An Exploration of the Viability of Forensic Accounting Techniques in Combating Financial Statement Fraud in Nigerian Organizations

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Abstract

Purpose: This study explored the viability of forensic accounting techniques in combating financial statement fraud in Nigerian organizations. The study specifically examined the relationship between forensic accounting techniques and fraud deterrence; and, the viability of forensic accounting techniques to enforce corporate policies and procedures.

Research methodology: The study adopts the survey research design. The sampling frame comprised accounting lecturers and chartered accountants in two geographical locations of Anambra State. The study utilized non-probability sampling to mitigate non-response bias and to select knowledgeable respondents. The final retrieved questionnaires were fifty. The primary data were analyzed using Pearson correlation analysis.

Results: The Pearson correlation results showed a positive association between forensic accounting techniques (FAT) and fraud deterrence. Secondly, there is a positive association between forensic accounting techniques and the enforcement of corporate policies.

Limitations: The main limitation was the small sample size from the retrieved questionnaires future studies can therefore widen the sampling frame and explore other sectors. The study also spanned one of the South-eastern States limiting generalizability.

Contribution: The study contributes to the literature in the context of developing countries, on the continuing viability of forensic accounting techniques (FAT) in detecting financial statement fraud in its various multifarious forms in such countries with weak institutional environments compared to developed countries. The study also adds to the literature on the viability of forensic accountants in enforcing corporate policies and procedures which is useful in an organizational research context.

Keywords: *Forensic Accounting, Fraud, Forensic Accounting Techniques, Fraud Detection, Fraud Prevention*

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1. Introduction

Forensic accounting technique has been widely acclaimed as a viable tool to combat financial statement fraud and economic crime (Kaur, Sood, & Grima, 2022). According to Adebisi (2013); Owolabi, Dada, and Olaoye (2013) "forensic" means "suitable for use in a court of law". Since its evolution, its success has been recorded across a wide range of contexts with its application useful in settling actual or anticipated disputes or litigations. Forensic accounting is the systematic process of identifying or examining trends, recording, comparing, sorting, and extracting relevant financial information (Bologna & Lindquist, 1995) for settling current or prospective legal disputes or using

prior financial data for projecting the future likelihood of fraud (Crumbley, Heitger, & Smith, 2007). The audited statement of financial position, statement of comprehensive income, and the statement of cash flows, along with the notes to the accounts provide a foundational basis for a firm's specific information which is available to investors (Bushman & Smith, 2003). Thus, when such information is fraught with errors of fraud, they present a distorted picture of the company, which is of course misleading to an investor.

Global recognition of forensic accountants led to its utilization by a wide variety of government agencies to deal with the issue of fraudulent practices (Bhasin, 2013, 2015), they include, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), Central Bank of Nigeria, Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS), etc. (Finance, 2018; Gray, 2008; Owolabi et al., 2013). However, despite its growing importance the rate of penetration in developed countries far outpaces that of developing nations (Alamry, Al-Attar, & Salih, 2022). An issue that Kaur et al. (2022) attributed to a lack of awareness and education. Another study by Akinbowale, Klingelhöfer, and Zerihun (2020) identifies the lack of a suitable organizational framework suitable for forensic accounting implementation. Pathetically, a major issue that has hindered the development of most emerging economies is the rate of fraudulent practices which is linked to their weak institutional environment. This is the case often observed among public servants in the Nigerian context, with the case of the Accountant General an illustrious one. As stated by Alamry et al. (2022), administrative corruption is generally prevalent among governmental units and its multifarious incidence has spread widely. An effect cushioned by weak public financial management systems.

Thus, public looting and unauthorized diversion of cash (acquisitive crimes) (Enyi, 2008) remain among the dominant forms of corruption in Nigeria's public sector, while, weak internal control systems remain the loophole in the Nigerian private sector (Hamilton & Gabriel, 2012).

Even in the presence of strong internal controls, Eton, Fabian, and Benard (2022) substantiated a need to maintain financial accountability. This is witnessed in several corporate scandals in the Nigerian context, such as Cadbury Plc., Oceanic, and Afri Bank Plc., due to the possibility of management fraud from access to internal control (Okpako & Atube, 2013). The ranking of the country by Transparency International (TI) of 154th in 2021; a position which has further worsened by declining five places below. Paradoxically in 2011, it ranked 143rd out of 183 countries showing that the present administration may not have been effective in curbing public corruption. As previously, reiterated by Oyejide (2008) a situation where the government rules, laws and processes to influence behavior are flawed leading to an absence of transparency, breeds fertile ground for fraudulent practices which are sustained over time. Thus, corruption is deeply entrenched in Sub-Saharan African countries and encompasses a wide range of suspicious and unethical economic and political practices via which civil servants and politicians enrich themselves (Amundsen, 1999).

