**TOWARDS A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF CREDIT TERMS: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF RECENT CREDIT TERMS RESEARCH ACROSS THE GLOBE**

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***Abstract***

*The importance of credit terms in determining the ability of small enterprises to access the much-needed credit provided by commercial banks as they stive to achieve their various business objectives cannot be overlooked. However, despite the increasing emphasis government and various financial institutions such as the World Bank and International Monetary Funds, there seems to be no complementing efforts from scholars especially in recent time, and particularly, in the developing nations, to unravel the mystery surrounding small enterprises growing difficulties in accessing credit for smooth operations. It is the concerns generated by this state of affairs that prompted the conduct of this study with the aim to provide a better understanding of the concept. The specific objectives are to review the conceptualisation of credit terms, review the various components of credit terms, survey studies carried out on credit terms in the last seven years across the globe, and examine the various methodologies used in previous studies. The study extracted data from relevant articles published in top 10 Academic Journal Publishers based on the 2024 ranking by* *World Scientific Publishers. Data was extracted from 23 articles and analysed In line with the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) protocol. Findings show that publications on credit terms in the last seven years across the globe have ben uneven with Africa performing poorly. Findings also show that methodologies employed have been in favour of primary data while the use of first-generation statistical tools of analysis preponderate. The study therefore recommends that forthcoming review studies be carried out using primary data and second-generation statistical tools such as structural equation modelling for better outputs.*

**Keywords:** Credit terms; systematic review; PRISMA; World Scientific Publishers.

1. **Introduction**

The launching of a business idea and its sustainability which manifests in the form of growth, development, and expansion is crucially dependent on the extent to which credit is affordably available. No business can survive without it any more than a human being can survive without blood (Aelex, 2023). Thus, the maxim that ‘Credit is the life blood of an enterprise’ holds true irrespective of the nature, location and size of the business. In realisation of this, the public sector across the globe have made frantic efforts to provide the much-needed financial resources through various Programmes and initiatives for the development of enterprises thereby promoting the vibrancy of the private sector which had been at the forefront of economic growth and development in most of the developed economies. In the same vein, some non - governmental organisations (NGOs) have both indirectly and directly provided various forms of funding for entrepreneurial development with the overall aim of reducing poverty, inequality, and improving living standard of living. All these measures were aimed at complementing the traditional role of Deposit Money Banks (DMBs) in mobilising funds for the development of the private sector.

However, in spite of all these commitments by both the public and private sectors, and especially, the banking sector, poor access to credit has ranked highest among the challenges face by Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in various parts of the world (Eton, Mwosi, Mutesigensi & Ebong, 2017; Chan, Chinnery & Wallis, 2023). Investigations in to the cause of this has shown that DMBs, though willing to lend to entrepreneurs, consider SMEs as ‘ugly customers’ due to certain undesirable peculiarities such as opacity, informality, and poor record keeping. In addition, insufficient legal and policy frameworks which could the risk exposure of DMBs limit their enthusiasm in lending to SMEs (Asian Development Bank, 2022)

Consequently, since they cannot completely avoid doing business with SMEs, DMBs often adopt some measures or conditions to confine their risks within the bounds of calculability and minimality. These conditions which have been referred to as credit terms by some scholars and lending terms by others have also been conceptualised in several ways. In recent studies, interest charges, non-interest charges, collateral requirements, and repayment conditions are the most mentioned components of credit or lending terms often used by DMBs to provide the needed safeguard for the credits given out to SMEs. The popular notion is that these conditions might have been so stringent thus inhibiting access. In spite of its importance, there are only a handful of research that have attempted to provide a comprehensive knowledge of what credit terms are, its constitution, effects and other aspects. So, it can be inferred that the understanding of credit terms is still shrouded in a cloud of ignorance which needs illumination. Since only what is known can be solved, this systematic study attempts to bring under one study the various efforts made by scholars to provide knowledge about this subject matter in the last five years.

Accordingly, the following specific objectives are set to enable the achievement of the aim of the study:

i. To review the conceptualisation of credit terms.

ii. To review the various components of credit terms.

iii. To provide a schematic illustration of the distribution of studies carried out to explain

credit terms in the last seven years

iv. To look at the various methodologies used in previous studies.

This paper is divided into six sections. Section 2 explains the conceptual framework. Section 3 describes the selection process for the analyzed information. Section 4 discusses the findings of the selected papers. Section 5 presents a discussion regarding the revisions that were made to this study. Finally, Section 6 highlights the main conclusions.

