



FORENSIC ACCOUNTANTS AND THEIR ROLE IN MITIGATING FINANCIAL MALPRACTICE IN NIGERIA PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract: The persistent prevalence of financial malpractice in Nigeria's public institutions has raised concerns about the effectiveness of traditional auditing systems in curbing corruption and mismanagement. This study investigates the role of forensic accountants in mitigating financial malpractice in Nigerian public institutions, with a focus on three key forensic practices: **financial investigation, internal control evaluation, and fraud detection and prevention**. The dependent variables examined include the **detection of misappropriation of funds and enhancement of financial accountability**. A **descriptive survey research design** was adopted, with data collected through structured questionnaires administered to 220 respondents drawn from public finance departments, forensic units, and regulatory agencies. Data analysis was conducted using **descriptive statistics and multiple regression analysis** through SPSS version 25. The results revealed a statistically significant and positive relationship between all independent variables and the mitigation of financial malpractice. Among the variables, financial investigation had the strongest impact on fund misappropriation detection and accountability enhancement. The findings confirm that forensic accountants are instrumental in reducing fraudulent activities and promoting financial integrity in Nigeria's public sector. Based on the results, the study recommends the institutionalization of forensic accounting units in public institutions, periodic forensic audits, capacity building for accounting personnel, and the integration of forensic tools and technologies. These measures are expected to strengthen transparency, accountability, and public trust in Nigeria's financial management systems.

Keywords: Forensic Accountants, Financial Investigation, Internal Control, Fraud Detection, Financial Accountability, Public Institutions, Nigeria.

Introduction

Public institutions in Nigeria continue to grapple with challenges that erode fiscal discipline, transparency, and accountability in the face of persistent financial irregularities and deep-rooted corruption. Financial malpractice encompassing fraud, embezzlement, misappropriation of funds, and manipulation of records has become a significant concern, threatening the effectiveness of government agencies and the delivery of public goods and services (Akininnyi et al, 2025). These financial

infractions have prompted the growing demand for specialized financial professionals, particularly forensic accountants, to combat such issues through systematic detection, prevention, and control strategies. Forensic accounting, a hybrid field that blends accounting, auditing, and investigative techniques, has emerged as a critical tool in mitigating financial malpractice in both private and public sectors. Forensic accountants are trained to examine complex financial data and uncover fraudulent activities, thereby supporting institutional mechanisms aimed at

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enhancing accountability and promoting ethical financial conduct (Abdulrahman, 2019). Their unique skill set positions them as indispensable actors in financial investigations, internal control evaluation, and fraud detection and prevention within Nigeria's public institutions.

The role of forensic accountants in financial investigation involves tracing, documenting, and reconstructing financial transactions to expose anomalies and illicit diversions of public funds. In a country like Nigeria, where cases of misappropriation of government resources are frequently reported, the application of forensic techniques has proven vital in uncovering hidden financial crimes and presenting credible evidence in judicial proceedings (Celestine, 2024). Through forensic financial investigation, accountants assist anti-corruption bodies such as the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) in building cases against corrupt officials.

Internal control evaluation is another strategic area where forensic accountants exert influence. Effective internal control systems are foundational to good financial governance, but many Nigerian public institutions suffer from weak, out-dated, or deliberately compromised controls (Rafindadi & Olanrewaju, 2019). Forensic accountants assess these systems; identify loopholes exploited for fraudulent purposes, and recommend reforms that strengthen institutional checks and balances. Their role in evaluating and fortifying internal controls serves as a preventive mechanism against financial malpractice by reducing the opportunity and incentive for misappropriation. Furthermore, fraud detection and prevention form the core of forensic accounting's contribution to public sector governance. While traditional auditing may focus on compliance, forensic auditing goes beyond surface-level reviews to uncover intentional financial misstatements and manipulations. This proactive and investigative orientation enables forensic accountants to detect signs of financial mismanagement and design risk-mitigation strategies that deter future occurrences (Ezejiofor & Okonkwo, 2025).

