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***Correspondence**
Lukuman Abiodun Yusuf

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Financial Fraud Detection: Do Forensic Accounting Skills Matter? Evidence From Nigeria

Lukuman Abiodun Yusuf
Office of the Auditor-General for the Federation, Audit House, Abuja, Nigeria

Abstract

This study investigates the effect of forensic accounting skills on financial fraud detection in Nigeria. A survey-based research approach was adopted. One thousand, two hundred (1,200) professional accountants and employees from chosen federal government ministries, departments, and agencies in Nigeria are the target population. A simple random selection procedure was used to choose 300 professional accountants from federal MDAs. Multiple regression analysis was used to examine the given data. The study's findings show that forensic accounting investigative skills, analytical skills, technical skills, and ethical skills all have a positive and significant relationship with financial fraud detection in selected Nigerian Ministries, Departments, and Agencies. The report suggests that the Nigerian government implement and use modern forensic accounting techniques and software for data analysis, anomaly detection, and fraud investigation. These solutions may automate operations, increasing the efficiency and efficacy of fraud detection activities.

Keywords: analytical skills, forensic accounting, technical skills, ethical skills, fraud detection, investigative skills

1.0 Introduction

In light of the rising incidence of worldwide financial crime, there is an increasing emphasis on forensic accounting to identify and examine these actions. Fraud is defined as deceptive actions aimed at gaining unfair advantages, prominently affecting corporate conduct (Prabowo & Hendi, 2021). Forensic accountants apply their expertise in accounting, auditing and investigation to examine financial transactions in organisations. They are important in legal processes about fraudulent acts (Nur, Dewi, & Noval, 2020). The increase in corporate fraud, especially in developing countries such as Nigeria has created the need for forensic accountants to assist in the investigation of complex financial crimes, quantification of economic losses and providing analytical support for legal proceedings. Forensic accountants need to have a good understanding of financial accounting, investigative techniques and business acumen because they are responsible for detecting fraud, collecting evidence and analysing the workings of an organization. The high rate of financial fraud in the public sectors of Nigeria especially in the Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) has made the need for forensic accounting expertise a necessity for financial integrity and transparency.

The increasing rate of fraud in Nigeria necessitates an in-depth study of the role of forensic accounting expertise in fraud detection. Research in developed countries has shown the significance of these skills but there is very scanty research in Nigeria. In previous studies, four aspects of forensic accounting have been examined (i.e. knowledge of procedures, legal knowledge, accounting knowledge and forensic accounting knowledge). This study aims to broaden the perimeter to skills such as auditing, investigation and analytical thinking. These competencies are used in fraud detection and have been found to produce mixed results in a number of studies, with some claiming their critical importance, and others questioning their importance. It is claimed that external auditors lack skills to effectively and efficiently combat fraud practices. It is therefore important to buttress the claim of fraudulent practices in the public sector especially in the ministries, departments and agencies of Nigeria. The research therefore seeks to determine the extent to which the expertise of forensic accounting enhances the detection of fraud in the identified scenarios. This highlights the significance of forensic accounting skills in protecting public funds and improving accountability.

2.0 Literature review

2.1 Conceptual Issues

2.1.1 Financial Fraud

Fraud is defined by Kanu and Okorafor (2013) as a deliberate act or series of acts intended to deceive others. That deception can be in the form of concealment of facts, inferences of untruths, outright lying, subtle innuendo, verbal and non-verbal cues such as gestures or facial expressions. Fraud prevention experts have defined fraudulent activities and misconduct as dishonest and deceptive acts that might, directly or indirectly, reduce the value of a company, even if the people involved do not stand to gain personally. Fraud is deliberate deception. The person uses false methods to commit or conceal the fraud. As Tilton (2006) emphasises, dishonest conduct is seldom the outcome of honest slips or slips. From the above definitions and descriptions, it can be inferred that fraud is the illegal acquisition of property from a person or an entity. The purpose of any fraudulent activity is primarily to deceive and unlawfully obtain financial assets or valuable items from people. Financial institutions face a huge threat in the form of fraud.