The growing spates of corporate scandals (Chinyamunjiko, Makudza, & Mandongwe, 2022) placed a wider responsibility on the accounting function thereby requiring them to equip themselves with the necessary skills to identify acts of mismanagement, fraud and other wrongdoings (Okunbor & Obaretin, 2010). Typical examples of worldwide corporate scandals such as Enron, Worldcom, Global Crossing (USA); Parmalat (Italy); Union Dicon Salt, Cadbury (Nigeria); Anglo-leasing, and Golden berg (Kenya) have shown the failure of the traditional audit approach in the fight against fraud (Afriyie et al., 2022; Ogutu & Ngahu, 2016). This according to Chinyamunjiko *et al.* (2022), is because their rate of proliferation has grown over the past few years. According to the ACFE (2022), organizations lose trillions in dollars equivalent globally to various forms of fraud. Furthermore, the growing complexity of fraud in the modern-day (Akinbowale, 2018; Kaur et al., 2022) entails detailed scrutiny and requires more sophisticated techniques for detection (Enyi, 2008); (Adebisi, 2013). A position previously stated by the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners Survey of 2014 (ACFE Report to the Nation, 2014). This has positioned forensic accounting techniques as a useful tool in today's contemporary system (Adebisi, 2013; BUCKHOFF & Hansen, 2002). Thus, the relevance of forensic accounting has also diffused to the corporate world. It is particularly important for detecting

various white-collar crimes and occupational frauds in the private sector (Buckhoff & Hansen, 2002). According to the ACFE (2022), the variant of fraud referred to as occupational fraud has over time been the costliest and most common form in the world of crime. It has remained greater than healthcare fraud, money laundering, tax evasion, or identity theft.

Several organizations with a vested interest have experienced a loss in investments from fraud and corruption by both local and foreign investors. Prior studies have severally explored the need for forensic services in corporate organizations (Modugu & Anyaduba, 2013; Ogutu & Ngahu, 2016), however, presently research seems to be dwindling especially survey evidence on how forensic accounting techniques can help curb financial crimes (Modugu & Anyaduba, 2013). Financial statement fraud distorts financial statement analysis (Olayinka, 2022) and therefore able to manipulate the decisions of investors and creditors and other potential stakeholders. Forensic accountants at all levels acquire a dynamic skill set from the requisite knowledge. This enables them to explore, identify, and discover variable forms of fraud or irregularities (Afriyie et al., 2022; Akinbowale, 2018; Akinbowale et al., 2020). This study, therefore, addresses the viability of forensic accountants in combating financial statement fraud in Nigerian organizations. The main objective of the study is to explore the viability of forensic accounting techniques in combating financial statement fraud in Nigerian organizations. The study specifically examined the following:
1. To determine the relationship between forensic accounting techniques and fraud deterrence in Nigerian organizations.
2. To investigate the relationship between forensic accounting techniques and the enforcement of corporate policies.

2. Literature Review
2.1 Conceptual Framework
2.1.1 Concept of Fraud
Fraud involves any form of illegality or illegal means to obtain or acquire the money or asset of another deceitfully or disadvantaged (Ojaide, 2000). They are false intentional manipulations undertaken to acquire a financial or non-financial benefit. Fraud "involves all multifarious means human ingenuity can devise" with the sole purpose of obtaining the undue advantage of another (Black, 1979). Fraud has several variants. For instance, Sutherland (1983) defined white-collar crime as a "criminality perpetrated by persons with a reputable social stance often during undertaking his or her normally assigned duty". In the view of, Stanley (1994) fraud consists of an intentional falsification of facts to deceive another thereby leading the other party to act unknowingly or without full information causing him or her a loss from the deceitful act. This definition reiterates the fact that fraud involves such actions as lying, stealing, and several forms of cheating that people engage in to extort or dupe others.