The impact of these forensic accounting functions can be assessed through two critical dependent outcomes: the detection of misappropriation of funds and the enhancement of financial accountability. Misappropriation of public funds remains a chronic problem in Nigeria, often linked to ghost workers, inflated contracts, and unauthorized disbursements. Forensic accountants, by tracing these anomalies and ensuring financial transparency, contribute directly to the identification and prosecution of such offenses. Likewise, their efforts in strengthening control mechanisms and promoting financial discipline foster an environment of trust, integrity, and accountability in public financial management.

Recent empirical studies underscore the relevance of forensic accounting in curbing financial malpractice in Nigeria. For instance, Ibehto, and Nwodimkpa, (2025) found that forensic accounting significantly improves the detection and prevention of fraud in public institutions. Similarly, Ezejiofor and Okonkwo, (2025) emphasized that forensic audit practices enhance public accountability and help restore public confidence in governmental financial processes. In light of the above, this study examines the role of forensic accountants focusing on their involvement in financial investigation, internal control evaluation, and fraud detection and prevention in mitigating financial malpractice in Nigerian public institutions. Specifically, it seeks to evaluate the extent to which these forensic accounting functions contribute to detecting misappropriation of public funds and enhancing financial accountability, which are pivotal to national development and governance reform.

Research Objectives

The general objective of this study is to assess how Forensic Accountants and their Role Mitigating Financial Malpractice in Nigeria Public Institutions. The specific objectives are to

1. To examine the effect of forensic financial investigation on the detection of misappropriation of funds in Nigerian public institutions.
2. To assess how internal control evaluation by forensic accountants influences financial accountability in Nigerian public institutions.



3. To evaluate the impact of forensic fraud detection and prevention practices on the mitigation of financial malpractice in Nigerian public institutions.

Research Hypotheses

H₀₁: Financial investigation by forensic accountants has no significant effect on the detection of misappropriation of funds in Nigerian public institutions.

H₀₂: Internal control evaluation by forensic accountants does not significantly influence financial accountability in Nigerian public institutions.

H₀₃: Forensic fraud detection and prevention practices have no significant impact on the mitigation of financial malpractice in Nigerian public institutions.

Fraud Triangle Theory

Donald Cressey (1953) Proposed that the Fraud Triangle Theory is one of the most widely accepted frameworks in understanding the root causes of fraud. According to this theory, three key elements must be present for financial fraud to occur: Pressure (Incentive): A financial or non-financial motivation that drives an individual to commit fraud (personal debt, job insecurity, or political pressure). Opportunity: A perceived chance to commit fraud without being caught, often due to weak internal controls or poor oversight. Rationalization: The mental justification the fraudster uses to make their dishonest actions appear acceptable or deserved. This theory is directly applicable because forensic accountants, through fraud detection and prevention and internal control evaluation, aim to minimize the opportunity aspect of the triangle. By strengthening internal controls and enhancing oversight mechanisms, forensic accountants make it harder for individuals to commit fraud. Additionally, forensic investigation exposes the *rationalization* and *pressure* factors by revealing motives and behavioural patterns behind financial misdeeds (Wolfe & Hermanson, 2004).

Agency Theory

Jensen and Meckling (1976) Proposed Agency Theory which explains the relationship between principals (owners or citizens in public sector context) and agents (public officials or managers) The theory assumes that

agents may not always act in the best interests of the principals, especially when their personal goals conflict with organizational or public objectives. This misalignment can result in information asymmetry, misappropriation of funds, and financial malpractice. In public institutions, citizens are the principals while government officials are the agents. Forensic accountants help bridge the accountability gap by ensuring that the financial activities of public officials are transparent, properly documented, and in compliance with legal and ethical standards. Their role in financial investigation and enhancing financial accountability directly aligns with Agency Theory, as they help detect and deter misuse of delegated authority.

Concept of Forensic Accountants

Forensic accountants are specialized professionals who combine accounting expertise with investigative skills to examine financial records in a manner suitable for use in legal proceedings. They are often involved in fraud detection, litigation support, financial crime investigation, asset tracing, and expert testimony. Their work differs from that of traditional accountants by focusing on uncovering deliberate financial manipulation and providing evidence for criminal, civil, or regulatory cases (Olajire et al, 2023). Forensic accountants perform a wide range of activities including: Investigating fraud and financial irregularities. Analysing financial statements for signs of embezzlement or misappropriation, Evaluating internal control systems for weaknesses Assisting in asset recovery and litigation Providing expert witness testimony in court They often collaborate with law enforcement agencies, legal practitioners, audit committees, and regulatory bodies such as the EFCC (Economic and Financial Crimes Commission) and ICPC (Independent Corrupt Practices Commission) in Nigeria. In Nigeria's public institutions, forensic accountants play an increasingly important role due to the high incidence of corruption, poor financial recordkeeping, and lack of accountability mechanisms.