2.1.2 Forensic Accounting

Courts and public forums regularly employ forensic accountants to settle disputes (Akidime and Uagbale, 2014). These experts utilise a methodical scientific approach to examine evidence. Accounting for the purpose of resolving or predicting future financial data in legal disputes include locating, recording, establishing, extracting, sorting, reporting, and verifying financial data from the past or from other accounting processes. The ability to analyse, summarise, interpret, and present complicated financial business-related matters is a hallmark of the forensic accounting profession, as pointed out by Felix, Otakefe, and Killian (2020). Forensic accountants are also taught to deal with the business realities of situations rather than just the numbers. Investigating and analysing financial evidence, developing computer applications to aid in its analysis and presentation, providing assistance in legal proceedings (such as serving as an expert witness and creating visual aids to bolster trial evidence), and reporting and presenting findings through reports, exhibits, and document collections are all part of the job.

2.1.3 Investigative Skills of Forensic Accounting

According to Rufus et al. (2015), any early engagement of forensic accounting in litigation is covered by forensic accounting investigations. To conduct an investigation is to systematically ask questions, look for answers, or gather information on a specific or broad topic. The investigative abilities and commercial acumen of forensic accountants play a crucial role in uncovering public sector fraud in Indonesia, as stated by Sumartono et al. (2020). The ability to conduct thorough investigations is an essential talent for every accountant. When exposing fraud is the most important result, auditing skills are useful. To resolve financial matters in a way that satisfies criteria needed by courts of law, forensic accountants use their investigation and analytical abilities (Nwaze, 2012).

2.1.4 Analytical Skills of Forensic Accounting

In order to arrive at well-informed conclusions, forensic accountants employ analytical methods in forensic accounting, which enable them to observe, analyse, study, and analyse data. Messmer (2004) asserts that forensic accountants must possess robust analytical abilities. Forensic accountants require analytical thinking. As they examine the source documents and financial reports, they must verify the legitimacy of each transaction and determine whether the corporation accurately reported it. The documentation does not always corroborate the figures in the reports. Fraud investigations and litigation support necessitate proficiency in critical thinking and analysis (Kalsom et al., 2010). The following skills are required of forensic accountants, as per Digabriele (2008): 1) deductive reasoning, 2) critical thinking, 3) the capacity to solve problems in an unstructured manner, 4) adaptability in the investigation, 5) competence in analysis, 6) fluency in written and spoken communication, 7) a comprehension of specific laws, and 8) decorum. The American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) states that forensic accountants should have analytical, investigative and communication skills in addition to their core competencies (conventional accounting fields), basic forensic knowledge and specialised forensic knowledge.

2.1.5 Technical Skills of Forensic Accounting

Tan and Libby (1997) distinguish between two categories of auditing skills: technical and non-technical. The core talents of an auditor, which are referred to as technical application, are demonstrated by their procedural knowledge and other clerical abilities in the field of general accounting and auditing. Bonner and Lewis (1990) categorise these abilities into three primary categories: (i) superior accounting and auditing capabilities, (ii) comprehensive comprehension of derivative contracts, and (iii) a profound understanding of fundamental business concepts. Harris and Brown's (2000) research has provided a comprehensive understanding of the technical proficiencies and competencies that are essential for forensic accountants. Civil and criminal law are at least superficially understood by the majority of the populace, and they have a basic understanding of the process and events that transpire during trials.

2.1.6 Ethical Skills of Forensic Accounting

An essential component of the accounting profession is the character trait of integrity, which forensic accountants should uphold in all of their investigations. Ethics, as proposed by Bay (1997), is the consensus among forensic accountants and the general public. To avoid fraud, it affects those who utilise financial reports (including investors, managers, specialists in the field, the public, and the government) to make informed decisions. An integral part of forensic accounting, it serves as standards for maintaining credibility with customers and delivering high-quality service. As an expert in their field, forensic accountants have a responsibility to ensure that investigative reports are accurate, dependable, timely, intelligible, relevant, and complete (Ogbonna, 2010).

2.2 Theoretical Framework

Underlying this investigation is agency theory. Because preserving the integrity of financial reports provided by management (agent) for the owners (principal) of organisations is of utmost importance, this research will focus on how forensic accounting skills may be used to prevent and identify fraud in Nigeria. According to Jensen and Meckling (1976), an agency relationship exists when one or more parties (the principal(s)) hire another party (the agent) to carry out a task or set of tasks on their behalf while also giving the agent some discretion over the final product. The purpose of this research was to find ways to strengthen the bond between principals and agents by using forensic accounting methods to uncover financial wrongdoing in MDAs. To address the concerns raised by information asymmetries and self-interest, which have led principals to lose faith in their agents (ICAEW, 2005), it will be necessary to implement measures that bring agents' interests into line with those of principals and limit the room for opportunistic behaviour and information asymmetries. Thus, forensic accounting is introduced as one of these strategies in this research.

