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Triangulation as a Methodological Tool for Examining Political Party Financing and Voting Behaviour in North Central Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Elections constitute a fundamental pillar of democracy, serving as the primary mechanism through which representatives are chosen and held accountable. However, the integrity of electoral processes is heavily influenced by the nature and management of political party financing. In Nigeria, as in many democracies, the sources and deployment of electoral funds have raised significant concerns regarding transparency, accountability, and their consequent impact on voter behaviour. This study examines the nexus between political party financing and voting behaviour in North Central Nigeria, employing methodological triangulation to enhance the validity and depth of the inquiry. By integrating quantitative and qualitative data, the research investigates the extent, motivations, and effects of party funding on electoral choices and democratic governance in the region. Drawing on a survey of 800 voters, interviews with 133 political party executives, and focus group discussions with election observer groups across Benue and Kogi States, the study reveals that unregulated political party financing significantly impacts voting behaviour, with vote-buying and material inducements shaping electoral outcomes. The findings indicate that the All Progressives Congress (APC) and Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) exceeded the N1 billion campaign spending limit in the 2019 general elections, spending N4.6 billion and N3.3 billion respectively, without submitting required audited financial reports (Independent National Electoral Commission [INEC], 2020). The study contributes to policy discussions on campaign finance reform and the strengthening of democratic institutions in Nigeria.

Keywords: Democracy, Election, Triangulation, Political Party Financing, Voting Behaviour, North Central Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Democracy, as a form of government, vests sovereign power in the people, exercised directly or through elected representatives. Central to this system are periodic, free, credible and fair elections, which legitimise political authority and facilitate peaceful political succession (Nnoli, 1981). In contemporary democracies, the conduct of elections is an expensive endeavour, requiring substantial financial resources for political parties to organise, mobilise, and communicate with the electorate. This necessity gives rise to the critical issue of political party financing. The management of these funds presents a profound dilemma: while adequate financing is indispensable for vibrant political competition and participatory democracy, unregulated or opaque funding can distort political representation, undermine electoral integrity, and foster corrupt practices (Ukase, 2015). When the financial lifeline of a party is dominated by a few wealthy individuals or corporate interests, the party's agenda may prioritise the benefactors' interests over the public good, thereby alienating the electorate and shaping voting behaviour in perverse ways (Usman et al., 2023).

The North Central geo-political zone of Nigeria, with its diverse ethnic composition and competitive political landscape, provides a pertinent context to study the dynamics of party financing and its correlation with voter attitudes and choices. Recent studies have established that political party financing does impact voting behaviour in the North Central region, with poverty deepening the effect of financing on voters' decisions (Yakubu et al., 2025). The catchphrase "stomach infrastructure" a term used to describe the preference for immediate gains like food and money as opposed to long-term development has become widespread, making it almost impossible to ensure credibility and transparency in the electoral process (Ocheja & Esomchi, 2023).

Statement of the Problem

The influence of money in Nigerian politics is pervasive and often cited as a major factor eroding the quality of democracy. In North Central Nigeria, elections are characterised by high-stakes competition, yet there is a palpable disconnect between massive campaign spending and the delivery of democratic dividends to the populace. This scenario suggests that political party financing may be fostering a voting behaviour driven by short-term material inducements rather than programmatic commitments or ideological alignment. The problem is compounded by a lack of rigorous, multi-method empirical studies that systematically dissect the funding mechanisms, their underlying motivations, and their precise impact on the electorate's behaviour. Prevailing analyses often rely on single-method approaches, which limit perspective and robustness. Recent research indicates that excessive political party financing affects the performances of eventual winners after elections, and that financing does not benefit the region in terms of governance and development (Ocheja & Esomchi, 2023). Furthermore, INEC's failure to enforce compliance with financial disclosure requirements with only 34 out of 91 political parties submitting audit reports for the 2019 elections, and only nine meeting full compliance requirements highlights the regulatory gaps that perpetuate this problem (INEC, 2020). There is a significant gap in knowledge regarding how the triangulation of research methods can yield a more valid and holistic explanation of the funding-behaviour nexus in this region. This study addresses this gap by employing methodological triangulation to comprehensively examine the relationship between political party financing and voting behaviour in North Central Nigeria.

Research Questions

This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the nature and extent of political party financing in North Central Nigeria?
2. What are the primary motivations behind the major sources of party funding in the region?
3. To what extent does political party financing influence the voting behaviour of the electorate in North Central Nigeria?
4. What are the implications of the current party financing regime for good governance, accountability, and democratic consolidation in the region?

