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LITERATURE REVIEW AS A METHODOLOGICAL TOOL: EVIDENCE FROM ELECTION CAMPAIGN FINANCING IN NIGERIA

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Abstract
Engagement with extant literature is central to effective research planning and execution. From problem formulation and the identification of knowledge gaps to the (dis)confirmation of findings, the literature review plays a pivotal role in the research process. This paper, which relies primarily on secondary data, examines the centrality of the literature review, its various approaches, and the methodological challenges associated with it in the research process. As a case study, the paper analyzes campaign financing in the Nigerian political system using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) framework. The study demonstrates that literature review contributes to theory building and serves as an important tool for data collection and analysis in social research. It also helps sharpen research focus while reducing the incidence of academic plagiarism and other ethical infractions. Furthermore, the study reveals that the outcomes of electoral contests in Nigeria are often significantly influenced by the level of financial resources deployed by political parties and their candidates. The paper concludes that reviewing related literature in social research provides a comprehensive synthesis of scholarly contributions over time, thereby offering researchers and readers a clearer analytical direction. It recommends that the country's electoral management body should strengthen its monitoring mechanisms by establishing a competent department to ensure compliance with campaign financing regulations, thereby promoting healthier democratic practices in Nigeria.

Keywords: Literature review, theory building, PRISMA, campaign financing, Nigerian political system

Introduction

Extending the frontiers of knowledge is critical to lifelong learning and human survival. Research is the building block of all academic activities, regardless of the discipline, making accurate problem framing, theory building, data collection, and analysis, as well as report writing, core priorities for all academics. However, this task has become increasingly complex on account of the intricacies and dynamism of knowledge production especially within the social sciences. This makes it hard to keep up with state-of-the-art research and to be at the forefront of effectively analyzing evidences in a particular research area. This challenge has made literature review more relevant today than ever (Aghedo & Obhakhan, 2025).

A literature review can broadly be described as a more or less systematic way of collecting and synthesizing previous research in order to find out the most appropriate results to solve societal problems (Mohajan, 2018; Tranfield, Denyer, & Smart, 2003). To push the knowledge frontier, the researcher must know where the frontier is by reviewing relevant literature and understanding the breadth and depth of an existing body of knowledge with the overarching aim of identifying a gap (Xiao & Watson, 2017). A well conducted review creates a firm foundation for consolidating knowledge, facilitating theory development and advancing societal progress (Webster & Watson, 2002).

Traditional ways of portraying the literature review often lack thoroughness and are hardly undertaken systematically (Tranfield et al., 2003). This sometimes results in scholars building their research on flawed assumptions. Besides, even when the methodology of the review is valid, sometimes there are issues with what constitutes a good contribution to knowledge. Puzzlingly, there has been some progressive evolution in review methodology in the last two decades even to the point where reviews are now considered as research in their own right. Yet, the standard of many published reviews remains poor and many researchers lack hands-on knowledge on how to relate their findings. Other challenges, according to Manchishi, Ndhlovu & Mwanza (2015), include excessive reliance on secondary sources and not being critical in review analysis. In confirmation of these weaknesses, manuscript reviews of some top-tier journals reveal that the inconsistency of literature reviews is one of the most criticized portions, with 57% of manuscripts rejected as a result (Tewksbury & Mustaine, 2012).

All over the world, political processes require funding to operate optimally, whether in consolidated, transitional, or authoritarian democracies. However, the funding modality of Nigerian elections has been a huge source of controversy. The imbroglio has been further compounded by the inadequate detail in the public domain of the subventions to political parties, despite the common knowledge that they are funded to some extent by the Nigerian taxpayers. Ideally, this should make accountability and transparency in party financing a matter of great national value. Yet, there are no available records on the exact amount of money spent by candidates and political parties in elections even though it is common knowledge that all the parties lack the capacity to generate their own income through legitimate means.

The predominance of money in Nigerian politics has become of grave concern because of its negative impact on the country's democracy and development. Among its numerous debilitating consequences, inordinate election monetization has debased politics and made it merely transactional, hence the epithet 'cash-and-carry politics'. Admittedly, economic growth and human development cannot thrive where political groups and individuals commodify elections. In view of this, it is pertinent to understand the sources of campaign financing in Nigeria. Against this backdrop, this study, through the instrumentality of literature review, provides an enhanced understanding of the sources of political parties' campaign finance in Nigeria.

Literature Review Approaches in Social Research

There are various literature review approaches in social research. The dominant ones are discussed below.

Historical Literature Review Approach

Reviews of historical literature concentrate on analyzing studies from a period of time, often beginning with the first time an issue, idea, theory, or phenomenon appeared, then tracing its

development to the present era within the scholarship of a discipline (Chigbu, Atiku & Du Plessis, 2023; Georgiou, 2021; Snyder, 2019). The goal is to put research in a historical context in order to demonstrate familiarity with state-of-the-art developments and to recognize the possible directions for future research. Thus, a historical analysis chronologically analyses all the historical scholarship documents.

Argumentative Literature Review Approach

In order to support or refute an argument, deeply embedded belief, or philosophical issue already identified in the literature, this approach explores literature selectively (Bacha, 2019). The goal is to create a literature body that develops a contrary point of view. Given the value-laden existence of some studies in social science, argumentative approaches to literature review are a valid and significant mode of discourse (Johan, 2024). An argumentative review is written to present an alternative view to a given viewpoint or idea, which helps persuade others to join in supporting a study.