2.3 Empirical Review

The effect of forensic investigative methods on stopping corporate fraud inside Nigerian banks was examined by Onodi, Okafor, and Onyali (2015). Numerous statistical approaches, including percentages, mean score computations, frequency tables, regression analysis, and Z-tests, are used in data analysis. Three hypotheses were developed and put to the test empirically. The results show a statistically significant relationship between corporate fraud prevention and

forensic investigative methodologies. The research suggests the need for enhancements in the accounting curriculum since it identifies deficiencies in the accounting and control systems taught at Nigerian universities for detecting instances of financial fraud.

Sumartono, Urusamah, and Hamdani (2020) investigated the influence of forensic accountants' skills on the identification of fraud in Indonesia's public sector. The current investigation used a quantitative research framework using a survey approach. Surveys were sent to auditors proficient in investigative auditing at the Audit Board of the Republic of Indonesia (BPK RI). The total number of respondents who filled the questionnaire and submitted was 44 which shows that the sample size is sufficient for descriptive research. The results of the research show that there is a positive correlation between investigative abilities and corporate worth, and these factors have a positive impact.

Oranefo and Egbunike (2021) examined the effectiveness of forensic accounting techniques against financial statement fraud in Nigerian companies. The present study is employing a survey method approach. The sample frame consisted of accounting lecturers and chartered accountants' resident in the two identified areas of Anambra State. The study used a non-probability sampling method to reduce the nonresponse bias, and to include the participants who have significant expertise on the topic. Finally, all fifty surveys were collected. The primary data were analysed using Pearson correlation analysis. The Pearson correlation study showed a significant positive correlation between the application of Forensic Accounting Techniques (FAT) and the effectiveness of fraud prevention.

Agboare (2021) studied the contribution of forensic accounting in the detection of money laundering in the Deposit Money Banks (DMBs) of Nigeria. This study used survey research as the research methodology. The primary data were collected through a standardised Likert-scale questionnaire and in a wide variety of contexts. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 20.0 for descriptive statistics and regression analysis. The findings indicate that forensic accounting techniques have significant impact on the detection of financial crime in deposit money institution in Nigeria. This will include investigations, evaluation of financial transactions and reconstruction of poor accounting records. Technological advancement has however, resulted in the report to recommend that Nigerian Deposit Money Banks (DMBs) should increase their use of forensic accountants for effective combating of contemporary financial crime.

Ojo-Agbodu, Abiola & Ndubusi (2022) investigated the effect of forensic accounting on fraud detection and prevention in a sample of publicly quoted Deposit Money Banks (DMBs) in Nigeria. The investigation employed a survey method using a sample of 115 resident internal control officials, branch operation managers and cash officers/head tellers in Access Bank, First Bank, GT Bank, Union Bank, UBA and Zenith Bank. The researchers used proportional and convenient random sampling technique to administer the questionnaires to the individuals. The study used basic linear regression to study the relationship between forensic accounting and fraud detection targeting mainly the above DMBs. The study found a strong statistical relationship between the practices of forensic accounting and the identification of fraudulent activities. However, there was no evidence of influence of forensic accounting on fraud prevention in the DMBs referred to. The findings of the study reveal that forensic accounting has not reduced the incidence of fraud in branch operations of deposit money banks in Nigeria.

Beatrice, Tina and Nkechi (2022) investigated the effect of forensic accounting on traditional accounting and reporting practices. The study is based on the panel data of the 10 best banking institutions in Nigeria. The data were basically sourced from the Annual Bulletin of the Central Bank of Nigeria and Factbook of the Nigerian Stock Exchange. The data cover the period from 2004 to 2020. The study used panel data and the results of Hausman test showed that fixed effects regression model is appropriate for the study. The result of the fixed effect regression analysis indicates that there is a significant significant relationship between forensic accounting and financial reporting.

Ogwiji (2023) examined the competencies of forensic accountants in Financial Crime and Corruption Investigation (ICC) and Knowledge and Expertise (KE) and Litigation Support Services (LSS) in determining the prevalence of financial crime (FC) in the Nigerian public sector. The study was based on cross sectional design and survey method. One hundred and ten surveys were distributed and 53 were returned (all responses were valid). The statistical analysis in this paper was mainly conducted using PLS-SEM (SmartPLS 3.0) and IBM SPSS version 20.0. The findings of this study confirm that the existence of expertise and competency of a forensic accountant will go a long way to improve the handling of financial crime. Also, there is a small financial crime effect in the investigation of crime and corruption. Research has found

forensic accountants have a better understanding of fraud prevention, detection, management and response than non-forensic accountants.