Objectives of the Study

The general objective is to examine the relationship between political party financing and voting behaviour in North Central Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

1. Ascertain the nature, sources, and scale of political party financing in North Central Nigeria.
2. Examine the motivations driving significant financial contributions to political parties in the region.
3. Assess the influence of party financing on the voting decisions and overall electoral behaviour of the electorate.
4. Evaluate the consequences of the prevailing party financing patterns for governance quality and democratic representation.

Significance of the Study

This study holds significance for multiple stakeholders. For academia, it demonstrates the application of methodological triangulation in political science research, enriching the methodological discourse (Denzin, 1978). As noted by scholars, triangulation enables researchers to cross-verify data, reduce bias, and develop a more robust understanding of complex social phenomena (Heale & Forbes, 2013). For policymakers and regulatory bodies like the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), it provides evidence-based insights that can inform more effective laws and regulations on campaign finance. For civil society and the electorate, it illuminates the often-opaque linkages between money and politics, fostering greater public awareness and demand for accountability.

Scope and Delimitation

The study focuses on North Central Nigeria, specifically Benue and Kogi States, examining the 2015, 2019, and 2023 general elections. These states are selected for their political competitiveness, history of active electoral participation, and accessibility. The study concentrates on the three dominant political parties: the All-Progressives Congress (APC), the People's Democratic Party (PDP), and the Labour Party (LP).

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Political Party Financing

Political party financing refers to the structured mechanisms through which political parties obtain the necessary resources to operate, campaign, and advance their agendas. It is a crucial aspect of democratic governance because adequate funding enables political parties to communicate their ideologies, organize campaigns, engage with the electorate, and maintain internal structures that sustain their political influence. The sources of political party financing are diverse and may vary depending on a country's legal, social, and economic context. These include: membership dues, donations from individuals and corporations, state subventions or public funding, fundraising events, and the sale of nomination forms. Effective political party financing requires robust legal and institutional frameworks to ensure accountability, transparency, and the equitable distribution of resources (Akpan, 2024). In Nigeria, the commercialisation of elections has become a notable consequence of the current financing regime. The high costs of participation including the purchase of nomination forms, campaign advertising, and logistical expenses have transformed elections into contests of financial capacity rather than policy debate or ideological competition (Anie, 2019). As documented by INEC (2020), the APC and PDP exceeded the N1 billion campaign spending limit in the 2019 general elections, with the APC spending N4.6 billion and the PDP N3.3 billion. According to Ocheja and Obi (2023), the electoral window in Nigeria's political terrain is conceived by the elite as an investment venture of which profit is to be maximised by means of the exchange of electorates' voting power for money.

Voting Behaviour

Voting behaviour refers to the attitudes, decisions, and actions of citizens when participating in the electoral process. It is a complex phenomenon influenced by an interplay of social, psychological, cultural, and economic factors (Afolabi, 2018). Understanding voting behaviour is crucial for political scientists, policymakers, and parties themselves, as it helps explain election outcomes, political stability, and citizen engagement in governance. Key determinants of voting behaviour include ethnicity, religion, party affiliation, candidate appeal, material considerations, media influence, peer pressure, political campaigns, and education. In the North Central Nigerian context, research has shown that voting behaviour is essentially determined by the ability of political gladiators to appeal to and mobilize ethnic, sub-ethnic, and religious sentiments and identities of the people concerned to ascend to political office (Ayobolu, 2025).

The Nexus between Financing and Voting Behaviour

Political party financing is closely linked to voting behaviour, as the scale and nature of campaign resources significantly influence electoral outcomes. Research suggests that the availability of financial resources enables parties and candidates to mobilize voters, shape perceptions, and, in some cases, deploy resources for direct vote-buying or patronage (Usman et al., 2023). This relationship creates a feedback loop where electoral success is increasingly dependent on financial capacity rather than ideology, competence, or performance. Lavish campaign spending can take many forms, including mass rallies, media campaigns, gifts to voters, and localized patronage programs. In contexts marked by poverty, low literacy, and limited political awareness, these expenditures can have a disproportionate effect on voter behaviour. Findings reveal that unregulated political party financing undermines Nigeria's electoral process and promotes political patronage and clientele networks (Usman et al., 2023).