1. **Methods**

The broad objective of this study was to provide a survey of recent scholarly literature on credit terms. Therefore, the researchers conducted thorough search of the literature by including policy-oriented, practitioner, and academic literature published from 2018 to 2024. This systematic review followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) protocol (Liberati, Altman, Tetzlaff, Mulrow, Gøtzsche, … and Moher, 2009; Shela, Ramayah, Aravindan., Ahmad, and Alzahrani, 2023) to select and review the articles. The protocol is widely adopted in multifarious fields, given that its ability to enhance review accuracy and minimise the risk of researchers’ biases has been well proven and acknowledged in scholarly literature (Haque, Fernando and Caputi, 2021).

* 1. **Searches and Selection Criteria**

In compliance with PRISMA protocols, the study carried out scoping procedures in order to extract or draw out the most relevant articles from the literature from July 2-4, 2024. In line with the focus of this study, the relevant articles were chosen from the top 10 Academic Journal Publishers by articles based on the 2024 ranking by World Scientific Publishers which was retrieved from <https://www.scilit.net/rankings>. These include: Elsevier BV, Springer science and business media LLC, Wiley, Multidisciplinary Digital Publishing Institute (MDPI), Informa UK Limited, Oxford University Press, Frontiers Media SA, Sage publication, Emerald and Cambridge university press. However, no publication was found on the current subject matter by Informa UK Limited and Frontiers Media SA during the period under review, hence, these two publishers were excluded from the review. These articles were mainly indexed in Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, World of Science (WoS), Scopus, and normal Google databases. Evidence Gap Map (EGMs) and relevant journals to the study were used to determine the extent of work that has been done and whether these sufficiently address the same issues discussed in this study. this search revealed that not much has been done since the Basel III reform was finalized in 2017. This necessitated this review as a contribution to and extension of existing literature in this area. The keywords used for the search process were ‘credit terms’, ‘lending terms’, and ‘loan terms’ which were considered broad enough to adequately cover the subject matter of the study.

Meanwhile, the study was limited to a period of six years spanning the 2018–2024, a year after the Basel III policy, a major global policy aimed at ensuring the soundness of financial institutions, was finally signed in 2017 (Ozili, 2021). This yielded a total of 107 articles. Source and type of documents for the study were limited to articles and journals published in English Language by the selected publishers from 2018-2024. Proper coding based on the research problem was done after which records were exported to a Microsoft Excel file for quality assessment.

* 1. **Quality Assessment, Eligibility, and inclusion**

The study employed a two-stage process to assess the articles. In the first stage, in order to ensure that the articles meet the selection criteria, the retrieved titles and abstracts were reviewed. In the second stage, full-text articles that were deemed relevant were retrieved and painstakingly assessed to determine if they met the inclusion criteria to ensure that the documents were properly filtered. A total of 45 irrelevant articles were discovered and removed during the process of filtering. Thus, 62 articles were found relevant and included in the review study.

* 1. **Data Extraction and Synthesis**

For data extraction, proper organisation of the material was carried out. Data was extracted from all included articles and properly checked to take care of the risk of missing values. Extracted data covered author, methodology, data set used, country, continent, study period, sample size, and study population. Descriptive analysis was carried out to understand the major trends of the publications in terms of distribution by year, source title and contributing countries.

**3** **Analysis and Interpretation of Results**

**3.1 Literature Search and Study Selection**

The literature search conducted resulted in a total of 2015 articles. After duplicates were removed, the 1894 articles that were left were further screened on the bases of title and abstract. A total of 107 full-text articles were selected for further investigation. Finally, 62 studies met the inclusion criteria and were included in this study. Figure 1 presents a flow diagram of the search, screening and selection process.

Number of articles excluded = 1787

Number of full-text articles excluded and why

N= 7 articles, full text not accessible

N=5 articles, full text not in English Language.

N = 5 articles, focuses on collateral requirement.

 only.

N = 2 articles, focuses on interest rate only

**Total number of full-text articles excluded = 19**

Articles identified through database searching = 2015

Number of articles left after the removal of duplicates = 1894

Number of articles screened = 1894

Full-text articles assessed for eligibility = 107

Number of articles included in quality assessment = 88

Identification

Screening

Eligibility

No articles included for analysis = 23

Included

Fig. 1. PRISMA flow diagram showing search results and exclusions.