Fraud by the EFCC (2004) is often a non-violent approach toward obtaining illicit/illegitimate wealth either as an individual or a group of individuals. The indulgence in such an activity is often in contravention of existing laws, either at the governmental or organizational level. The EFCC (2004) further describes the various forms of fraudulent activities including "…trafficking, embezzlement, money laundering, bribery, and any form of corrupt malpractice". (Nwaze, 2012) opined that fraud is a predetermined process or means usually undertaken by an individual or group of individuals with the sole aim of obtaining from another individual or organization illegally at a disadvantage otherwise not possible without such deceptive act or procedure. Other forms of fraudulent practices in the Nigerian context as stated by the EFCC include illegal bunkering, child labor, and mining. In a tax-related context, there is also the issue of tax evasion and transfer pricing, etc. Various studies have described the forms of fraud which are characterized by the methods of perpetration, such as teeming and lading, theft and embezzlement, insider abuses, forgeries, and fraudulent substitutions, unauthorized lending, ghost workers, unauthorized use of a firm's documents, manipulation of (payment) vouchers, over-invoicing, ledger accounts manipulation, cyber fraud, etc. (Adeniji, 2004; Okafor, 2004).

2.1.2 Concept of Forensic Accounting

Forensic accounting is a combination of two words "forensic" and "accounting" (Peloubet, 1946). The origins of forensic accounting may be traced to the early works of Kutilya, an economist that tracked forty ways of embezzlement thereby recognizing the need for forensic accounting. An age-long perspective by Peloubet views forensic accounting as the activity of applying relevant accounting knowledge in addition to investigative procedures in resolving matters that are admissible in a court of law. Authors are of the view that it is a scientific approach to fraud analysis and deterrence (Okoye, Adeniyi, & Nwankwo, 2015). It, therefore, entails the use of numerous tools or techniques, and the application of skills and knowledge for fraud investigative purposes. Forensic accounting involves the application of auditing, accounting, and other relevant quantitative and investigative techniques to provide evidence in a legal proceeding (Fakhari & Oskou, 2018; Wahyuni-TD, Haron, & Fernando, 2021). It is made up of two major aspects. The first, litigation services specify the role of a forensic accountant in a court of competent jurisdiction as a witness, while, the second recognizes the use of specialty and quantitative skills for investigative purposes and the provision of relevant information for courtroom testimony or relevant stakeholders (Adebisi, 2013).

According to the definition proffered by the Association of Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA's) Forensic & Litigation Services Committee, forensic accounting involves the application of specialist skills in a broader accounting and auditing environment, with the involvement of other related quantitative techniques and research for expert fraud case detection. Forensic accounting involves the application of quantitative skills (Sharifi, Vaez, & Basirat, 2022) intending to support individuals, organizations and the government (Alshurafat, Al Shbail, & Mansour, 2021). Furthermore, Sharifi et al. (2022) state that it has a multi-disciplinary orientation. In an increasingly nefarious world, forensic accountants collect and analyze evidence across a wide category of functions such as the police, DMBs or other forms of banks and government institutions. The growing digitalization of the world economy has led forensic accountants to become also involved in obtaining evidence concerning cybercrime (Rehman & Hashim, 2020). American Institute of Certified Public Accountants AICPA (2010) defines forensic accounting as the expert application of knowledge and other investigative skills in areas of fraud or the like. Therefore, forensic accounting involves the application of specialized audit and accounting practices, economics, law, tax, and other relevant disciplines.

Going by the words of Crumbley et al. (2007) …forensic accounting presents evidence that is appropriate for legal review by offering a higher degree of assurance. In other words, by implementing a thorough approach to investigation a forensic accountant presents evidence that is complete from an unbiased professional judgment, on the nature of the accounts examined. Manning (2005) defines forensic accounting as the application of analytical and investigative skills to detect and address issues in the context which can lead to the provision of evidence acceptable to the courts in either civil or criminal litigation. Forensic accounting plays a role in fraud risk assessment and identification (Mansor, 2015). The growing importance of forensic accounting has been stressed by several authors, such as Sharifi et al. (2022) that found it useful for shareholder protection.

Coenen (2005) and Zysman (2004) pointed out some areas or branches of forensic accounting application including:
a. Criminal investigations or corporate fraud
b. Shareholders and partnership dispute
c. Litigation services
d. Business valuation
e. Computer forensic
f. Personal injury claim
g. Business and insurance claims
h. Employee fraud
i. Professional negligence, and
j. Mediation and arbitration.