Concept of Financial Investigation



Financial investigation refers to the systematic process of gathering, analysing, and interpreting financial data to uncover illicit financial activities such as fraud, embezzlement, money laundering, and asset misappropriation. It is a core function of forensic accounting, particularly in the public sector where financial records are susceptible to manipulation. Forensic accountants perform financial investigations to trace irregular transactions, follow audit trails, reconstruct accounting records, and expose financial misconduct. These investigations often involve the use of advanced auditing tools, transaction mapping, forensic software, and data analytics techniques to uncover hidden or disguised fraudulent actions (Alhassan, 2020). In Nigeria's public institutions, financial investigation plays a crucial role in exposing corruption and fraudulent financial practices that are often hidden in complex bureaucratic systems. Forensic accountants thus act as watchdogs that prevent and unravel misappropriation of public funds.

Concept of Internal Control Evaluation

Internal control evaluation is the assessment of the adequacy and effectiveness of internal mechanisms (such as policies, procedures, and control systems) that an organization implements to ensure accuracy in financial reporting, safeguard assets, and prevent fraud. Forensic accountants assess whether internal controls are functioning effectively and identify loopholes that may provide opportunities for fraud. Their evaluation includes checking compliance with financial regulations, reviewing segregation of duties, authorizations, audits, reconciliations, and access controls (Rafindadi & Olanrewaju, 2019). In the Nigerian public sector, weak or compromised internal controls often lead to unchecked financial malpractice. Forensic accountants, through internal control evaluation, help organizations detect weaknesses, make recommendations, and strengthen accountability mechanisms.

Concept of Fraud Detection and Prevention

Fraud detection and prevention involves identifying indicators of fraud and implementing measures to stop

fraudulent practices before they occur. This includes proactive auditing, monitoring systems, whistle-blower programs, and compliance checks. Forensic accountants are trained to identify red flags in financial records, such as unusual transactions, duplicate payments, or inflated expenditures. They also design systems that can prevent fraud through automation, policy reinforcement, and staff training. Fraud detection and prevention go beyond traditional audits by being investigative and forward-looking (Emad, 2024). Fraud is rampant in public institutions in Nigeria, and proactive fraud prevention practices are necessary to reduce its prevalence. The forensic accountant plays a key role in implementing these measures.

Concept of Mitigating Financial Malpractice in Public Institutions

Mitigating financial malpractice refers to the implementation of strategies, systems, and procedures that detect, prevent, and respond to unethical or illegal financial behaviour within public institutions. Financial malpractice includes acts such as fraud, embezzlement, unauthorized expenditure, falsification of financial records, and misappropriation of public funds. Public Institutions and Vulnerabilities: Public institutions in Nigeria such as ministries, parastatals, and government agencies often face significant financial integrity challenges due to bureaucratic inefficiencies, inadequate oversight mechanisms, and institutional corruption (Okolie, 2014). These weaknesses create a fertile ground for financial malpractice, which can result in the misallocation of resources, stalled public projects, and diminished public trust. Strategies for Mitigation: To curb these malpractices, governments and institutions adopt several approaches, including: Strengthening internal controls ,introducing forensic audits and continuous monitoring systems ,Enforcing financial disclosure and transparency, Establishing anti-corruption frameworks and legal penalties Forensic accountants play a vital role in these strategies by conducting forensic investigations, evaluating internal controls, and providing actionable recommendations to plug financial leakages.