Methodological Triangulation: A Comprehensive Framework

Research is a systematic and structured process through which humans seek to understand the environment, social phenomena, and natural processes. In the social sciences, research focuses on understanding human behaviour, decision-making, and social interactions, which are influenced by free will, choices, and interactions with complex societal forces (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Triangulation offers a solution to the limitations of single-method approaches by employing multiple methods, sources, or theoretical perspectives in the study of a single phenomenon. In the social sciences, triangulation involves combining qualitative and quantitative approaches, using multiple observers, or drawing on diverse empirical materials to ensure the validity, reliability, and comprehensiveness of research findings (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). Denzin (1978) identified four types of triangulation: data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation, and methodological triangulation (Denzin, 1978). Methodological triangulation, the most common form, involves using two or more data collection methods within the same study. For instance, a researcher might combine quantitative surveys to measure party contributions and voter turnout with qualitative interviews to explore perceptions of political financing and decision-making motivations. According to Carter et al. (2014), methodological triangulation includes data collection of multiple methods on the study of the same phenomenon, and may include interviews, observation, and other approaches. The technique originates from navigation and land surveying, where a location is determined by the intersection of measurements from multiple points. Similarly, in research, triangulation enables scholars to cross-verify data, reduce bias, and develop a more robust understanding of complex social phenomena. Greene et al. (1989) identified five purposes for the use of multiple methods: triangulation (convergence and confirmation of results), complementarity (interpretation of different aspects), development (results of one method inform the other), initiation (discovery of contradictions and paradoxes), and extending (expanding and deepening research). By integrating multiple methods, triangulation provides a more comprehensive, nuanced, and accurate representation of the political dynamics shaping Nigeria's democracy.

Theoretical Framework

Resource Mobilisation Theory

This study is anchored on the Resource Mobilisation Theory (RMT), originally developed by McCarthy and Zald (1977) in the context of social movements, and later adapted to political party behaviour by scholars such as Edwards and McCarthy (2004). The theory posits that the success of any political organisation including political parties is fundamentally dependent on its ability to acquire, control, and deploy material and human resources. These resources include financial capital, organisational infrastructure, skilled personnel, media access, and network connections. RMT challenges earlier perspectives that viewed political participation as primarily driven by grievances or ideological commitment. Instead, it argues that access to resources determines which parties emerge, which candidates win nominations, which campaigns effectively reach voters, and ultimately, which parties secure electoral victory. According to this framework, political parties function as competitive firms in a market, and their market share (votes) correlates strongly with their resource endowment (funding). The theory is particularly relevant to the Nigerian context for three reasons. First, the high cost of elections and the prevalence of "godfatherism" reflect a resource-dependent political ecosystem where wealth determines political relevance. Second, voting behaviour in contexts of poverty and limited political literacy becomes susceptible to resource-induced influence, including vote-buying, patronage distribution, and media saturation. Third, the theory explains why the APC and PDP have dominated their superior financing compared to smaller parties creates an unlevel playing field.

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Clientelism Theory as a Complementary Framework

While RMT provides a robust framework for understanding the importance of financial resources, it may overemphasize material resources while underestimating the role of ideology, ethnicity, religion, and incumbency advantages. To address this limitation, this study complements RMT with Clientelism Theory, which specifically explains how resource exchanges create voter obligation and loyalty through patron-client networks prevalent in North Central Nigeria's political culture. Clientelism Theory, drawing on the work of Stokes et al. (2013) and Kitschelt and Wilkinson (2007), conceptualizes electoral politics as a series of contingent exchanges between patrons (politicians, party elites, wealthy individuals) and clients (voters, community leaders). Unlike programmatic politics, where parties offer policy platforms and public goods to all citizens irrespective of their vote choice, clientelistic politics involves the targeted distribution of private or excludable goods in exchange for electoral support. Research on clientelism in African democracies demonstrates that clientelistic strategies flourish in contexts where state institutions are weak, electoral competition is high, and voters lack access to public goods (Kitschelt & Wilkinson, 2007).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Research design refers to the strategic blueprint for addressing a research problem and achieving the study's objectives. For this study, the descriptive survey research design is employed. Survey research is particularly effective in collecting data from a representative sample to identify patterns, relationships, and trends within a population (Awotunde & Ugodulunwa, 2004). It enables the researcher to describe characteristics of the population, examine relationships among variables, and infer generalizable conclusions. The descriptive survey design is ideal for this study due to the dispersed nature of the population across North Central Nigeria. The zone comprises six states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), with diverse socio-political dynamics. Employing a survey design allows researchers to systematically collect data across these varied locations, ensuring that the findings accurately reflect the behaviour of both voters and political actors (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Study Area

The study focuses on Nigeria's North Central geopolitical zone, comprising six states Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Niger, Plateau, and Nasarawa and the FCT of Abuja. This zone, which accounts for approximately 14% of Nigeria's total population based on the 2006 census, has historically played a significant role in national elections and political party dynamics (Mustapha, 2007). The study concentrates on Benue and Kogi States, chosen due to their political significance and the predominance of the three major political parties, APC, PDP, and LP, over the past decade. Both states have experienced electoral contests where party financing, candidate selection, and voter mobilisation have directly influenced election outcomes. Previous research in this region has revealed that political party financing impacts and influences voters' behaviour during elections to a large extent (Yakubu et al., 2025).