2.1.3 Forensic Accounting and Fraud Deterrence

Forensic accounting techniques equip accountants with the necessary skills to act as "financial scavengers" to rip out information (Ogutu & Ngahu, 2016). It arms them with various skills that help them to comprehend financial patterns to detect and combat financial crime (BUCKHOFF & Hansen, 2002; Grubor, Ristić, & Simeunović, 2013; Hibshi, Vidas, & Cranor, 2011). They use a wide array of techniques such as a structured interview of culpable persons to obtain information, data mining, analytical, reporting and a wide array of quantitative tools such as ratio analysis (vertical or horizontal) (Akinbowale et al., 2020; Eyisi & Ezuwore, 2014). Presently also the use of digital forensics based on computer-assisted methods has become prominent following big data analytics. Overall fraud deterrence, encompasses areas such as asset misappropriation, corruption and financial statement fraud. Studies in the Nigerian context have established the relevance of forensic accounting in banks, manufacturing firms and the public sector. For instance, Augustine and Uagbale-Ekatah (2014) exploratory study found that forensic accounting remains a viable tool for combating fraud in Nigeria's commercial banks. The authors further provided evidence that such techniques were also useful in the reduction of corruption. The findings were supported by Temitope (2014). Specifically, the study reported that forensic accounting techniques aided banks to combat financial crimes. From a meta-analytic perspective, the study by Kaur et al. (2022), found a positive association between forensic accounting techniques and fraud detection and control. The survey study by Onuora and Fabian also found a positive association between forensic accounting techniques and fraud reduction in Nigeria. The study by Okoye et al. (2015) using secondary data from Nigerian brewery firms from 2010 to 2016 finds that forensic auditing positively and significantly affected the return on assets, return on equity, and EPS. Agyemang, Ohalehi, Mgbame, and Alo (2022) find evidence that forensic accounting reduces occupational fraud. Based on these assertions, the study, therefore, formulates the following hypothesis:

H₁: There is a significant relationship between forensic accounting techniques and fraud deterrence in Nigerian organizations.

2.1.4 Forensic Accounting and Corporate Policies

Forensic accounting also aids and supports the development of an effective mechanism to support the enforcement of corporate anti-crime policies (Akinbowale et al., 2020). Many organizations in a bid to prevent fraud often establish an efficient internal control system (Rehman & Hashim, 2020). Such controls are based on the managerial perspective on ethics and strong corporate governance policies (Ogutu & Ngahu, 2016). More so, efficient procedural controls would lead to the safeguarding of company assets, while efficient audit mechanisms would maintain transparency and curb fraud. Prior studies have suggested that tracking financial crimes within an organization may become complicated due to internal conspiracy or attempts to cover up such crimes (Akinbowale et al., 2020). More so, internal financial crimes are perpetrated by top-level management who often have a feeling they can do much with impunity (Akinbowale et al., 2020). The study by Rehman and Hashim (2020) conducted in Oman, using cross-sectional survey evidence found that forensic accounting techniques contribute to sustainable corporate governance. This is suggestive of the fact that the management can employ forensic accounting techniques to further strengthen the corporate governance of a firm (Kamwani, Vieira, Madaleno, & do Carmo Azevedo, 2022). In Nigeria, Ezekwesili using a sample of 11 banks and the Pearson correlation coefficient finds a positive and significant association between forensic auditors and corporate governance. The qualitative study by Navarrete and Gallego (2022), which assessed the viability of forensic accounting techniques in detecting financial statement fraud found its utility ex-ante. This is consistent with the view presented in the study by (Rehman & Hashim, 2018), that proactively forensic accounting techniques can be employed in organizations to achieve corporate governance maturity. Therefore, we propose that:

H₂: There is a positive association between forensic accounting techniques and the enforcement of corporate policies.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The theory on which the study is based is the "General Strain Theory (GST)" (Agnew, 1992). The core centrality of the GST is that when an individual experiences a strain from the environment, such an individual may become upset and indulge in crime. This is often seen as the pathway to escape

from strain or stress (Krohn, Lizotte, & Hall, 2009). Strains are situations or events which are generally not favorable to the individual (Agnew, 2006a, 2006b). The GST broadly conceptualizes strains across three categories. The first is when an individual loses something of value to him or her. In the second scenario, an individual is treated in a negative or aversive manner by others. Lastly, an individual who fails to achieve his or her goal may also be exposed to strain. The authors further distinguished between *objective* and *subjective strains* (Agnew, 1992, 2001, 2006b). The difference between the two is the level of negativity by a given set or group of persons towards the situation with the former representing a detest by the majority of persons in a group while the subjective category is a detest to such an event and situation by person or group of persons that experienced it.