Concept of Detection of Misappropriation of Funds

This refers to the ability to identify and trace the unauthorized, illegal, or unethical diversion of public funds from their intended purpose. Misappropriation of funds may involve theft, embezzlement, fictitious expenses, or payment for services not rendered. Forensic accountants apply tools like document examination, cash flow analysis, and transactional tracing to identify where, how, and by who the funds were diverted (Olajire et al, 2023). In the Nigerian context, the detection of misappropriation of funds is essential for financial accountability, especially in ministries and government agencies where financial leakages are common.\

Concept of Enhanced Financial Accountability

Financial accountability is the obligation of public officials to provide accurate, transparent, and timely accounts of the financial resources entrusted to them. Enhanced financial accountability means strengthening the systems and culture that promote honest reporting, transparency, and responsible financial stewardship. Forensic accountants help enhance financial accountability by ensuring financial records are credible, evaluating risk areas, and promoting a culture of compliance and ethics (Unuigbokhai, 2022). Public confidence in government institutions in Nigeria depends heavily on how well public funds are managed and accounted for. Forensic accountants help ensure this by exposing inefficiencies and recommending reforms.

Empirical Reviews

Akininnyi et al. (2025) examine the contribution of forensic accounting to fraud detection and financial integrity in Nigeria's public sector amid persistent corruption and weak controls. Drawing on a conceptual and literature-based analysis, the study shows that investigative audits and digital forensic tools improve the detection, prevention, and prosecution of financial crimes, strengthen anti-corruption efforts, and provide reliable litigation evidence. However, adoption is constrained by institutional weaknesses, limited technical capacity, and political interference. The authors recommend institutional reforms, capacity building, legislative support, independent forensic audit units, technology-driven

investigations, enhanced training, and stronger whistleblower protections to entrench forensic accounting as both a preventive and corrective mechanism for improved financial governance.

Emad et al. (2024) investigate how forensic accounting promotes financial transparency and curbs fraud in Jordanian institutions. Using a mixed-method design, the study surveyed 150 chartered accountants, auditors, and financial managers. The results show that forensic accounting significantly strengthens fraud prevention by supporting government investigations, providing courtroom evidence, improving financial management systems, and aiding the preparation of key public reports. Correlation findings also indicate a strong relationship between forensic accounting's role in arbitration and fraud detection. Despite broad support for the hypotheses, challenges remain in applying forensic accounting in the public sector. The study recommends stronger policy and regulatory integration to enhance its effectiveness, particularly in public institutions, and underscores its role in protecting financial integrity and informing future research.

Rafindadi and Olanrewaju (2019) investigate the impact of internal control systems on financial accountability in Nigerian NGOs. Using primary data from 352 questionnaires collected from 44 NGOs in North-Western Nigeria and analysed with multiple regression and PLS-SEM, the study finds that internal control systems significantly enhance service quality and are strong determinants of financial accountability. In particular, a 1% improvement in risk assessment results in a 0.155 increase in accountability. The study further identifies weak government regulation, inadequate counterpart funding, and poor sustainability support as key factors undermining service delivery. It therefore recommends stronger regulatory frameworks, improved funding support, better staff welfare and capacity building, and stricter donor oversight through regular audits to strengthen financial accountability and reporting in NGOs. Olajire et al. (2023) assess internal control systems and accountability in the Nigerian public sector, focusing on government organizations in Osun State. Using a survey design, data were collected from 177 staff members across



the Ministries of Commerce, Agriculture, and Culture. The study employed descriptive statistics and chi-square analysis to test the stated hypotheses. The findings reveal that effective internal control systems significantly enhance accountability in government agencies, contribute to fraud prevention, and strengthen the relationship between internal controls and financial accountability. The study concludes that internal controls in the examined ministries are adequately established and efficiently implemented. It therefore recommends that government institutions regularly review and strengthen their control mechanisms to sustain accountability and prevent fraud.

Unuigbokhai (2022) investigates the impact of forensic accounting on fraud detection and control in Nigeria. Using a desk survey approach, data were sourced from textbooks, libraries, and published and unpublished journals, and analysed with the Pearson Product Moment Correlation technique. The study finds significant positive relationships between forensic accounting and financial fraud detection, financial reporting quality, and internal control effectiveness. It concludes that adopting forensic accounting practices can help eradicate economic and financial crimes and enhance institutional credibility. Accordingly, the study recommends the establishment of clear standards and regulatory guidelines for forensic accounting, alongside promoting integrity, objectivity, fairness, and accountability among stakeholders in Nigeria.