Narrative Literature Review Approach

The narrative review is a conventional way of reviewing existing literature that is skewed towards prior knowledge being interpreted qualitatively. Narrative review summarizes what was written on a specific subject, but does not seek generalization from the reviewed literature (Pare, Trudel, Jaana, & Kitsiou, 2015; Sylvester et al., 2013). This kind of review critiques and summarizes a body of literature and draws conclusions about the subject in question. The literature body consists of the relevant studies and knowledge covering the subject area. It is usually selective in the content it uses, although it is not always obvious to the reader the criteria for choosing particular sources for review. This form of review is useful in collecting and synthesizing a volume of literature in a given subject field. The main aim is to provide a detailed context for the reader to understand existing knowledge and to highlight the relevance of new research. By finding contradictions in a body of information, it may stimulate research ideas, allowing the researcher to recognize or define research questions or hypotheses (Cronin, Ryan & Coughlan, 2008). It can also help simplify or concentrate a large research issue; however, it is useful for both the collection of data and the refinement of the topic. Again, Coughlan et al. (2007) posited that narrative review is beneficial in developing a conceptual or theoretical construct for a study.

Integrative Literature Review Approach

It is a type of review that integrally analyses, criticizes, and synthesizes representative literature on a subject in such a way that new structures and perspectives on the subject are developed. All research that presents similar or identical theories constitutes the body of literature. In terms of transparency, rigour, and replication, a well-articulated integrative review follows the same criteria as primary research (Kennedy, 2007). In order to incorporate a need for a new study, an integrative review consists of examinations and critical analysis of a given topic.

Theoretical Literature Review Approach

The purpose of this form of review is to analyze concretely the body of theory that has been gathered about a topic, idea, or phenomenon. The theoretical literature review helps to decide the theories already in existence, their relationships, the extent to which the current theories have been examined, and to establish new hypotheses to be tested (Turner, Baker & Kellner, 2018). Also, Snyder (2019) argued that it can be used to show that existing theories are insufficient to clarify new or evolving research issues. A theoretical principle or a whole theory or structure may be the subject of the unit of study.

Systematic Literature Review Approach

This form of review consists of an analysis of current evidence related to a clearly defined research question that uses pre-specified and structured methods to classify and critically evaluate relevant research to compile, report, and analyze data from the studies included in the examination. Usually, it focuses on a very particular empirical issue, often raised in a cause-and-effect manner. Systematic reviews use a more rigorous and well-defined approach to literature review in a particular subject area. Systematic reviews are used to answer well-focused social research questions. Parahoo (2006) recommends that the time frame within which the literature is chosen, as well as the methodology used to analyze and synthesize the outcomes of the studies in question are detailed in a systematic review. To determine the reliability and validity of the review, the researcher presents the specific criteria used to formulate the research question; create inclusion or exclusion criteria; select and access the literature, evaluate the quality of the literature included in the review; and interpret, synthesize, and disseminate the results (Parahoo, 2006).

Thematic Literature Review Approach

The thematic literature review is structured around an issue, theme, or topic, rather than the evolution of time. In a thematic review, however, the evolution of time can still be an important factor, but the focus is on the subject matter. The thematic literature review approach organizes existing studies by identifying common themes, patterns, and concepts across sources, enabling researchers to critically analyze, compare findings, and highlight gaps within a specific research topic. (Saydazimova & Begmatova, 2024; Willie, 2025). However, note that more authentic thematic reviews appear to break away from the order of chronology. In conjunction with the point made, a review structured in this way will change between time periods within each section.

Methodological Literature Review Approach

The methodological literature review approach focuses on the techniques or methods used by the researcher during the study's review of relevant literature. Methodological literature review does not necessarily concentrate on what someone has written, but how it was said, i.e., the analytical method. The methodological literature review approach examines and compares the research methods used in previous studies, focusing on data collection techniques, sampling procedures, and analytical tools to evaluate their strengths, weaknesses, and applicability (Adeniran & Tayo-Ladega, 2024). This approach to evaluating current literature offers a structure for interpretation at various levels (i.e., theories used, substantive fields, research methods, and data collection and analysis techniques). Annamalah (2024) observed that the methodological literature review allows researchers to draw on a wide range of expertise in the field of quantitative and qualitative integration, sampling, interviewing, data collection, and data analysis, from the conceptual level to specific documentation for use in fieldwork. Also, it helps to highlight many ethical concerns that a researcher should recognize and consider during the period of the study. In the analysis, a methodological scope will impact either the kinds of documents or the manner in which these documents are addressed.