2.3 Empirical Review

Prior studies have employed varying research designs to explore the issue of FAT in Nigeria and globally. Using a sample of three fifty respondents that work in Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) in Nigeria, the survey study by Eko (2022) established that forensic accounting had a positive association with fraud detection and prevention. Using survey data from Kenya, the study by Ogutu and Ngahu (2016) investigate the application of forensic accounting skills in the mitigation of fraud in Nakuru County, Kenya. They employed a descriptive survey research design. They distributed the questionnaire to twenty-five respondents in various accounting firms. The data were analyzed using frequencies and descriptive statistics while qualitative data was analyzed by grouping similar responses. The results showed that areas, where forensic accountants were mainly needed, were fraud prevention, detection, insolvency or reorganization, and other related specialist investigations in a firm.

Dada (2014) examined the application of forensic accounting techniques in fraud detection and investigation in Nigeria. The study employed a survey research design. The regression result showed that the application of forensic accounting techniques was effective in preventing fraud and corruption.

The survey study by Modugu and Anyaduba (2013) analyzed the role of forensic accounting in financial fraud detection and control in Nigeria. The primary data were analyzed using a sample of 143 respondents comprising accountants, auditors and shareholders. The results revealed that the relevant stakeholders agreed that forensic accounting was effective in fraud detection and control. More so, it plays a key role in financial reporting and internal control quality.

Using survey data, the study by Enofe, Julius, and Ogbeide (2015) on the application of FAT to curb various forms of financial crimes. They utilized primary data from a structured questionnaire administered to 100 respondents. The hypothesis was tested using the chi-square technique. The results showed that forensic accounting did not mitigate payroll fraud but curbed management theft. Similarly, Okpako and Atube (2013) used primary data from fifteen firms in Benin City and analyzed using the Chi-Square and Ordinary Least Square (OLS) and found that the application of forensic accounting techniques reduces the level of fraudulent activities.

The study by Owolabi et al. (2013) evaluated the effect of forensic accounting techniques in detecting corruption and embezzlement in Nigeria's public sector organizations. They focused on its application by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) in investigative procedures that can ensure the effective prevention of corruption. The data were analyzed using multiple regression analysis. The results showed that forensic accounting techniques were viable in the investigation and detection of corruption. However, no evidence was found for its utility in preventing the embezzlement of funds from the application of forensic accounting techniques.

Using survey evidence from Nigerian public sector organizations, Adebisi (2013) examined the utility of forensic accounting techniques to detect and prevent fraud. The study was conducted in Kogi State. The primary data was obtained from 350 questionnaires in five (5) ministries in the State. They also interviewed a few persons in those ministries. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Analysis Of Variance (ANOVA). They find that forensic accounting services reduced the occurrence

of fraud. This flows from the specialist skills applied by forensic accountants when compared to traditional accountants/auditors. Lastly, forensic accountants are also better at preventing fraud in the Nigerian public sector.

Using empirical data from Nigeria, the study by Owolabi et al. (2013) examined the usefulness of FAT in fraud deterrence. Multiple regression techniques were used to analyze the survey data obtained through questionnaires and oral interviews used for hypotheses testing. The results indicated that fraud investigation and detection through forensic accounting significantly and positively reduced fraud.

Using survey data from Nigerian banks, the study by Chi-Chi and Ebimobowei (2012) examined the effect of forensic accounting services on fraud detection. They utilized primary data from Nigerian banks. The data were collected from a structured questionnaire administered to twenty-four banks in Port Harcourt. The data were analyzed using the Ordinary Least Square test. The result revealed that forensic accounting services reduced fraudulent activities in banks.

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3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The geographical area of this study is Anambra State in Nigeria, the two selected localities were Onitsha and Awka with the former representing a prominent commercial nerve center in the state and the latter the state capital. The study employed the use of a *survey research design.* Survey design entails a useful method for evaluating opinions from the use of a questionnaire or interview with a large number of respondents (Ezejelue, Ogwo, & Nkamnebe, 2008). Surveys enable researchers to generate data on contexts, practices, or perceptions at a point in time *via* a questionnaire or interview. The survey research design is deemed appropriate for this study because the study intends to elicit the opinion of the subjects on the issue of interest in the study. The study sample comprised lecturers and chartered accountants in the two localities. The researchers administered a total of eighty questionnaires (80) however, the final number of useable retrieved questionnaires was fifty (50), and thus represents the number of participants from the selected categories that took part in the study.