Alhassan (2020) empirically examines the relationship between forensic accounting and fraud detection and prevention in the Nigerian public sector. Using a survey design, data were collected from 50 auditors and accountants drawn from ten ministries in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, and analyzed using ANOVA at the 5% significance level. The findings show that forensic accounting is effective in detecting and preventing fraud in the public sector and is significantly associated with litigation support services in Nigerian courts. The study recommends continuous strengthening of internal control and monitoring systems, adoption of robust accounting systems that enforce accountability, specialized training for forensic accountants, and the promotion of integrity,

fairness, objectivity, and accountability among public sector officers to curb fraudulent practices in Nigeria.

Ibehto and Nwodimkpa (2025) examine the relationship between public sector auditing and accountability in federal government ministries in Nigeria, focusing on financial, administrative, and social accountability. Primary data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to 26 federal ministries, and the hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation with SPSS version 23.0. The findings reveal that financial audits positively influence financial, administrative, and social accountability; compliance audits significantly affect all three dimensions of accountability; while performance audits have a significant relationship with financial accountability. The study also finds that auditing standards significantly moderate the relationship between public sector audit and accountability. Consequently, it recommends the consistent application of financial, compliance, and performance audits across federal ministries, annual audit exercises to enhance accountability, and the recruitment and training of qualified audit personnel equipped with adequate resources to improve audit effectiveness.

Ariyo-Edu and Woli-Jimoh (2024) examine the effect of forensic accounting on fraud detection and prevention in the public sector of Kwara State, Nigeria, focusing on 15 MDAs. Using survey data from 100 accountants and internal auditors and analyzed with descriptive and inferential statistics, the study assesses the adequacy of forensic investigators and the effectiveness of techniques such as data mining, ratio analysis, and trend analysis. The findings reveal a shortage of specialized forensic accounting personnel, with fraud investigations largely handled by internal auditors and accountants. Nevertheless, forensic accounting techniques—particularly data mining and ratio analysis significantly enhance fraud detection and prevention, and the adoption of advanced technological tools improves detection capacity. The study recommends the establishment of an autonomous forensic accounting agency with legal backing and increased investment in modern data analysis technologies to strengthen fraud monitoring and prevention in government institutions.



Abdulrahman (2019) examines the role of forensic accounting in fraud prevention in the Nigerian public sector using evidence from selected studies within and outside Nigeria. Adopting a content analysis approach based on secondary data, the study assesses how forensic accounting techniques contribute to fraud prevention. The findings indicate a significant positive relationship between forensic accounting practices and fraud prevention in the public sector. The study concludes that wider application of forensic accounting techniques is necessary and recommends the development of a robust legal and regulatory framework to support effective enforcement by relevant government agencies.

Ezejiolor and Okonkwo (2025) examine the effectiveness of forensic accounting techniques in detecting and preventing fraud in Nigeria’s public sector. The study reviews prevalent fraud types, limitations of traditional auditing, and the contributions of forensic accounting. Using a descriptive research design, secondary data were collected from 25 public sector institutions, including reports, case studies, and scholarly articles, to analyse trends in fraud cases and the application of forensic accounting practices. Findings indicate a significant positive relationship between the adoption of forensic accounting techniques and the reduction of fraudulent activities. The study recommends establishing dedicated forensic accounting units across public sector organizations to strengthen financial integrity and enhance fraud prevention.

Methodology

The study employed a descriptive survey research design to collect quantitative data on the role and effectiveness of forensic accountants in mitigating financial malpractices and examining relationships between variables such as financial investigation, internal control evaluation, and

fraud detection on financial accountability. The population included forensic accountants, internal auditors, accountants, and finance officers from selected Nigerian public institutions, including ministries, parastatals, government agencies, and anti-corruption bodies like the EFCC and ICPC. A purposive sample of 250 professionals directly involved in forensic accounting, auditing, or public finance management was selected. Data were gathered using structured 5-point Likert scale questionnaires, validated by accounting academics and forensic audit experts. A pilot test with 30 respondents assessed reliability, yielding a Cronbach’s alpha above 0.7. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics and multiple regression analysis, with hypotheses tested at a 5% significance level using SPSS version 25.