Table 1: Summary of Literature Review Approaches in Social Research

Approach	Systematic	Semi-systematic	Integrative
Typical purpose	Synthesize and compare evidence	Overview research area and track development over time	Critique and synthesize

Research questions	Specific	Broad	Narrow or broad
Search strategy	Systematic	May or may not be systematic	Usually not systematic
Sample characteristics	Quantitative articles	Research articles	Research articles, books, and other published texts
Analysis and evaluation	Quantitative	Qualitative/quantitative	Qualitative
Examples of contribution	Evidence of effect inform policy and practice	State of knowledge Themes in literature Historical overview Research agenda Theoretical model	Taxonomy or classification Theoretical model or framework

Source: Snyder (2019)

While it can be challenging to determine the most appropriate approach for a specific type of review, the research question and the review's specific purpose always determine the appropriate strategy. While the systematic review is perhaps the most accurate and rigorous approach to collecting articles because it ensures that all relevant data have been covered, it requires a narrow research question and may not be feasible or even suitable for all types of projects. This is where the semi-systematic review can be useful, but this approach is also problematic, as it has fewer clear steps to follow. While the methodology for systematic reviews is straightforward and follows highly strict rules and standards (Liberati et al., 2009), the semi-systematic review process requires more development and tailoring to the specific project (Wong et al., 2013).

Often, researchers need to develop their own standards and a detailed plan to ensure the appropriate literature is accurately covered to be able to answer their research questions.

However, if done properly, this can be a highly effective way of covering more areas and broader topics than a systematic review can handle. In addition, when it comes to the integrative review, it becomes even more demanding, which puts more responsibility on and requires more skills of the researchers, as there are even fewer standards and guidelines on which to rely for developing a strategy (Torraco, 2005).

Objective Steps in Conducting a Literature Review

Develop Review Design

Developing a literature review design involves identifying relevant sources, defining key themes and concepts, and organizing existing studies systematically. It requires evaluating previous research findings, methodologies, and theoretical perspectives to establish the context of the study, identify research gaps, and provide a strong foundation for the current research investigation (Snyder, 2023). Once the research question has been identified and an overall review approach considered, Szarucki, Sadauskis, Mačiulytė-Šniukienė & Kosch (2025) emphasized that a search strategy for identifying relevant literature must be

developed. This includes selecting search terms and appropriate databases and deciding on inclusion and exclusion criteria. Here, a number of important decisions must be made that are crucial and will eventually determine the quality and rigor of the review. Search terms can be words or phrases used to access appropriate articles, books, and reports. These terms should be based on words and concepts that are directly related to the research question. Depending on the aim of the review and the research question, these search terms can be broad or narrow. Importantly, it could be worthwhile to consider including additional limitations.

Steer the Review

After deciding on the purpose, specific research questions, and type of approach, it is time to start conducting the actual review. When conducting the review, a pilot test of the review process and protocol is appropriate. By testing the search terms and inclusion criteria on a smaller sample, the process can be adjusted before performing the main review. It is common to adjust the process a number of times before actually selecting the final sample. Importantly, it should be noted that it is preferred to use two reviewers to select articles to ensure the quality and reliability of the search protocol (Brouard, 2020).

The actual selection of the sample can be done in a number of ways, depending on the nature and scope of the specific review. Depending on how many articles are yielded, different approaches will be appropriate. For example, reviewers may read each piece of literature that appears in the search in full; this is a highly useful, but time-consuming approach. Another option could be to focus on the research method or findings, and a third option is to conduct the review in stages by reading abstracts first and making selections, and then reading full-text articles later, before making the final selection. Once this is done and the initial articles (or other relevant literature) have been collected, the texts should be screened in full to ensure they meet the inclusion criteria (Antons & Breidbach, 2018).

Analysis

After conducting the literature review and deciding on a final sample, it is important to consider how the articles will be used to conduct an appropriate analysis. That is, after selecting a final sample, a standardized means of abstracting appropriate information from each article should be used. Data abstracted can be in the form of descriptive information, such as authors, years published, topic, or type of study, or in the form of effects and findings. It can also take the form of the conceptualization of a certain idea or theoretical perspective. Importantly, this should be done in concordance with the purpose and research question of the specific review, and the form will vary. In this step, it is important to consider training the reviewers to avoid any differences in coding and abstraction (if there is more than one) and monitoring the data abstraction carefully during the review process to ensure quality and reliability (Dunton, 2021). Often, if the aim is to publish in an academic journal, this will require a detailed description of the process or a measure of reliability between reviewers. Sometimes this is easy, if the information of interest is, for example, population, effect size, or sample size. However, it becomes harder when the information of interest is themes in the literature, perspectives, or providing a historical timeline.

Writing the Review

When writing the review, the motivation and need for the review must be clearly communicated. Depending on the approach, the final review article can be structured in different ways, and it will require different types of information and different levels of detail. Several standards and guidelines explicitly address how literature reviews should be reported and structured, including Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA), developed for systematic literature reviews and meta-analyses (Liberati

et al., 2009); Realist and Meta-Narrative Evidence Syntheses Evolving Standards (RAMESES), developed for systematic narrative reviews (Wong et al., 2013); and guidelines for integrative reviews (Torraco, 2005). Although review articles can be organized in various ways, some generalizations can be made. All authors are expected to follow accepted conventions for reporting on how the study was undertaken. It is necessary to describe the process of designing the review and the method for collecting literature. That is, how the literature was identified, analyzed, synthesized, and reported by the author. Doing so properly gives the reader the chance to assess the quality and trustworthiness of the findings.