Population of the Study

The study population comprises three categories: eligible voters with Permanent Voter Cards who participated in the 2015, 2019, and 2023 elections, as they possess firsthand experience of campaign activities and party financing influences; political party executives from APC, PDP, and LP across wards in the senatorial districts of the selected states, totaling 200 individuals, whose insights are critical for understanding internal party financing mechanisms, candidate selection, and campaign strategies; and election observer groups, including 10 groups (five from each state) that monitored elections during the general elections, providing an external perspective on electoral processes, transparency, and compliance with funding regulations.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

A total sample size of 943 respondents was selected using multistage sampling techniques. This includes 800 voters (400 from each state), 133 party executives, and 10 observer groups. Stratified sampling divided states into three senatorial districts for representative coverage. Simple random sampling selects voters within each stratum, ensuring fairness and reducing selection bias. Purposive sampling selected political party executives based on their role and experience in party financing. Convenient and proportionate sampling selected observer groups that were actively involved in electoral monitoring. The Taro Yamane (1967) formula determined the sample size, ensuring statistical validity and reliability. For instance, for Benue State voters: $n = N / (1 + N(e)^2) = 2,244,376 / (1 + 2,244,376 \times 0.05^2) \approx 400$.

Instruments of Data Collection

The study employed questionnaires and oral interviews as primary instruments. The questionnaire included structured Likert-scale items focusing on voter perceptions, experiences with campaign financing, and the influence of party resources on electoral choices. Oral interviews complemented this by capturing qualitative insights, allowing respondents to elaborate on experiences, gaps, and perceptions not easily quantified. This mixed-methods approach aligns with the principles of triangulation, as it incorporates both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. As noted by Ocheja and Esomchi (2023), the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods is essential for understanding the complex dynamics of political party financing and voting behaviour.

Validity and Reliability of Research Instruments

Validity ensures that the instrument measures what it purports to measure (Ikeagwu, 2002). This study adopted content validity, ensuring alignment with research objectives, problem statements, and hypotheses. A panel of five political science experts reviewed instruments for face and content validity, confirming relevance, clarity, and comprehensiveness. Reliability measures the consistency of instruments (Uzoagulu, 2005). The test-retest method was applied to 20 respondents, with Cronbach's alpha used to assess internal consistency. Instruments with alpha ≥ 0.74 were considered reliable.

Data Analysis

Data analysis combined descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Quantitative data from questionnaires were analysed using frequency distributions, percentages, and charts via SPSS. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient tested hypotheses and relationships between party financing and voter behaviour. Qualitative data from interviews were analysed thematically, identifying patterns, trends, and recurrent themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This integrated approach reflects the triangulation methodology, ensuring that findings are robust, corroborated, and reflective of the complexities of political financing and voter behaviour in North Central Nigeria.

RESULTS

Nature and Extent of Political Party Financing

The study reveals that political party financing in North Central Nigeria is characterised by heavy reliance on private donations, sale of nomination forms, and "godfatherism." Findings indicate that the majority of voters report awareness of high campaign spending by major parties, with the APC and PDP spending significantly beyond legal limits (Yakubu et al., 2025). INEC's tracking of campaign expenditures in the 2019 general elections established that the APC spent N4.6 billion on the presidential election, while the PDP spent N3.3 billion, far exceeding the legal spending limit of N1 billion (INEC, 2020). Furthermore, only 34 out of 91 political parties submitted audit reports for the 2019 elections, and among these, only nine met the full requirements of submitting audit reports accompanied by an affidavit. The two major parties APC and PDP were not among those that submitted their audit reports. This finding aligns with recent allegations that APC governors diverted about ₦800 billion for political and campaign-related activities, raising serious concerns about political finance transparency (Lawal, 2026).