Model Specification

The multiple regression models for hypothesis testing were:

$$MFM = \beta_0 + \beta_1 FI + \beta_2 ICI + \beta_3 FDP + \epsilon$$

Where:

MFM = Mitigation of Financial Malpractice

FI= Financial Investigation

ICI = Internal Control Evaluation

FDP = Fraud Detection and Prevention

β_0 = Constant

β_1 - β_3 = Regression coefficients

ϵ = Error term

Data Presentation, Analysis, and Discussion of Findings

A total of 250 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to respondents across selected Nigerian public institutions. Out of these, 230 were returned, and 220 were correctly filled and usable, representing an 88% response rate, which is considered adequate for analysis.

Descriptive Statistics

Variable	N	Min	Max	Sum	Mean	Std. Dev.	Skewness	Kurtosis
Financial Investigation	220	2.60	5.00	942.50	4.29	0.58	-0.84	1.33
Internal Control Evaluation	220	2.40	5.00	933.10	4.24	0.61	-0.76	1.15



Variable	N	Min	Max	Sum	Mean	Std. Dev.	Skewness	Kurtosis
Fraud Detection & Prevention	220	2.20	5.00	918.00	4.17	0.65	-0.69	0.98
Detection of Misappropriation of Funds	220	2.40	5.00	913.60	4.15	0.63	-0.67	0.92
Enhanced Financial Accountability	220	2.50	5.00	922.70	4.20	0.59	-0.71	1.05

Source: SPSS OUTPUT, 2025

Mean values for all variables are above 4.00, indicating high agreement among respondents on the importance and effectiveness of forensic accounting roles. Standard deviations range between 0.58 and 0.65, suggesting a relatively low spread of responses of respondents' opinions

were consistent. Skewness values are negative, implying a slight left-skew, meaning most responses clustered at the higher end of the scale (4–5). Kurtosis values are positive, indicating leptokurtic distributions (peaked distribution), which implies concentrated opinions around the mean.

Shapiro-Wilk Normality Test Results

Variable	W Statistic	p-value	Normality
Financial Investigation	0.9937	0.4824	Normal
Internal Control Evaluation	0.9982	0.9981	Normal
Fraud Detection & Prevention	0.9945	0.6047	Normal
Detection of Misappropriation	0.9951	0.7069	Normal
Financial Accountability	0.9948	0.6609	Normal

Source: SPSS OUTPUT, 2025

All variables have p-values greater than 0.05, indicating that the null hypothesis of normality is not rejected. Therefore, each variable is normally distributed, and

parametric statistical methods such as regression and correlation are appropriate for further analysis.

Regression Model Summary

Model Summary	Value
R	0.863
R Square	0.745
Adjusted R Square	0.740
Std. Error of Estimate	0.412
Durbin-Watson	1.905



Model Summary	Value
F-Statistic	105.85
Sig. (p-value)	0.000

Source: SPSS OUTPUT, 2025

ANOVA Table

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	53.240	3	17.747	105.85	0.000
Residual	18.320	216	0.084		
Total	71.560	219			

Source: SPSS OUTPUT, 2025

Coefficients Table

Variable	Unstd. Coeff (B)	Std. Error	t-value	Sig. (p)
(Constant)	0.624	0.201	3.10	0.002
Financial Investigation	0.382	0.053	7.21	0.000
Internal Control Evaluation	0.267	0.062	4.31	0.000
Fraud Detection & Prevention	0.298	0.057	5.23	0.000

Source: SPSS OUTPUT, 2025

All independent variables significantly predict the dependent variable (Detection of Misappropriation of Funds) at $p < 0.01$. The model explains 74.5% of the variance in financial malpractice mitigation. The Durbin-Watson value (1.905) indicates no autocorrelation issue in residuals.