3.0 Methodology

The investigation adopts a survey framework. The study cohort includes professional accountants working inside certain federal government ministries, departments, and agencies in Nigeria. As of December 31, 2023, the total number of federal government ministries, departments, and agencies is five hundred and forty-one (541). Based on the information gathered on 31 December, 2023, from National Bureau of Statistics, there are one thousand, two hundred (1,200) staff who are professional accountants (in Federal Ministries, Departments and Agencies). The whole population yields a sample size of 300 by the use of Taro Yamane's formula. The investigation employs primary data collected by a specifically crafted questionnaire given to the respondents. The acquired data was analysed using multiple regression techniques facilitated by the statistical software STATA 13. Normality and multicollinearity evaluations were conducted on the independent variables. A 5-point Likert scale is a common tool used to gauge attitudes and views. The analysis used a 5-point scale with two extremes and a neutral selection paired with average response possibilities. The assessment was performed using a modified five-point Likert scale that included the choices of Strongly Agreed (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (UD), Disagreed (D), and Strongly Disagreed (SD).

3.1 Measurement of Variables

Table 1: Variables Measurement

Variable	Measurement	Authority
Dependent Variable		
Financial Fraud Detection	Median values of responses on the questions raised under financial fraud detection	Agbaje and Salawu (2022)
Independent Variables		
Investigative Skills	Median values of responses on the questions raised under analytical skills	Agbaje and Salawu (2022)
Analytical Skills	Median values of responses on the questions raised under financial fraud detection	Agbaje and Salawu (2022)
Technical Skills	Median values of responses on the questions raised under technical skills	Agbaje and Salawu (2022)
Ethical Skills	Median values of responses on the questions raised under ethical skills	Agbaje and Salawu (2022)

3.2 Model Specification

The model employed by Olaniyan et al., (2021) was adapted and modified to suit the present study. The formulated model for the study is therefore stated below:

$$FINFRDET_i = \beta 0i + \beta 1\ INVSKL\ i + \beta 2\ ANLYSKL\ i + \beta 3\ TECHSKL\ i + \beta 4\ ETHSKL + \mu it$$

Where:

FINFRDET = Financial Fraud Detection

INVSKL = Investigative Skills

ANLYSKL = Analytical Skills

TECHSKL = Technical Skills

ETHSKL = Ethical Skills

β1, - β5 = Coefficient of explanatory variables

βo = Constant or Intercept

μ = Error Term

i = Anti-graft Agencies

4.0 Results

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

Table 2 summarises and presents the descriptive and statistical information about the dependent and explanatory variables, including their minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation values.

Table 2: Summary of Descriptive Statistics

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.	Maximum	Minimum	Skewness	Kurtosis
FINFRDET	2.49	0.7605886	4	1	0.3764243	2.663463
INVSKL	2.953333	0.8909554	5	1	0.347014	3.049196
ANLYSKL	3.316667	1.061514	5	1	-0.0688911	2.126002
TECHSKL	2.43	0.6161972	4	1	0.8690442	3.081669
ETHSKL	2.073333	0.7139008	5	1	1.10818	5.500499

Source: Output generated from STATA 13 Software.

The financial fraud detection is shown in Table 2, where the calculated mean value is 2.49. The 2.49 has a range of values from 1 to 4, accompanied by a standard deviation of 0.7605886. Table 2 displays the statistical measures of the investigative skills, revealing a mean value of 2.953333 and a standard deviation of 0.8909554. The investigative skills exhibit a range spanning from 1 to 5. Table 2 further reveals that analytical abilities have a mean of 3.316667 and a standard deviation of 1.061514. The range of values is from 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest and 1 the minimum. Nevertheless, technical capabilities may go as low as 1 and as high as 4, with an average of 2.43 and a standard deviation of 0.6161972. Ethical competence ranges from a minimum of 1 to a high of 5, with a mean of 2.073333 and a standard deviation of 0.7139008 (Table 2).

4.2 Correlation Matrix

In order to determine how strongly related the variables are to one another, researchers use the correlation matrix. The correlation matrix shows the relationships between the study's independent variables and their dependent counterparts, as well as between the independent variables themselves. Overly strong correlation may cause multicollinearity, which in turn can provide erroneous results, thus it's important to do correlation analysis to determine the level of association among all independent variables.