**Table 1: Distribution of credit terms related articles by selected publishers from 2018-2024**

|  |
| --- |
|  **Distribution by selected publishers from 2018-2024**  |
| S/N  | Publisher  | Country/Continent | No of Publication | Percentage (%) |
| 1 | Elsevier | Netherlands, Europe | 6 | 26 |
| 2 | Wiley | USA, North America | 5 | 22 |
| 3 | Emerald | United Kingdom, Europe | 3 | 13 |
| 4 | MDPI | Switzerland, Europe | 1 | 4 |
| 5 | Cambridge University Press | United Kingdom, Europe | 2 | 9 |
| 6 | Oxford University Press | United Kingdom, Europe | 2 | 9 |
| 7 | Springer | Germany, Europe | 3 | 13 |
| 8 | Sage  | USA, North America | 1 | 4 |
|  | **Total**  |  | **23** | **100** |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| **Distribution by year of Publication by year of Publication** |  |
|   |  |  |  |  |
| 1 | 2018  |  | 3 | 13 |
| 2 | 2019 |  | 3 | 13 |
| 3 | 2020 |  | 2 | 8.7 |
| 4 | 2021 |  | 2 | 8.7 |
| 5 | 2022 |  | 5 | 21.7 |
| 6 | 2023 |  | 8 | 34.9 |
| 7 | 2024 |  | 0 | 0 |
|  | **Total**  |  | **23** | **100** |
|  |  |  |  |  |

Source: Author’s Computation, 2024

Table 1 reveals that Elsevier the highest percentage (26%) of articles followed by Wiley which published 22% of the total number of articles on credit terms across the world in the period covered by the review. Springer and Emerald are tied, each accounting for13% of total publications. Cambridge University Press and Oxford University Press account for 9% of total publication each while MDPI and Sage published the least number of articles on credit terms during the time period covered by the review with each accounting for 4% of total publication.

Another information provided by Table 1 is the proportion of the articles published by the selected academic journal publishers over the review period (2018-2024). It shows that the highest proportion (34.9%) of the publications took place in the year 2023. Year 2018, the year after the final ratification of Basel III policy recorded an appreciable proportion (13%) of total publication while the least publications was recorded in the year 2024. There was a drop in the number of articles published in 2020 and 2021 as only 8.7% of total publication was made in each of the two years. . While the low proportion of publication in 2020 and 2021 could be attributed to the impact of COVID-19 Pandemic, the only reason that could be adduced for the low publication in the year 2024 is that the year was just in its first half during the time of the review.

Another important information that can be gleaned from Table 1 is that all the top-ranked academic journal publishers are domiciled in the countries of European and North American continents. As indicated in Table 1, 6(75%) out of the publishers are domiciled in Europe, and the remaining 2(25%) are found in the USA. This implies that none of the 8 top-ranked academic publishers by World Scientific Publishers in 2024 was domiciled in the continents of Africa, Asia, South America, and Australia.

**3.3 Conceptualisation and effect of credit terms**

The study reveals that twenty out of the twenty-three reviewed publications (Berger, Makaew, & Roman, 2019; Caporale, Lodh, & Nandy, 2018; Escalante, Osinubi, Dodson, & Taylor, 2018; Hertzberg, Liberman, & Paravisini, 2018; Pappas, Walsh, & Xu, 2019; Delis, Kim, Politsidis, & Wu, 2020; Ghimire, Escalante, Ghimire, & Dodson, 2020; Do, Truong, & Vu, 2021; Auh and Landoni, 2022; Gong, Xu, & Yan, 2023; Naiborhu and Ulfa, 2023) did not dwell on definition of credit terms but instead considered the its composition and effects. However, three publications (Ngeno, 2019; Kimeto, Naibei, & Bett, 2022; Widyastuti, Ferdinand, & Hermanto, 2023) paid attention to the issue of definition. According to Ngeno (2019), credit terms refer to “the debt repayment of your agreement with a creditor, such as 60 months, 48 months in form of duration”. Kimeto *et al*. (2022), conceptualise it as “a credit control practice for any firm that takes part in the provision of credit facilities to its stakeholders”. A broader perspective to the conceptualisation of credit terms was provided by Widyastuti *et al.* (2023). They conceptualise it as “standards set by credit provider institutions that debtors must meet which include the loan repayment period, guarantee, and interest rate.