Methodological Challenges in Conducting Literature Reviews

Inappropriate Search Strategy

One of the major challenges encountered by students in conducting research is the inappropriate search strategy. Most students do not know how to search for relevant extant materials for their study. Again, selection bias occurs where the articles included in a review are not representative of the evidence base as a whole (McDonagh, Peterson, Raina, Chang & Shekelle, 2013). Any resultant synthesis and conclusions based on this evidence are then highly likely to be biased or inaccurate. Broadly speaking, selection bias may occur in reviews as a result of failing to account for bias in what research is published (publication bias) and what data are reported in published studies (reporting bias), and by substandard review methods that affect which studies are included in the review. Specifically, in relation to search strategies, however, selection bias affects syntheses through inappropriate search strategies; choosing biased/unrepresentative bibliographic databases, or using inappropriate search strategies for the subject at hand.

Inconsistency and Faulty Checking Strategy

A researcher performing various tasks of a review may interpret definitions, concepts and system boundaries differently from another. This variability is an inherent part of being human, but in a literature review, it may result in the inclusion or exclusion of different set of studies depending on individual interpretation. By inconsistency and faulty checking strategy, a reviewer cannot be sure they are correctly accessing and reviewing the right literature. Also, inconsistency leads to a higher rate of errors which is unacceptable in knowledge production (Waffenschmidt, Knelangen, Sieben, Bühn, & Pieper, 2019).

Incompatible Synthesis

All literature reviews attempt to create new knowledge by summarizing a body of evidence. For quantitative reviews this may take the form of a meta-analysis; that is, combining of effect, sizes and variances across all studies to generate one or more summary effect estimates with confidence intervals (Stewart, 2010). Not all systematic reviews may use meta-analysis as a synthesis method, but all reviews that are identified as ‘meta-analyses’ must fulfill a number of standard requirements such as calculation of the effect sizes for individual studies, calculation of the combined effects and confidence intervals and so on (Koricheva, & Gurevitch, 2014; Vetter, Ruecker, & Storch, 2013). Meta-analyses and systematic reviews are therefore overlapping, with some arguing that all meta-analyses in social research should be based on systematic methods to identify, collate, extract information from and appraise studies as they are in other domains (Vetter, Ruecker, & Storch, 2013).

Lack of Appropriate Critical Appraisal

Reviews that fail to appropriately assess and account for the reliability of included studies are susceptible to perpetuating problems through their synthesis, resulting in inaccurate and

biased findings. Primary research may have issues relating to 'internal validity' (that is, the accuracy of methods) that are caused, for example, by confounding variables, failure to account for the presence of confounding variables, and a lack of randomization. Finally, review conclusions may be misleading if studies are selected for meta-analysis based on criteria that do not properly relate to the study question (Haddaway, Bethel, Dicks, Koricheva, Macura, Gillian Petrokofsky, Pullin, vilaakso & Stewart, 2020).

Methodological Significance of Literature Review

Literature Review Serves as a Data Collection and Analysis Tool in Social Research

Collection and analysis of data is a pivotal enterprise in socio-scientific research. Condon, Simpson and Emmanuel (2022) assert that the hallmark of research enterprise hinges on the ability and capacity to gather accurate data and analyze same for the advancement of knowledge. Data as a unique concept simply means information or a body of information. It is possible to extract this body of knowledge from many sources, such as words, numbers, pictures, hyperlinks, audio and video. Therefore, the information gathered or collected by the literature reviewer to inform a literature review represents data. It is reasonable that the method of literature review is used as a mechanism for collecting data - that is, as a way of collecting a body of knowledge related to a subject of interest. The literature review, as a data collection and analysis method, includes tasks such as the identifying, documenting, understanding, meaning-making, and transmission and analysis of information to advance knowledge. The literature review method is, indeed, actualized through the collection of data (Snyder, 2019). The literature review, in its optimal form, reflects a logical data collection process in which information is collected and evaluated in a thorough manner to provide answers to a research question.

Literature Review as a Method

The word method describes the basic approaches and processes systematically used by the researcher in the field of research, which are manifested in research design, sampling design, data collection, data analysis, data interpretation, and so on. The literature review is a method where the literature reviewer selects knowledge related to a topic of interest from a variety of methods and procedures for identifying, documenting, understanding, meaning-making, and transmission. In addition, as Onwuegbuzie, Leech and Collins (2011) asserted, carrying out a literature review is equal to conducting a research study, with the information obtained by the literature reviewer representing the data. In fact, the literature review includes the following four steps, as is the case with all studies, namely conceptualization, planning, implementation, and dissemination. According to Terry and Terry (2013), literature review is thus a way to understand and know how others have approached a similar topic and how they framed and went about conducting their research.

Literature Review Aids Theory Building

Socio-natural behaviours, events, or phenomena are explained with theories. More formally, a scientific theory is a system of constructs (concepts) and proposals (relationships between those constructs) that collectively provides a rational, systematic and consistent description of a phenomenon of interest within certain assumptions and boundary conditions (Bhattacherjee, 2012). A theory is a highly established method of reasoning as to why there are certain occurrences. Theory is best thought of as the consciousness behind the logic, strategies and what is actually observed in the present research. A theory helps inform almost all aspects of the study's findings, not just the literature review, but also the methods and how to ultimately interpret them.