Motivations Behind Financial Contributions

Party executives interviewed describe reliance on "godfathers" wealthy individuals and corporate interests who fund campaigns with expectations of preferential treatment, policy access, and post-election contracts. Donors interviewed describe expectations of "access" and "recognition" as primary motivations for their financial contributions. The study identified that political party financing in the region is driven by: investment logic, where political elites view elections as investment ventures where profit is maximized through exchange of voters' power for money (Ocheja & Esomchi, 2023); access and influence, where corporate donors seek favourable policy outcomes and government contracts; and patronage networks, where politicians build and maintain clientelistic relationships through resource distribution. Ocheja and Esomchi (2023) found that excessive political party financing affects the performances of eventual winners after elections, and that political party financing does not benefit the region in terms of governance and development.

Influence of Party Financing on Voting Behaviour

The triangulated findings reveal that political party financing significantly impacts voting behaviour in North Central Nigeria. Survey data shows that a significant percentage of respondents report receiving material inducements during campaigns. Qualitative interviews with voters reveal transactional reasoning: voters describe accepting inducements with the understanding that "they will not remember us after the election." Key findings on the financing-voting behaviour nexus include: vote-buying prevalence, where vote-buying is prevalent but may not guarantee loyalty; partisanship as a targeting criterion, where politicians strategically target loyal partisans who are more likely to reciprocate (Awoyemi, 2025); and poverty as a non-predictor, where, contrary to traditional assumptions, poverty is not always a strong predictor of susceptibility to vote-buying (Awoyemi, 2025). Usman et al. (2023) found that unregulated political party financing undermines Nigeria's electoral process and promotes political patronage and clientele networks, leading to unequal participation and making it difficult for new political forces to emerge. Obiajulu et al. (2026) established that prevalent electoral irregularities such as vote buying, voter intimidation, ballot snatching, and result manipulation are significantly associated with post-election violence in North Central Nigeria ($r = 0.71$, $p < 0.05$), with electoral irregularities explaining 64% of post-election violence variance.

Implications for Governance and Democratic Consolidation

The study reveals that unregulated political party financing undermines Nigeria's electoral process and democratic consolidation. Findings indicate: policy capture, where excessive campaign spending creates a "revolving door" between campaign donors and contract awards, with elected officials giving preferential treatment to their backers (Usman et al., 2023); unequal participation, where high financing requirements make it almost impossible for new and upcoming political forces to emerge, entrenching the dominance of wealthy actors; institutional weakness, where INEC's limited capacity to enforce disclosure requirements and monitor campaign spending perpetuates the problem; and electoral irregularities, where prevalence of electoral irregularities such as vote-buying, voter intimidation, ballot snatching, and result manipulation are significantly associated with post-election violence (Obiajulu et al., 2026). Lawal (2026) argues that when nomination fees alone equal or exceed the total legal campaign ceiling, compliance becomes structurally impossible, and the system has normalised the breach of its own campaign finance laws.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of this study corroborate and extend existing research on political party financing and voting behaviour in Nigeria. The dominance of "godfatherism" and the commercialisation of elections reflect a resource-dependent political ecosystem where wealth determines political relevance (Anie, 2019). This aligns with Resource Mobilisation Theory's premise that access to resources determines which parties emerge and which candidates win nominations (McCarthy & Zald, 1977). The study's finding that nomination forms alone can equal or exceed the legal campaign spending limit as alleged in the 2026 Ebonyi local government elections, where chairmanship nomination forms reportedly cost N30 million, the exact legal limit for total campaign expenditure reveals how the system structurally designs illegality (Lawal, 2026). The significant gap between legal campaign spending limits and actual expenditure with APC and PDP spending 4.6 and 3.3 times the legal limit, respectively reveals the systemic weakness of regulatory enforcement in Nigeria. As noted by Lawal (2026), when nomination fees alone equal or exceed the total legal campaign ceiling, compliance becomes structurally impossible. This finding supports the argument that Nigeria has normalised the breach of its own campaign finance laws. The study also found that only 34 out of 91 political parties submitted audit reports for the 2019 elections, with only nine meeting full compliance requirements, confirming that a law without enforcement is not regulation but theatre (Lawal, 2026).