The study has also revealed that that there are slight variations in the terms used to describe the concepts, although, these differing terms are homogenous in reference. These identified terms are: Credit terms (Ngeno, 2019; Iqbal and Rao, 2022; Widyastuti *et al.,* 2023), loan financing policies (Kimeto *et al.,* 2022; Lokopu, Cherono, Simiyu, 2023), loan features (Dansana, Patro, Mishra, Prasad, Razak, & Wodajo 2023), loan terms (Caporale *et al.,* 2018; Escalante *et al.,* 2018; Hertzberg *et al.,* 2018; Delis *et al.,* 2020; Ghimire *et al*., 2020; Auh and Landoni, 2022; Hu, Schclarek, Xu, & Yan 2022 ), lending terms (Escalante *et al*., 2018; 2020; Delis *et al.,* 2020), loan contract terms (Berger *et al.,* 2018; pappas *et al*., 2019; Do *et al.,* 2021; Gong *et al*., 2023), loan packaging terms (Ghimire *et al.,* 2020), loan pricing term ( Jin *et al.,* 2022), and lending scheme policy (Naiborhu and Ulfa, 2023).

Furthermore, the study reveals various components of credit terms which can be grouped broadly into three. First, Borrower-specific factors such as age, gender, education, race/tribe (Gong *et al.,* 2023). Second, Business-specific factors which include firm size, firm age, location. Third, loan-specific factors which include collateral requirements, repayment condition, loan size, interest rate (Pappas *et al.,* 2019; Do *et al.,* 2021). Giving another perspective to this grouping, Escalante *et al.* (2018) and Delis *et al.* (2020) classify these terms under price and nonprice terms. The review study also shows that a number of theories have been used in previous studies in connection with credit terms. The common ones are Agency theory (Iqbal and Rao, 2022), Asymmetric Information Theory (Kimeto *et al.,* 2022), Transactions Costs Theory (Kimeto *et al.,* 2022), Trade-off Theory (Ngeno, 2019), Pecking Order Theory (Ngeno, 2019), MM Theory (Ngeno, 2019), The Modified pecking Order" financing theory (Ngeno, 2019) and Static Trade-off Theory (Ngeno, 2019).

Amongst the reasons adduced for the use of credit terms in the reviewed studies include ensuring recovery of loan exposure to clients (Escalante *et al.,* 2018), and serving as a screening device (Gong *et al*., 2023). The review also established that the effect of credit terms on firms could be negative or positive depending on whether it is compatible with business growth or not. Some of the effects mentioned in the reviewed studies include, *inter alia,* liquidity challenges, reduction in firm’s profitability and viability, and disposition towards undertaking risky projects (Escalante *et al.,* 2018; Gong *et al.,* 2023; Widyastuti *et al.,* 2023). Few studies (Escalante *et al.,* 2018; Pappas *et al.,* 2019; Do *et al.,* 2021) also confirmed that financial institutions discriminate against small businesses in their lending scheme policies. The studies also provide evidence that shows that financial institutions also apply lending scheme policies discriminatively on the basis borrower’s gender, race, and age.