Literature Review Helps Avoid the Incident of Academic Plagiarism in Social Research

In recent years, plagiarism has become an increasingly important topic in academic institutions, primarily due to the ease with which information can be copied from the internet and other sources and passed on as the individual researcher's study or effort. According to Ude-Akpeh & Ezekulie (2022), plagiarism is presenting the work and ideas of other people and passing them off as your own, without acknowledging the original source of the ideas used. Thus, the growth of originality in research studies is advanced by preparing a critical literature review. Originality is simply the function of search, study and review of literature of previous studies. At the start of a research study, preparing a literature review directs a researcher to conveniently prevent plagiarism mishap. And the researcher will note what and how a similar study has been conducted on the topic during a summary compilation of a topic for research. The researcher will tailor their own study accurately by understanding this reality in such a way that it will not appear as a mere rehashing of the original or old concept of another author. Thus, literature review helps to dispel suspiciousness and promote authenticity of social research.

Literature Review Sharpens Research Focus

A literature review sharpens research focus by examining existing studies, theories, and findings related to a topic. It helps researchers identify gaps, avoid duplication, clarify key concepts, and refine research questions. By understanding previous work, the researcher can narrow the study scope and concentrate on specific issues that require further investigation (Luft, Jeong, Idsardi & Gardner, 2022). Sajeevanie (2022) argued that the research emphasis is typically developed through a rigorous review of existing literature in a specific discipline. The notion of originality is closely linked to the search function and the literature review analysis. A researcher condenses, assesses, synthesizes, and paraphrases the concept of external sources in their own words after assembling external sources. In the broader sense of what other researchers have already done on the topic in the past, relevance is placed on research through this process of reviewing, analyzing and evaluating the extant literature.

Understanding Campaign Financing in Nigeria through a Literature Review

Money is the lifeblood of politics across the world but the abuse of the laws guiding how funds are spent by politicians and political parties continues to undermine democracy. Undoubtedly, political parties have come to play significant and fundamental roles in most democracies. The role of money in politics is of increasing relevance across the world. In spite of these fundamental roles, the activities and operations of political parties are sometimes taken for granted. As political machines established to contest for, win elections, and wield governmental power, they are critical link between the state and civil society, between the institutions of government and the groups and interest that operate within the society (Heywood, 2007; Ukase, 2015). Ukase (2015: 184) has underscored the importance of political parties thus:

Party system and party politics constitute the substructure or foundation of any viable and durable democratic order, for this provides insight into how programmes of actions are articulated and how interests are formed and aggregated in the society. Given these enormous responsibilities, the success or failure of any political arrangement depends to a large extent on the nature and character of its political parties and party system.

The nexus between finance and politics in Nigerian political system is undeniable. Money is the mother’s milk of politics globally. INEC (2015:7) conceptualizes campaign finance as the collection and expenditure of funds in relation to elections. The Political Party Finance Handbook (PPFH) developed by the INEC describes campaign expenditure as any expense

incurred by a party for the purpose of enhancing the standing of or promoting electoral success for a party at a forthcoming or future elections. This includes issuing disparaging materials relating to another party or its candidates. Thus, for the purpose of monitoring media spending, campaign expenditure is conceptualized as expenditure incurred by or on behalf of a registered political party or candidate to promote the party and candidate at an election or in connection with future elections (OSJI, 2005).

This conceptualization does not only include expenditure incurred by a political party or individual candidates, but also spending on behalf of political parties or candidates by third parties, such as their support groups, hidden advertisements by state and public institutions, or institutions supported by the state. More often than not, third party spending is often used as a way of evading legal limits on campaign expenditure, but it could also be a perfectly legitimate form of political expression for individuals and organizations (OSJI, 2005). Therefore, the line between legitimate and questionable third-party spending is sometimes blur. The approach favoured in the literature is focusing on campaign outputs and estimating their costs or market value.

Given the plutocratic realities of liberal democratic system, it is a well acknowledged fact that money is crucial to politics. At the same time, unregulated use of money portends dangers to electoral politics and democratic survival. Money becomes a threat to politics when it is used arbitrarily to corrupt the electoral process. This prompts democracies across the world, including Nigeria to design regulations to combat the danger of unregulated political funds.

Campaign finance is shaped and reshaped by the relations between parties, politicians, party membership and the electorate. Money is vital for democracy because many political activities simply cannot occur without it. The narrow definitions of campaign finance tend to focus on campaign and party funding. In fact, many extra-party actors are involved in political competition with the objective of shaping public policy agenda, influencing legislation or electoral debates and outcomes (Walecki, 2008:1).

Campaign finance as a concept has been defined as the use of money or the use of other material resources for political activities (Ayoade, 2006). It also embodies the sources or means through which political activities are sponsored in a given polity. The concept of campaign finance has two broad connotations, namely, money used for electioneering (campaign funds) and money used for political party expenses (party funds). Although, there are various forms of campaign finance, this study focuses on campaign funds and party funds, as they constitute the foundation of political activities.

Campaign Finance in Nigeria's Political System: Gaps in the Literature

It is important to stress that there is a research gap on issues of campaign and party funding, particularly regarding the money spent on political party delegates who elect their party's flagbearers. Despite extensive studies on virtually all aspects of political parties, researchers appear to have paid little or no attention to financial issues, especially campaign finances relating to political party candidates' campaign funding during primary elections. The debate about party funding and campaign finance has generally revolved around the negative effects of uncontrolled, undisclosed and opaque political finance as a major challenge to the integrity of elections in emerging and advanced democracies alike.