3.2 Sources of Data

The study mainly relied on primary sources of data which were generated from the use of a structured questionnaire. The questionnaires were administered within 2 weeks in November 2021. The questionnaire used in the study was structured in the Likert scale format; and, used to provide information from the respondents on their responses to the items in the instrument. A questionnaire comprises a compilation of relevant questions which a researcher develops from a literature review and used to obtain information from the respondents (Kumar, 2010). The questionnaire comprised two sections, with the first section dealing with the background information of the respondents, while section B addressed questions emanating from the research questions of the study. Section B of the questionnaire was designed using the Likert scale. The summated rating scale is also commonly referred to as the Likert scale. The design is based on the assumption that items in the instrument have equal attitudinal value, i.e., 'importance' or 'weight' (Kumar, 2010).

3.3 Validity and Reliability Test

The instrument was subjected to face and content validity. Face validity entails the judgment that the designed instrument measures what it is purported to primarily assess from an analytical link between the questions and the objectives of the study (Kumar, 2010). It is practically useful for ensuring the final instrument is a true representation of the items or questions that address the issue in the research. The evaluation of the items in the instrument concerning the above is referred to as content validity (Kumar, 2010). In addition, the instrument should maintain adequate coverage of the items of interest in the research; that is, each section should adequately represent an issue with the clustering of relevant questions (Kumar, 2010). The reliability of the instrument was evaluated using Cronbach Alpha.

3.4 Pilot Test and Data Analysis

The instrument was also pilot-tested on an informal sample of fifteen respondents. This is practically useful to enable the researchers to understand reactions and modifications that need to be made to an instrument before a large-scale survey (Centre, 2011). The pilot study was carried out on 15 accounting lecturers. The study employed quantitative techniques to analyse the primary data. The Pearson correlation was used to test the hypotheses using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS).

4. Results and Discussions

4.1 Demographic Profile

The table below shows the proportion of questionnaires returned under the various subheads in the demographic section of the questionnaire of the final sample.

Table 1. Bio-Data of Respondents

Category	Distribution	Number	Percentage (%)
Age	20 – 30 years	11	22
	31 – 45 years	33	66
	46 – 65 years	6	12
Total		50	100
Length of Working Experience	1 – 5 years	4	8
	6 – 10 years	19	38
	11 – 15 years	25	50
	16 & Above	2	4
Total		50	100
Highest Academic Qualification	OND/NCE	Nil	0
	BA/BSc/HND	28	56
	PGD/MBA/MSC	13	26
	PhD	9	18
Total		50	100
Professional Affiliation	ICAN	21	42
	ANAN	29	58
Total		50	100

Source: Field Survey (2021)

The table above revealed the bio-data of respondents in respective categories. From the table, 11 respondents (i.e. 22%) are between the ages of twenty to thirty. 33 respondents (i.e. 66%) are between the ages of thirty-one to forty-five and 6 respondents (i.e. 12%) are between the ages of forty-six to sixty. The table revealed that 4 respondents (i.e. 8%) have work experience of one to five years, 19 respondents (i.e. 38%) have work experience of six to ten years, 25 respondents (i.e. 50%) have work experience of eleven to fifteen years, while only 2 respondents (i.e. 4%) have work experience of sixteen years and above. None of the respondents is OND/NCE holder. However, it shows that 28 respondents (i.e. 56%) are BA/BSc/HND holders, 13 respondents (i.e. 26%) are PGD/MBA/MSc. Holders while only 9 respondents (i.e. 18%) are PhD holders. Finally, the table shows the division of respondents according to professional affiliation where 21 respondents (i.e. 42%) are ICAN members and 29 respondents (i.e. 58%) are ANAN members.

4.1.1 Reliability Statistics

Table 2. Reliability statistics

	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Forensic accounting techniques	.910	5
Fraud deterrence	.711	4
Corporate policies and procedures	.885	4

Source: SPSS Ver.20

Cronbach's alpha showed values well above a threshold of .70. Therefore, the reliability of the measurement is justified.