Table 3: Dependent-Independent Variable Correlation Matrix

	FINFRDET	INVSKL	ANLYSKL	TECHSKL	THSKL
FINFRDET	1				
INVSKL	0.0882	1			
ANLYSKL	0.0471	0.4984	1		
TECHSKL	0.0154	0.0442	0.0448	1	
ETHSKL	0.2607	-0.0285	-0.0257	-0.0347	1

Source: Output generated from STATA 13 Software.

With a value of 0.4984, the resulting correlation matrix shows that the connection between the independent variables analytical skills and investigative abilities is the greatest. Researchers Judge, Griffiths, Hill, Luthepohl, and Lee (1985) found that correlations between independent variables should not be considered troublesome until they exceed the 0.80 or 0.90 threshold.

4.3 Diagnostic Test

To ensure that the assumptions of multiple regression are not broken, a diagnostic test is conducted. Accordingly, multicollinearity and normalcy are checked in the research.

4.3.1 Multicollinearity Test

To ensure that the independent variables were not multicollinear, multicollinearity was detected.

Table 4: Results of Multicollinearity Test

Variables	VIF	Tolerance
ANLYSKL	1.35	0.740079
INVSKL	1.33	0.750711
ETHSKL	1.01	0.985949
TECHSKL	1.00	0.995078
Mean VIF	1.15	

Source: Output generated from STATA 13 Software

According to table 4, the tolerance value is clearly more than the cutoff of 0.10, falling between the range of 0.740079 to 0.995087. An upper limit of 1.35 for the VIF is below the critical value of 10 (Gujarati & Porter, 2009). No indication of multicollinearity between the study's variables has been found, since all of the VIF values are below 10. It follows that the independent variables in this research are not significantly impacted by multicollinearity, allowing for a conventional interpretation of the regression coefficient.

4.3.2 Heteroskedasticity Test

Since a constant variance of the errors is one of the requirements of multiple regression, the research conducted a heteroskedasticity test to ensure this. A heteroskedastic distribution is one in which the variance of the errors is not constant (Gujarati & Porter 2009). Nevertheless, heteroskedasticity was tested using the Breusch-Pagan\Cook-Weisberg test. According to Table 5, which demonstrated that the p-value is higher than 5%. This rules out the possibility of heteroskedasticity.

Table 5: BPP/Cook-Weisberg Heteroskedasticity Test

Test	Chi-square	Prob>chi2
Breusch-Pagan / Cook-Weisberg	0.02	0.8970

Source: The output produced by using the STATA 13 software

4.4 Multiple Regression Analysis

Table 6 displays the results of a multiple regression analysis. Based on the multiple regression analysis shown in Table 4.10, the independent variables may explain about 39.06% of the variation in the dependent variable (R2 = 0.3906). After taking into consideration the number of predictors and the sample size, the independent variables explain about 37.52% of the variation in the dependent variable, according to the adjusted coefficient of determination (Adjusted R2) of 0.3752. Table 6 shows that the probability value is 0.0001 and the F value is 5.86. With an F-value more than 4.000 and a probability less than 0.050, the investigation's results point to the Goodness Model of Fit being present.

Table 6. Results of Multiple Regression Analysis

Model Summary			
No. of Observation	300		
F-statistic	5.86		
Prob. > F	0.0000		
R-square	0.3906		
Adj. R-squared	0.3752		
Variables	**Coefficient**	**t-statistic**	**Sig.**
INVSKL	0.0559337	2.39	0.007***
ANLYSKL	0.0045859	2.13	0.016**
TECHSKL	0.0167895	1.89	0.070*
ETHSKL	0.194261	4.94	0.000***
(Constant)	1.838334	8.06	0.000***

Source: Results produced by the STATA 13 tool.

Note: ***, ** and * = Significant at 1%, 5% and 10% respectively.

5.0 DISCUSSION

Table 6 displays the findings of the multiple regression analysis, which demonstrate that forensic accounting's investigation abilities have a positive coefficient value of 0.0559337 and a p-value of 0.007, both of which are less than the 1% significance threshold. This demonstrates that forensic investigation abilities are positively and significantly correlated with the identification of financial fraud in public institutions in Nigeria. Ministry, Department, and Agency financial fraud detection will improve by the coefficient value for every increase in forensic investigation abilities. This means that integration of forensic investigative skills allows for a more comprehensive oversight of financial activities. By combining the strengths of both approaches, Ministries, Departments and Agencies in Nigeria can cover a broader spectrum of potential fraud indicators, leading to improved fraud detection. This finding corroborates the conclusion reached by Oranefo and Egbunike (2021), and Agboare (2021). But it contradicts that of Beatrice, Tina and Nkechi (2022).