According to the former chairman of INEC, Professor Attahiru Jega, transparency of political and election campaign finance is central to a vibrant and sustainable democracy (INEC, 2015). It has a decisive effect on operations and the quality of democracy in a country. Thus,

the issue of party and campaign finance remains integral to sanitize Nigeria's growing electoral democracy given the corrosive influence of money and abuse of state and administrative resources on the electoral geography (Salman, 2015). Money exerts far-reaching influence on electoral democracy as it is required for the running of political parties and for the candidates to finance their campaigns (Ukase, 2015; Adetula, 2014; Onyekpere, 2013; Fisher and Eisenstadt, 2004). But the challenge has often been how to reduce the undue influence of money so that it does not subvert the will of the people and the democratic process. Perhaps this explains why Nigeria's electoral laws usually impose caps on the amount of money an individual or entity can donate for election campaigns, as well as ceilings on how much candidates can spend for different categories of elective offices, such as presidential, gubernatorial, and state assembly elections.

Table 2: Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria in the Present Study

This study's review is guided by the following inclusion and exclusion criteria.

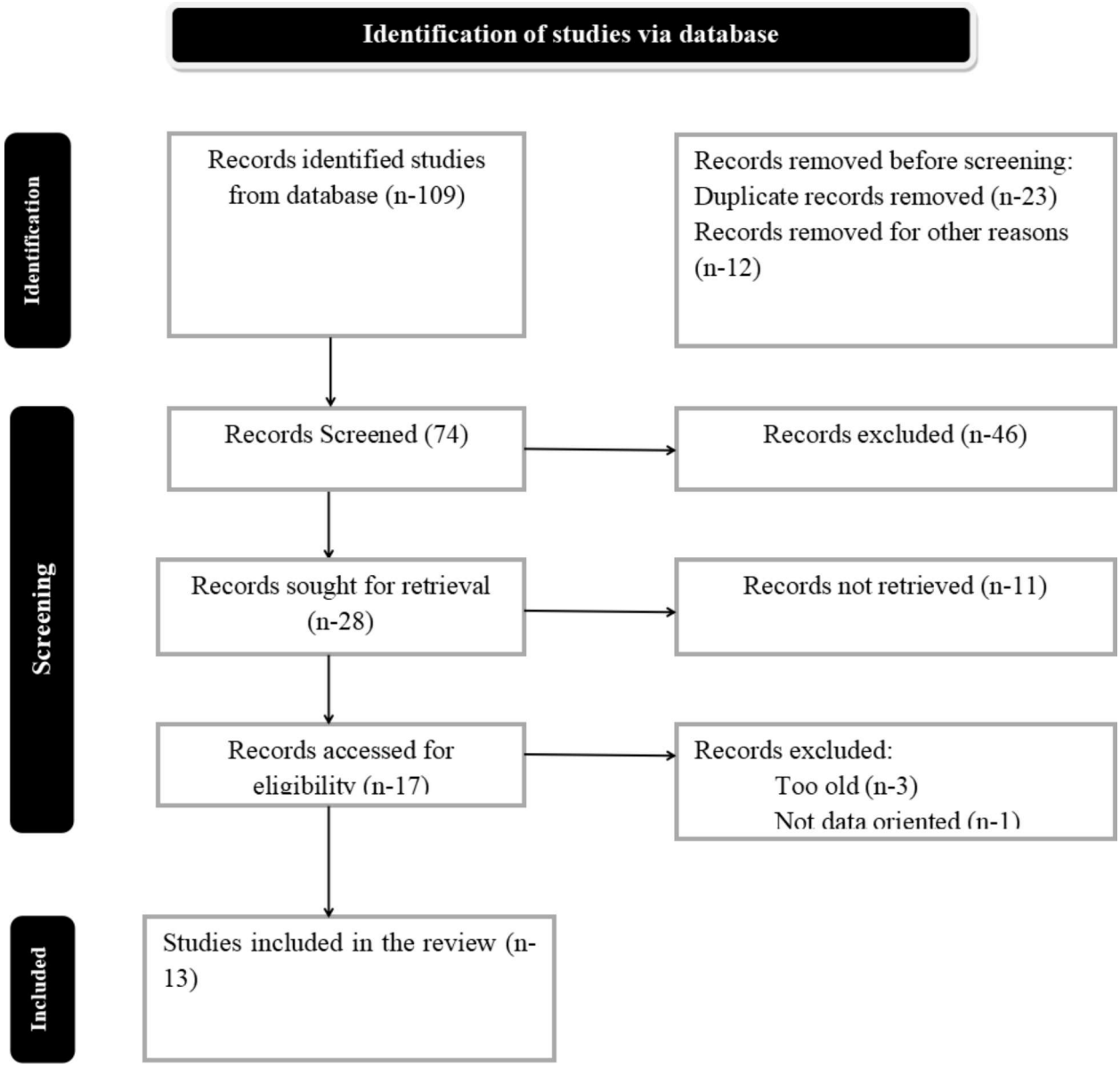
Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
The Study Design	Literature reviews, systematic reviews, meta-analyses, cohort studies, cross-sectional studies, surveys	Case reports, editorials, letters to the editor, conference abstracts, commentaries
The Year of Publication	2000 to 2023	Before 2000
The Topic	Campaign finance and financing, money politics, political party funding in Nigeria political system	Studies that are not based on campaign finance and financing, money politics, political party funding in Nigeria political system
The Language of Publication	Studies published in English	Studies published in languages other than English
The Geographical Location	Restricted to studies in Nigeria	Studies conducted outside of the Nigeria
The Availability of Full Text	Full text available	Only abstract or summary available