**Table 2: Distribution of Studies Based on Methodologies Adopted**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| S/N | Author(s)/Date | Title of Article | Country | Components | Source of Data  | Method of Data collection | Data Analysis Techniques |
| 1 | Braggion *et al.,* 2023 | Credit provision and stock trading: evidence from the South Sea Bubble | UK |  | Secondary | Database | Regression |
| 2. | Escalante *et al*., 2018 | Looking beyond farm loan approval decisions: Loan pricing and nonpricing terms for socially disadvantaged farm borrowers | USA | Loan amount, interest rate, loan maturity | Secondary  | Database | Descriptive statistics; Regression |
| 3.  | Biglaiser *et al*., 2020 | Regulators vs. markets: Are lending terms influenced by different perceptions of bank risk? | USA | loan maturity, cost of credit, loan repayment | Secondary | Database | Correlation, regression |
| 4 | Do *et al*., 2021 | Options listings and loan contract terms: Information versus risk-shifting  | USA | Loan maturity, collateral, interest rate  | Secondary | Database | Regression |
| 5 | Pappas et al., 2019 | Real earnings management and loan contract terms | USA | interest spreads, collateral requirements, loan maturity | Secondary | Database  | Linear regression |
| 6 | Gong *et al.,* 2022 | National development banks and loan contract terms: Evidence from syndicated loans | China | Loan maturity, Loan size | Secondary | Database  | Regression |
| 7 | Naiborhu and Ulfa, 2023 | The lending implication of a funding for lending scheme policy during COVID-19 Pandemic: The case of Indonesia banks. | Indonesia  | Interest rate | Secondary  | Database  | Difference-in-Difference regression |
| 8 | Iqbal and Rao, 2023 | Social capital and loan credit terms: does it matter in microfinance contract? | Pakistan  | Loan size, interest rate, repayment schedule. | Primary | Questionnaire  | PLS-SEM |
| 9 | Ghimire *et al.,* 2020 | Do farm service agency borrowers’ double minority labels lead to more unfavorable loan packaging terms? | USA | Loan amount, interest rate and maturity. | Secondary | Database  | Regression  |
| 10 | Kimeto *et al.,* 2022 | The Relationship between Credit terms and Financial Performance of Microfinance Institutions in Kericho County, Kenya  | Kenya  | Credit terms, financial performance. | Primary  | Questionnaire  | Regression  |
| 11 | Dansana *et al*., 2023 | Analyzing the impact of loan features on bank loan prediction using Random Forest algorithm | India  | Type of business, loan term, and marital status. | Secondary | Database  | Regression  |
| 12 | Caporale *et al*., 2018 | How has the global financial crisis affected syndicated loan terms in emerging markets? Evidence from China | China  | Interest rate, loan maturity, profitability, loan amount.  | Secondary  | Database  | Difference-in-Difference regression |
| 13 | Berger *et al.,* 2019 | Do business borrowers benefit from bank bailouts? – The effects of TARP on loan contract terms | USA | Spread, amount, maturity, collateral, and covenants | Secondary | Database  | Difference-in-Difference regression |
| 14 | Auh and Landoni, 2022  | Loan terms and collateral: Evidence from the bilateral Repo market | USA | Interest rate, collateral, and maturity | Secondary | Database  | Regression  |
| 15 | Liu and Chin, 2023 | Are banking and accounting expertise on the audit committee related to bank loan terms? | China  | Interest rate, collateral, and maturity | Secondary | Database  | Regression  |
| 1617 | Jin *et al.,* 2022 Ngeno, 2019  | What firm risk factors drive bank loan pricing and other terms? Evidence from China.Influence of Credit Lending Terms of Microfinance Institutions on Financial Performance of Small and Medium Enterprises in Eldoret Town, Kenya  | ChinaKenya  | Interest rate, collateral, and loan maturityCollateral, loan period, interest rate, and loan size | Secondary Primary  | Database Questionnaire  | Regression Chi square, Correlation and regression |
| 18 | Cheng and Hasan, 2023 | Firm ESG practices and the terms of bank lending | China  | Interest rate, collateral, and maturity. | Secondary  | Database  | Regression  |
| 19 | Egrican, 2021 | Overlapping board connections with banker directors and corporate loan terms: Evidence from syndicated loans | USA | Collateral, loan maturity, interest rate | Secondary | Database  | Regression  |
| 20 | Widyastuti *et al.,* 2023 | Strengthening formal credit access and performance through financial literacy and credit terms in micro, small and medium businesses. | Indonesia  | Collateral, interest rate, loan repayment time | Primary  | Questionnaire | SEMPLS |
| 21 | Hu *et al. (*2022) | Long-term finance provision: National development banks vs commercial banks | USA | Loan maturity, interest rate. | Secondary  | Database  | Panel Data Analysis |
| 22 | Hertzberg *et al*., 2018 . | Screening on loan terms: Evidence from maturity choice in consumer credit | USA  | Loan maturity, interest rate  | Secondary  | Database  | Regression  |
| 23 | Lokopu *et al.,* 2023 | Effect of bank loan financing policies on performance of small and medium enterprises in Turkana County, Kenya  | Kenya | Collateral, interest rate, repayment conditions. | Primary  | Questionnaire  | Correlation Analysis |

Source: Author’s Compilation, 2024

As evident from Table 2, USA has the highest number of the publications made in the selected publishers during the review period having recorded 10 publications representing 43.5% of total publications. Next to the USA is the China with 5 publications representing 21.7% of total publication, Kenya with 3 publications, representing 13%, Indonesia with 2 publications, representing 8.7%, while UK, Pakistan, and India contributed 4.3% each to total publications. Method of data collection used in the reviewed articles was predominantly secondary generated from various databases. Table 2 shows that 18 (78.3%) of the studies used secondary data while the remaining 5 (21.7%) used primary data collected through questionnaires. The methods of data analysis adopted by the reviewed studies were majorly first-generation statistical tools such as regression, correlation, Chi-square, panel data analysis (Ngeno, 2019; Hu *et al.,* 2022; Cheng and Hasan, 2023; Lokopu *et al.,* 2023). However, second-generation statistical tool – Structural Equation Modelling-Partial Least Squares was also used by Iqbal and Rao 2023) and Widyastuti *et al. (*2023).

