Impact of Naira Redesign in the Election.*

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Naira redesign cash lack hindered electorates from movement to vote.	41	10
Naira redesign cash scarcity minimized vote buying	216	54
It encouraged voluntary and selfless voting	42	11
It gave rise to voter apathy for lack of gratification	101	25
Total	400	100

Table 6 displays the impact of naira redesign on the 2023 presidential election. It shows that 41 (10%) of the respondents said that naira redesign and its attendant paucity of cash hindered voters from travelling to cast their votes. Also, 216 (54%) respondents opined that the scarcity of cash minimized vote buying. About 42 (11%) of the respondents

voted that it encouraged voluntary and selfless voting while 101 (25%) of the respondents indicated that naira redesign gave rise to voters' apathy for lack of anticipated gratification. The implication of the result that naira redesign and paucity of cash minimized vote buying in the election.

Table 7. *Implication of Naira Redesign and Vote Buying in the Election.*

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Naira design minimized vote buying	88	22
It stamped out vote buying completely	4	1
This encouraged voting on character, competence and capacity	224	56
Electorate voted on conviction hence credibility of election	84	21
Total	400	100

Table 7 presents implications of naira redesign and vote buying on the 2023 presidential election. It shows that 88 (22%) of the respondents said that naira redesign minimized vote buying. Also, 4 (1%) of the respondents ticked that naira redesign stamped out vote buying completely; 224 (56%) of the respondents opined that naira redesign has encouraged voting on character competence and capacity while 84 (21%) of the respondents indicated that electorates voted on conviction hence, near credibility of the election. The implication of the result is that naira redesign minimized vote buying hence the electorate voted on character, competence and capacity of the office seekers.

4. Discussion of the Findings

The discussion of the findings was done using the research question that guided the study.

Research Question 1: What extent do Anambra state audiences follow the naira redesign and vote buying in the 2023 presidential election on social media?

The first research question was asked to determine the extent Anambra state audience followed naira redesign and vote buying in the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria. Responses in tables 2 and 3 provided answers to the research question. It could be deduced from the tables that all the respondents followed the naira redesign and vote buying and that 203 (53%) of the respondents followed them consciously and carefully. The result of findings agree with the views of [17] who affirm that the electorate followed hate speeches made by PDP and APC during the 2015 general elections. It is clear from the findings that Anambra state audience followed naira redesign and vote buying in the 2023 presidential election.

Research Question 2: What is the attitude of the Anambra

state audience towards vote buying in the 2023 presidential election?

The second research question was to find out the attitude of Anambra state audience towards vote buying in the 2023 presidential election. The result of the analysis is in table 4 which shows that 201 (50%) of the respondents liked it. The outcome of this study is similar to the findings of Nwangwu, *et al* that vote buying was prevalent in 2015 and 2019 general elections because average Nigeria voter is poor and cannot resist charming effects of uncontrollable electoral bribes in cash or kind [3].

Research Question 3: What is the audience perception of naira redesign during the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria?

The third research question was to ascertain the Anambra state audience perception of naira redesign during the 2023 presidential election. The result of the analysis is in table 5 which shows that the majority 207 (52%) of the respondents opined that the naira redesign was too frustrate vote buying generally in the election. The result of the finding supports Pillah who found out in his study that current redesign could minimize the influence of money on Nigeria electorate process by discouraging vote buying and inducing of electoral officers. [18].

Research Question 4: To what extent does naira notes redesign impact on the 2023 presidential election in Anambra state?

The fourth research question was to find out the extent of the naira note redesign impact on the 2023 presidential election in Anambra state. The result of the analysis is found in table 6 where 216 (54%) of the respondent identified that naira redesign and its attendant cash scarcity could minimize vote buying in the 2023 presidential election. This also supports Pillah's finding in a separate study that currency

redesign has the propensity to minimize and discourage vote buying in 2023 general elections [18].

Research Question 5: How did the naira note redesign affect vote buying in the 2023 presidential election in Anambra state?

The fifth research question was to ascertain the implication of naira notes redesign on vote buying in the 2023 presidential election among Anambra state audience. Responses in table 7 provide answers to the research question. It could be deduced from the table that 224 (56%) majority of the respondents opined that effect or implication on naira redesign on vote buying in the 2023 presidential election in Anambra state is that it gave rise for voting on character, competence and capacity.

Findings

The summary of the findings are as follows:

1. Anambra state electorate followed the naira redesign, vote buying in the 2023 presidential election on social media. Majority of them followed it consciously and carefully.
2. Attitude of the Anambra state electorate towards vote buying in the 2023 presidential election is that they like it. This was influenced by prevalent poverty among the electorate. Hence, they could not resist monetary and other inducements.
3. Electorate perception of cash redesign during the 2023 presidential election is that it was a design to frustrate vote buying by political parties and political office seekers.
4. The extent of impact of naira redesign on 2023 presidential election in Anambra state was paucity of naira note. This in turn drastically minimized
- 5.
6. vote buying in the election.
7. The major implication of naira redesign of vote buying in the 2023 presidential election in Anambra state was that it gave rise to voting in line with electoral candidate's character, competence and capacity.

5. Conclusion

The study examined audience perception of naira redesign on social media and its implication on vote buying in the 2023 presidential election in Anambra state. Based on the finding above, it is hereby concluded that Anambra state audience perceived naira redesign as a federal government device to frustrate and minimize vote buying by political parties and office seekers. In so doing, the electorate could vote based on their conscience and candidate's character, competence and capacity.

6. Suggestions

We therefore suggest that beside naira redesign, government should always device authentic means to eradicate or eliminate the incidence of vote buying and other electoral malpractices. Electoral laws should be made more

stringent in dealing with the menace. By this we can build participatory democracy where the vote and the voice of the electorates will count.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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