Source: Authors analysis (2026)

Secondary sources were used to collect data for this study. To conduct a thorough analysis of the subject, secondary data was gathered from a variety of sources, especially relevant publications (Adetula, 2015; Akpotor, 2015; Ayeni, 2019; Odunlami, Akinola & Adetola, 2019; Oji, Eme & Nwoba, 2014; Sule, 2018; Ukase, 2016). Based on the criteria, studies selected for the research included (i) those that have been published in English language, (ii) those that have successfully addressed the challenges of campaign finance and money politics in Nigeria, and (iii) those that have examined the relationship between money politics and electoral outcomes in Nigeria. See the figure 1 below for more details.

Figure 1: PRISMA Illustration

PRISMA Diagram Used for the Study



Source: Authors analysis (2026)

The figure 1 shows the analysis of summarized data that helped to develop a proper literature review regarding the impact of campaign finance on political outcomes in Nigeria. It presents the source of review of an enhanced understanding of political parties' campaign finance. Again, the summarized data further helped to analyze the nature and pattern of deployment of funds in the electoral process.

Table 3: Selected Literature on Campaign Finance in Nigeria Using the PRISMA Framework

Authors	Year	Title of the Study	Findings	Recommendations
Ayeni, O. O.	2019	Commodification of Politics: Party Funding and Electoral Contest in Nigeria	Party funding is responsible for election victory and failure with special reference to party funding.	Government should make extant laws that ensure accountability and reduce the influx of money into political parties by building and enhancing the institutions with the capacity to track illicit funds with modern technology and technique.
Odunlami, D., Akinola, L. and Adetola, O. B.	2019	Monitoring Political Parties' Spending in Nigerian Elections: What Role for the Press and other Public Institutions?	The nature of party spending for elections in Nigeria is yet far from transparent and the roles of the public institutions saddled with the responsibility including the press is called into question.	All elements that make INEC tied to the apron strings of the government should be untied to enable her deliver and function maximally for the good of democracy and Nigerians.
Sule, B.	2018	Political Party Financing and Election Reformations In Nigeria's 2015 General Election: Issues and Impacts	There was a clear violation of regulations on political party financing and massive corrupt practices amounting to trillions of Naira, particularly by the two major contending parties: APC and PDP. This money was sourced from government's treasury and illegally spent in bribing the stakeholders who	Political party financing should be regulated and revisited to enable future election to be conducted using electronic voting. In addition, financial activities of parties and candidates should be strictly monitored and violation of electoral laws by any party or candidate should be sanctioned severely.

			were involved in the elections but, the election reformation helped immensely in producing an improved election in comparison with the previous ones.	
Olorunmola, A.	2016	The Cost of Parliamentary Politics in Nigeria	Although INEC also has presence in all the states of Nigeria, it is doubtful that the Commission has enough human resource to effectively monitor infringements and still be focused on election activities. The current situation is not expected to change until both the political will and ability to enforce legal provisions are established.	Capacity building and experience sharing workshops to identify practical cost effective mechanisms for monitoring and tracking compliance with political finance regulations.
Sule, B., Sani, M. A. M. and Mat, B.	2018	Impact of Political Party Financing on Integrity of 2015 General Election in Nigeria	There were excessive use of money and violation of electoral regulations in the 2015 general election	There is need to look into the aspect of political party financing in future elections with a serious determination to foster transparency and more credible elections
Vande, P. T.	2017	Vote Buying And Credible Elections In Nigeria: An Opinion Survey Of Voters On The 2019 General Election In The Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja	Efforts to institutionalize best practices of democracy as well as ensuring the sanctity and integrity of the process in Nigeria have always encountered threats in every election	There is the need to reduce poverty as well as the amendment of the Electoral Act 2010 to incorporate electronic voting, among others, as a measure to curbing vote buying

			cycle.	
Ukase, P. I.	2016	Political Parties and Election/Campaign Financing in Nigeria: Interrogating the 2015 General Elections	There were infractions of laws regulating party finance during campaigns and elections by political actors in the 2015 general elections	The Commission should enforce the law against violations of the Electoral Act without fear and favour
Adetula, V. A. O.	2015	Godfathers, Money Politics, and Electoral Violence in Nigeria: Focus on 2015 Elections	There were weaknesses in the legal framework to control the use of money in politics; Nigerians were indifferent to the problem of party finance; there was obvious rent-seeking behaviour by political elites and their parties	The capacity of INEC and other relevant institutions and agencies such as the police and other security agencies needs to be strengthened
Akpotor, A. S.	2015	Legal Framework for Elections in Nigeria. A Study of the 2015 General Elections	The legal framework for the 2015 election was weak	A stronger legal framework for better free, fair and credible election is needed
Nwanegbo, C. J.	2015	Electoral Process and Micro Level Rigging in 2015 General Elections in Anambra West and Awka North Local Government Areas of Anambra State.	The negative effect of bad governance has increased the poverty level, making the elections avenues for making profit.	An effective model to help the electoral body in planning against such vices is needed
Oji, R.O., Eme, O. I. and Nwoba, H. A.	2014	Political Party Funding in Nigeria: A Case of the People's Democratic Party	There were ineffective management of political finance	Electoral actors must have the obligation to submit election expenses report to the INEC (for national elections) and State Independent Electoral Commissions (for sub-