The triangulation of methods in this study has enabled the identification of both convergence and complementarity in findings. The convergence between survey data on vote-buying prevalence and qualitative accounts from voters and observers validates the extent of the problem. The complementarity between quantitative findings (high campaign spending) and qualitative explanations (mechanisms of donor influence) provides a more comprehensive understanding of the financing-behaviour nexus. This aligns with Greene et al.'s (1989) framework, which identifies triangulation and complementarity as key purposes of mixed-methods research. According to Usman et al. (2023), excessive and unregulated financing breaks the link between the electorate and politicians, leading to unequal participation and making it difficult for new political forces to emerge. The study's finding that electoral irregularities are the strongest predictor of post-election violence ($r = 0.71$, $p < 0.05$), explaining 64% of its variance, confirms the serious consequences of unregulated political financing (Obiajulu et al., 2026). This supports the argument that the political class is engaged in transactional politics, where elections are conceived as investment ventures of which profit is to be maximised by means of exchange of electorates' voting power for money (Ocheja & Esomchi, 2023). The study also confirms that excessive political party financing affects the performances of eventual winners after elections and does not benefit the North Central zone in terms of service delivery-oriented governance and development (Ocheja & Esomchi, 2023).

CONCLUSION

This study underscores the importance of methodological triangulation in social science research, particularly in politically and socially complex environments like North Central Nigeria. By employing multiple methods and sources of data, triangulation enhances the credibility, reliability, and depth of research findings (Denzin, 1978; Heale & Forbes, 2013). The approach addresses the gaps in existing literature and provides a robust framework for analyzing the nexus between party financing and voting behaviour. The integration of Resource Mobilization Theory and Clientelism Theory offers a comprehensive analytical lens that captures both the material and relational dimensions of electoral politics (McCarthy & Zald, 1977; Kitschelt & Wilkinson, 2007). The findings reveal that unregulated political party financing undermines Nigeria's electoral process, promotes political patronage and clientele networks, and sacrifices good governance and development (Usman et al., 2023). The prevalence of vote-buying, the strategic targeting of partisans, and the erosion of accountability mechanisms all point to a system where money determines electoral outcomes more than policy debate or citizen preferences. The study establishes that excessive political party financing affects the performances of eventual winners after elections and does not benefit the region in terms of governance and development (Ocheja & Esomchi, 2023). Ultimately, the study establishes a methodological model that can guide future research on political financing, electoral dynamics, and democratic consolidation in Nigeria and other comparable contexts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study and the broader literature reviewed, the following recommendations are made:

1. Transparent Public Funding Mechanism: To reduce dependence on wealthy patrons ("godfathers") and corporate interests, the National Assembly should enact a law establishing a transparent public funding framework for political parties. Funding should be tied to performance (e.g., percentage of votes received) and conditional on submitting audited financial reports. This framework should include a multi-party funding commission independent of INEC and the executive branch (Usman et al., 2023).

2. Severe Penalties for Vote-Buying: The Electoral Act should be amended to impose stiffer penalties including imprisonment for a term not less than five years, disqualification from future elections for ten years, and forfeiture of assets on candidates and parties found guilty of distributing material inducements. A dedicated anti-vote-buying tribunal should be established to expedite prosecutions (Usman et al., 2023).

3. Strengthening INEC's Monitoring Capacity: INEC should establish a dedicated Campaign Finance Monitoring Unit with powers to audit party accounts, investigate suspicious transactions, and collaborate with the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC). The unit should be adequately funded and staffed with forensic accountants and investigators, with zonal offices in all six geopolitical zones (Ocheja & Esomchi, 2023).

4. Establishment of Independent Oversight Body: The federal government, without undermining the existence of INEC, should establish an independent and distinct body whose sole function is to oversee and regulate the financing of the electoral process (Ocheja & Esomchi, 2023).

5. Internal Party Democracy and Financing Reforms: Parties should adopt constitutions that limit the influence of "godfatherism" by capping individual donations from a single source at a maximum of 10% of total party receipts per election cycle. They should also reduce the cost of nomination forms, which currently commercialise candidacy and exclude grassroots aspirants (Yakubu et al., 2025).

6. Real-Time Campaign Expenditure Tracking: INEC should implement a digital platform for real-time declaration of campaign expenditures above ₦1 million, accessible to the public and civil society organisations. This platform should include a whistleblower mechanism allowing citizens to report suspected violations anonymously (Lawal, 2026).

7. Enhanced Transparency through Electronic Result Transmission: INEC should enhance transparency through real-time electronic result transmission to address institutional weaknesses and ethno-political tensions that exacerbate violent outcomes (Obiajulu et al., 2026).

8. Civic Education Initiatives: INEC, civil society organisations, and political parties should expand civic education initiatives to promote peaceful electoral participation and shift voter focus from material inducements to programmatic promises (Obiajulu et al., 2026).

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