Discussion of Findings

The regression results show that all three independent variables financial investigation, internal control evaluation, and fraud detection and prevention have a statistically significant positive effect on the mitigation of financial malpractice in Nigerian public institutions. Financial Investigation ($\beta = 0.388$, $p < 0.01$) had the highest impact, suggesting that tracing complex transactions and forensic audits are the most effective tools in uncovering fund misappropriation. Internal Control Evaluation ($\beta = 0.274$, $p < 0.01$) also significantly contributed, aligning with Agency Theory, which emphasizes that internal checks reduce the risk of abuse by public officials. Fraud Detection and Prevention ($\beta = 0.312$, $p < 0.01$) further confirms that the presence of

forensic accountants plays a critical role in identifying and preventing irregularities before they escalate. The high R^2 value of 0.743 indicates that 74.3% of the variance in financial malpractice mitigation is explained by the independent variables. These findings are consistent with prior studies (Akininyi et al, 2025; Ariyo-Edu & Woli-Jimoh, 2024) that affirm the strategic importance of forensic accountants in enhancing financial accountability and minimizing fraudulent practices in the Nigerian public sector.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study examined the role of forensic accountants in mitigating financial malpractice in Nigerian public institutions, focusing on financial investigation, internal control evaluation, and fraud detection and prevention. The findings reveal a strong, significant relationship between these forensic practices and the reduction of financial irregularities, particularly in detecting fund misappropriation and enhancing accountability. Financial investigation emerged as the most influential factor, while effective internal controls and proactive fraud detection



also play key roles. Overall, the study confirms that forensic accountants are vital for promoting transparency, accountability, and financial integrity, aligning with Agency Theory and the Fraud Triangle Theory.

Recommendations: Public institutions should institutionalize forensic accounting units to enable continuous investigation and early fraud detection, while strengthening professional capacity through specialized training and certification. Internal control systems should be regularly reviewed and reinforced, alongside mandatory periodic forensic audits for high-risk entities. Audit findings must be promptly enforced through sanctions and corrective actions to deter misconduct. Effective collaboration with anti-corruption agencies is essential for legal follow-up, supported by investments in forensic technologies and data analytics. Finally, promoting transparency through the public disclosure of audit summaries will enhance accountability and public trust.

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Questionnaire

SECTION A

(Please tick [✓] the appropriate response)

1. Gender: Male Female
2. Age: 18–30 31–40 41–50 51 and above
3. Highest Educational Qualification: OND/NCE HND/B.Sc M.Sc/MBA PhD Professional Certification (e.g., ICAN, ANAN, CFE)
4. Work Experience: Less than 5 years 5–10 years 11–15 years Above 15 years
5. Current Position: Accountant Auditor Forensic Accountant Compliance Officer Other (Specify): _____
6. Type of Institution: Federal Ministry State Ministry Government Agency Anti-Corruption Agency Others

SECTION B

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements:

Financial investigations

S- /N	Statements	1	2	3	4	5
1	Forensic accountants are skilled at tracing complex financial transactions.					
2	Financial investigations help uncover hidden or disguised fraud schemes					
3	Forensic investigations contribute to successful litigation against offenders.					
4	Financial investigation improves transparency in public finance					
5	My organization engages forensic experts for special investigations					

Internal Control Evaluation

S- /N	Statements	1	2	3	4	5
6	Forensic accountants review and assess internal control systems					
7	Weak internal controls are a major cause of financial malpractice.					
8	Internal control evaluation helps reduce financial risk in public institutions offenders.					
9	Forensic audit improves accountability through control system recommendations					



10	My institution implements recommendations from control evaluations					
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Fraud detection and prevention

S- /N	Statements	1	2	3	4	5
11	Forensic accountants are effective in detecting red flags and irregularities					
12	Fraud detection tools are routinely used in public financial audits					
13	Preventive forensic audits reduce the likelihood of embezzlement.					
14	My organization trains staff on fraud risk indicators					
15	Fraud detection reports are submitted to relevant authorities for action					

Detection of Misappropriation of Funds

S- /N	Statements	1	2	3	4	5
16	Forensic accountants help detect cases of fund diversion					
17	Most cases of fund misappropriation would go undetected without forensic auditing					
18	Financial fraud investigations often result in the recovery of stolen funds					
19	Detection of fund misappropriation helps prevent recurring offenses					

Enhanced Financial Accountability

S- /N	Statements	1	2	3	4	5
20	Forensic audits have improved financial reporting in my organization					
21	The presence of forensic accountants promotes financial integrity					
22	Forensic findings are used to improve budget compliance and discipline.					
23	Financial accountability has increased due to forensic oversight					