				national elections)
Ovwasa. O. L.	2014	Money Politics and Vote Buying in Nigeria: The Bane of Good Governance	Pervasive money politics portends dangers to the democratic process and in turn good governance	More transparent and effective screening methods need to be developed by the political parties and electoral institutions to checkmate infractions
Ologbenla, D. & Adisa, W. B.	2012	Money-Bag Politics, Rent-Seeking and Flawed Elections in Nigeria: A Theoretical Statement	Money-bag politics illegitimately influences the outcomes of the electoral process	There is a need for enlightenment and awareness creation

Source: Compiled by the authors from relevant scholarly literature

To obtain relevant articles, the researchers reviewed 13 studies published between 2000 and 2020 on the impact of campaign finance in Nigeria. These studies were drawn from both local and international journals and selected based on the study's inclusion criteria, which considered the year of publication, research focus, findings, and recommendations.

Results and Discussion

Campaign finance is an integral component of Nigeria's democratic political landscape. The role of money in Nigerian politics is of increasing relevance in all aspects of the electioneering process. Consequently, campaign financing role in the electoral space is increasingly prominent. Thus, the research findings indicate that the sources of political party and candidates finance during electioneering process in Nigeria have been plagued by illegal practices. The study found that there are obvious links between campaign finance and corruption. In other words, the findings of the study indicate that large amount of the money used to fund political parties and their candidates during electioneering process are sourced illegally. This establishes the fact that money-bags or godfathers deploy state resources to fund political parties and their candidates. This position of the study is consistent with Ologbenla and Adisa (2012) who assert that money-bag politics is a form of rent-seeking. It entails the use of money illegitimately to influence the outcomes of an electoral process. In fact, most political parties in Nigeria do not have a legitimate mechanism of sourcing for funds from their members. Instead, they rely on individuals and entities that have illegal access to public funds. These individuals not only fund party activities but also influence party decisions. Notably, Adetula (2015) refers to this group of individuals as *loco parentis*, as they often determine the party's agenda. It is further noted that this situation flourishes when party supremacy is replaced by the supremacy of the government over the party (Adetula, 2015). Thus, political parties in Nigeria are no longer subscription organizations as they used to be. Parties are therefore exposed to financiers who usually expect returns on their investment, thereby commoditizing election. Consequently, the party in spite of its constitution stops being a public stakeholder organization. Instead, it has become a privatized shareholder organization (Adetula, 2015).

This transactional nature of elections is proving too expensive for the country to run. Akpotor (2015) asserted that over ₦4 trillion was used during electioneering process by political actors to actualize their political ambitions in 2015. The consequences of this scenario, is that it breeds political corruption. This type of return on investment that political parties are exposed to aids financial misappropriation in governance. Considering this, the study reveals that the larger portion of the sampled population concurred to the fact that the pattern of deployment of money on the electoral process is the root of political corruption in Nigeria. The manner in which money is deployed in the electioneering process by political compradors with ulterior motives fuels political corruption and undermines economic growth and sustainable development. Ovwasa (2014) contends that monetized politics portends dangers to the democratic process and good governance. Similarly, Vande (2017) found that the quest to institutionalize best practices of democracy as well as ensuring the sanctity and integrity of the process in Nigeria has always encountered threats in every election cycle on account of incessant vote buying and other infractions.

The review also shows that there is a nexus between election monetization and electoral outcome as the money deployed during the electioneering process is often used for vote buying. According to the interview conducted by Nwanegbo (2015), effective mitigation of the menace of vote commoditization is a herculean task because a good number of the electorates said they would prefer to keep their vote if they are not paid for as they actually do not believe that the person being voted for can really affect them positively after election. This is a terrible indication of the level of distrust between the people and their elected representatives.

Conclusion

This paper critically examined the methodological significance of the literature review in social research, using campaign financing in Nigeria as an empirical example. The study underscores the importance for social researchers to possess a thorough understanding of the role of literature reviews at all stages of the research process, including question formulation, data collection, and analysis, to ensure the reliability and validity of findings. Since the literature review serves as a bridge between past and current studies, it is essential for the sustainable production of knowledge in the social sciences.

A review of current and relevant literature on a specific topic must provide a clear and concise description to achieve a balanced integration of prior studies' methodologies and primary findings, while demonstrating the rationale for further research on the subject. With the growing emphasis on innovative methods for data collection and analysis, social researchers must understand how to prepare literature reviews that align with their research objectives. This study has provided both a theoretical and practical foundation on the methodological significance of literature reviews in social research. It posits that, for social research to be rigorous and scholarly, literature reviews must be critical, systematic, and thorough in examining existing studies, thereby contributing meaningfully to knowledge production.

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