A positive coefficient of 0.07949 and a p-value of 0.041, which is below the 5% threshold of significance, are shown in table 6 as the results of the multiple regression analysis for forensic accounting analytical skills. Government agencies in Nigeria are far better able to identify financial fraud when their forensic analysts have strong analytical capabilities, as shown by the positive coefficient value. This means that forensic accountants are able to use cutting-edge data analytics techniques because of their analytical abilities. Financial fraud may be detected by forensic accountants in Nigeria using data mining, pattern recognition, and predictive modelling, among other approaches. Analytical tools facilitate the recognition of patterns and trend analysis in financial data. Forensic accountants can identify irregularities or deviations from normal financial patterns, helping detect fraud schemes that may otherwise go unnoticed in Nigeria. This analysis provides support for the findings of Beatrice, Tina and Nkechi (2022), Sumartono, Urusamah and Hamdani (2020).

Table 6 indicates that a positive coefficient of 0.0167895 and a p-value of 0.070, both below the 10% significance level, are linked to forensic accounting competencies. This discovery indicates that forensic technical skills are positively and substantially associated with the detection of financial crime in public institutions in Nigeria. This suggests that technological competencies like biometrics or multi-factor authentication bolster the security of financial systems in Nigeria, diminishing the chances of unauthorised access and fraudulent actions. Through the deployment of automated surveillance systems equipped with alert functionalities, forensic accountants in Nigeria can swiftly identify anomalous behaviours and possible fraud signals, facilitating prompt intervention and identification. This result supports the findings of Onodi, Okafor and Onyali (2015). Meanwhile, the findings contradict studies of Sumartono, Urusamah and Hamdani (2020).

Table 6 shows the statistical analysis findings; the forensic accountant's ethical competence has a coefficient of 0.194261 and a p-value of 0.000, which is less than the 1% significance threshold. Ministries, Departments, and Agencies in Nigeria are able to identify 0.194261 more instances of financial fraud for every unit improvement in forensic ethical abilities. But this proved that Nigerian government agencies' ability to identify financial crime is positively and significantly correlated with forensic ethical competence. The fact that forensic accountants' credibility and trustworthiness are bolstered by ethical behaviour provides justification for this positive and substantial link. A more effective response to financial fraud in Nigeria is possible when experts conduct investigations in accordance with ethical standards. This increases the likelihood that stakeholders would accept and trust the results. Consistent with previous research, this study's findings corroborate those of Agboare (2021), Oranefo and Egbunike (2021), and Ojo-Agbodu, Abiola and Ndubusi (2022).

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

The study found that forensic accounting analytical skills aid Nigerian government agencies and ministries to detect financial crimes faster. This implies that the use of methods of forensic investigation helps in a more thorough investigation of financial activities. The operations of Ministries, Departments and Agencies in Nigeria can enhance fraud detection by integrating the beneficial elements of both approaches, to cover a wider spectrum of possible fraud indicators. Furthermore, the study validates that the forensic accounting skill in analysis significantly improves the detection of financial fraud in Ministries, Departments and Agencies in Nigeria. This means that the use of analytical skills enhances the forensic accountants' data analytics skills. The study also finds that the specialised skills of forensic accounting significantly improve the detection of financial misconduct in Nigerian public entities. This demonstrates that the adoption of technological innovations such as biometrics and multi-factor authentication improves the security of Nigeria's banking systems by decreasing the likelihood of unauthorised access and fraudulent activities. The study findings show that ethical skills of forensic accountants positively relate to financial crimes detection in Nigeria's Ministries, Departments and Agencies. This important association may be explained by the idea that ethical behaviour practice enhances the reliability and credibility of forensic accountants. Hence, the study recommends that the Government adopts and uses advanced forensic accounting tools and software for data analysis, anomaly detection and fraud investigation. The Government is further advised to undertake specialised training and capacity building programs for personnel in MDAs to equip them with the requisite knowledge and skills to effectively carry out forensic accounting investigations and audits. MDAs will have to establish collaborations with academic institutions to embed forensic accounting courses within appropriate academic programs. Finally, the study recommends that Nigerian

Ministries, Departments and Agencies should have a strong internal control system and conduct an internal audit with adequate expertise that is competent and effective.

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