**4 Discussion**

The first objective of the study was to carry out a systematic review of the conceptualisation of credit terms in recent articles. The review conducted revealed that a good number of the scholars **(**Hertzberg *et al.,* 2018; Pappas *et al.,* 2019; Deli *et* *al.,* 2020; Ghimire *et al.,* 2020; Do *et al.,* 2021; Auh and Landoni, 2022; Gong *et al.,* 2023; Naiborhu and Ulfa, 2023) did not concentrate their efforts on defining credit terms but rather carried out a comprehensive description of what credit terms represent. To these scholars, concepts such as credit terms should be described rather than providing a simplified definition which might not capture the whole essence of the concept. However, a handful of the scholars provided definitions for credit (Ngeno, 2019; Kimeto *et al.,* 2022; Widyastuti *et al.,* 2023) provided definitions for credit terms and offered brief explanations. These two approaches are often used in research and both can be useful if the rule accuracy is observed especially in the case of definition to avoid misleading interpretation. The review also revealed that scholars have used concepts such as loan financing policies, loan features, loan terms, lending terms, loan contract terms, loan packaging terms, and lending scheme policy to synonymously with credit terms. This implies that the concept of credit terms is broad and can be flexibly discussed under a number of headings provided its main essence is not lost.

The second objective of the study was to identify the various components of credit terms as used by the scholars whose studies were used in this review. The outcome of the review has shown that the components of credit terms have been grouped under: Borrower-specific factors such as age, gender, education, race/tribe (Gong *et al.,* 2023), business-specific factors which include firm size, firm age, location, loan-specific factors which include collateral requirements, repayment condition, loan size, interest rate (Pappas *et al.,* 2019; Do *et al.,* 2021). Giving another perspective to this grouping, Escalante *et al.* (2018) and Delis *et al.* (2020) classify these terms under price and nonprice terms. The study also revealed that the loan - specific and business- specific factors could be used as moderating variables when looking at the effect of the loan-specific factors on specific aspects of firms such as performance.

The third objective of the study was to provide a schematic illustration of the distribution of studies carried out to explain credit terms in the last five years. Table 1 showed that the three ost preferred publishers used by authors across the globe for the publication of credit-term related articles were Elsevier, Wiley, and Emerald. These three publishers accounted for about 61% of the total articles published on credit terms by the selected publishers within the reviewed period. The review also revealed that more than half (56.6%) of the articles were published in year 2022 and 2023. This could be due to the post Covid-19 Pandemic global emphases placed by both government and researchers on the need to ramp up financial access to enterprises that were affected by the pandemic. Understandably, publication of articles was affected in the years 2020 and 2021 which coincided with the period of the global pandemic. In terms of geographical distribution of publication, USA has the highest number of the publications, followed by China. The only representation from Africa was Kenya that published 3 articles within the review period. This highlights the need for researchers in African countries particularly, Nigeria, to commit resources to publishing with top-ranked publishers and in journals with high impact index. Such quality research will have a more pronounced effect on development than publications in low-rated journals that in most cases are for gaining academic promotion without practical bearings on real challenges.

Finally, the review looked at the various methodologies utilised in studies involving credit terms published within the study period by the selected publishers. It is obvious that most (78.3%) of the empirical works utilised secondary data using various databases while the dominant statistical tool of analysis was regression and correlation while only two authors (Iqbal and Rao, 2023 and Widyastuti *et al.,* 2023) used structural equation modelling for analysis. The third analytical tools used in the published studies in the period under review by the selected publishers was Chi square ( Ngeno, 2019). This implies that the authors relied heavily on the use of first-generation statistical tools. This situation needs improvement given the weaknesses associated with genre of statistical tools.

**5 Conclusion and Recommendations**

The study conducted a systematic review of prior research on credit terms. In reviewing the literature, key findings were made leading to the identification of key gaps in the literature. Based on these findings, the inference could be brawn that research publication on credit terms in high-ranked Academic Journal Publishers in the last five years (2018-2024) is very low in Africa in General and Nigeria in particular. Therefore, there is a dire need for empirical efforts geared towards credit terms and its influence on small enterprises performance. It can also be concluded based on the findings that previous studies relied on secondary data and the use of first-generation statistical tools of analysis such as regression and correlation. Therefore, the study recommends that forthcoming review studies be carried out using primary data and second-generation statistical tools such as structural equation modelling for better outputs.

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