4.1.2 Test of Hypotheses
Hypothesis One:
H_{o1}:   There is no significant relationship between forensic accounting techniques and fraud deterrence in Nigerian organizations.

Table 3: Test of Hypothesis One

		Forensic accounting techniques	Fraud deterrence
Forensic accounting techniques	Pearson Correlation	1	.521[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	50	50
Fraud deterrence	Pearson Correlation	.521[**]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	50	50

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
Source: SPSS Ver. 20

The table above shows a positive correlation between forensic accounting techniques and fraud deterrence. This suggests the high acceptability of the fact that there is a great involvement of forensic accountants in fraud prevention. The significance of .000 (p<.05); rejected the null and accepted the alternate hypothesis in this study. Consequently, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate thus; there is a significant relationship between forensic accounting techniques and fraud deterrence in Nigerian organizations. This is supported by (Kaur et al., 2022) that find that FAT plays a significant role in fraud deterrence and prevention. This further concurs with (Jaya & Narsa, 2021) using survey evidence from Indonesia analyzed using the PLS technique and finds that forensic accounting techniques played a role in mitigating financial statement fraud. Chi-Chi and Ebimobowei (2012), on the effect of forensic accounting techniques on fraud detection in Nigerian banks and showed that the application of forensic accounting services affects the level of fraud in the banks. In Kenya, Ogutu and Ngahu (2016) also found that FAT were effective in fraud detection. From a phenomenological perspective, the qualitative study by (Navarrete & Gallego, 2022) finds evidence that FAT was a viable tool for fraud detection in the modern era. The perception of respondents in the survey study by (Modugu & Anyaduba, 2013), also confirms that stakeholders perceive that FAT was effective in fraud prevention and control. This evidence is also substantiated in the study by (Okpako & Atube, 2013) conducted their survey-based study using empirical data from Benin State, Nigeria. (Nandini & Ajay, 2021) from a forensic audit perspective also confirm that FAT plays an inhibiting role in fraud mitigation and prevention using survey evidence.

Hypothesis Two:
H_{o2}:   There is no positive association between forensic accounting techniques and the   enforcement of corporate policies.

Table 4. Test of Hypothesis Two

		Forensic accounting techniques	Corporate policy enforcement
Forensic accounting techniques	Pearson Correlation	1	.461[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	50	50

Corporate policy enforcement	Pearson Correlation	.461**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	50	50

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS Ver.20

From the table above, it could be inferred that the asymptotic significance of .000 is less than the level of significance employed in this study. The significance of .000 (p<.05); rejected the null and accepted the alternate hypothesis in this study. Consequently, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis, thus; forensic accounting techniques are positively associated with the enforcement of corporate policies. According to Nandini and Ajay (2021), FAT can play a useful role in strengthening corporate policies, for instance, in assisting the audit committees with a concomitant effect on corporate governance. This evidence was further argued by Navarrete and Gallego (2022), though from an ex-ante application of FAT against an ex-post application. The authors argued that the ex-ante application reinforces the institutionalized management control systems (MCS) in place within the organization. This is consistent with the study by Enofe et al. (2015), which showed that forensic accounting curbed management theft. More so, the evidence is synonymous with the study by Dada (2014) which established that forensic accounting techniques were successful in detecting and preventing cases of corruption. According to Kamwani et al. (2022), achieving maturity in the organizational corporate governance model requires effective preventative methods geared toward fraud deterrence. And, Wahyuni-TD et al. (2021) in Indonesia using a PLS framework find that good governance contributes to improved organizational performance.

5. Conclusion

The study concludes that forensic accounting techniques were still viable in combating financial statement fraud in Nigerian organizations. Our empirical analysis supports the fact that forensic accounting techniques are significantly associated with fraud deterrence; and, the application of forensic accounting techniques was positively associated with the enforcement of corporate policies. The main contribution of the study lies in its argument that the traditional post-forensic approach is replaced by pre traditional forensic approach by increasing the presence of forensic accountants, especially in public sector organizations. This would have the benefit of the ex-ante improving internal controls and management within private and public sector organizations. More so, the authors recommend that internal auditors can also be trained in forensic accounting techniques to support the organizational internal control system. This would have the dual advantage of supporting external audits and improving organizational and management controls reducing internal fraud. Therefore, future studies can explore the areas of practicality in which forensic accounting techniques may be implemented within the organization and management control systems. Also, using a different approach such as a mixed methods design or the like would prove useful.

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