

# FORENSIC ACCOUNTING PRACTICES AND FRAUD PREVENTION IN RIVERS STATE MINISTRIES

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**Abstract:** *This study was carryout to evaluate the impact of forensic accounting practices and fraud prevention in rivers state ministries. The methodology adopted in this study was survey research design and fraud triangle theory was used to underpin the study. The collected primary data used were source from 140 respondent staff from the selected ministries out of which 126 questionnaires were returned and 121 were valid and therefore used for analysis. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson moment correlation coefficient and regression technique added by SPSS version 22.0. The result of the empirical study revealed a strong positive relationship between forensic accounting practices and fraud prevention in rivers state ministries .Likewise Investigative accounting, and Litigation support services, show a significant positive relationship with payroll fraud. The study concludes that forensic accounting practices influence fraud prevention in rivers state ministries. The study recommends that Government should employ more forensic auditors into Rivers state ministries for inclusion in statutory review report towards preparation for auditor general audit report as it will help to curtail fraudulent activities in the ministries. it was also stated that Government should establish a functional whistle blowing policy that will ensure effective reporting of all fraudulent act uncover for litigation as to discourage fraudulent practices*

**Keyword:** *Investigative accounting, Litigation support services, forensic accounting practices, fraud prevention, payroll fraud*

## Introduction

The rampant impacts of financial fraud globally have increased the need for credible and high quality of forensic accounting as to bridge a large gap in prevention of such financial fraud. Fraud prevention is essential for helping public sector, corporate organizations and individuals protect themselves from financial loss and other harm caused by fraudulent

activities. Forensic audit and fraud prevention are closely related because forensic auditors often conduct fraud detection investigations as part of their work, and their findings may be used as evidence in legal proceedings. Erasmus (2021) posited that fraud in Nigeria is a subject that has gotten a lot of attention both globally and in the local country. The rate of fraud in Nigeria pose a concern for the stakeholder as well as the Nigerian government, although the government of Nigeria has try to control fraud through anti-corruption agency like ICPC and EFCC to mention but a few yet the rate of financial crime in the country is alarming.

The Nigeria environment is filled with news of fraud and fraudulent activities; this is as a result of the fact that financial fraud has now become part and parcel of daily activities of Nigerians. The story of ghost workers, fraud and embezzlement are found everywhere in Nigeria especially in the ministries and agencies of government. Eze (2015) opined that the wave of financial fraud in the world has demonstrated in many ways how financial fraud has bedevilled the world globally and resultant hateful failure and the inability of the public sector organization to fulfil their responsibility placed greater functions on accountants to equip themselves with skills to identify and act upon financial fraud and irregularities. The increasing rate of public and private fraud embezzlement has caused a serious concern to investors, general public and owners of business organization. Fraud is a pervasive problem in state ministries, leading to financial losses, erosion of public trust, and reputational damage. Forensic accountants use various techniques to detect and prevent fraud, including data analysis, forensic analysis of electronic evidence, and expert witness testimony. By employing these techniques, forensic accountants can identify patterns and anomalies in financial data that may indicate fraudulent activities. Forensic accounting is a specialized field that combines accounting, auditing, and investigative techniques to analyse and interpret financial data. It plays a crucial role in detecting and preventing fraud, which is a significant issue in Nigeria. In the context of State Ministries, forensic accounting can be used to detect and prevent fraud in various areas, such as procurement, payroll, and cash handling. By conducting thorough investigations and analysing financial data, forensic accountants can identify instances of fraud and provide evidence for prosecution. Additionally, forensic accountants can help State Ministries implement internal controls and risk management strategies to prevent future fraud occurrences.

Ogiriki and Appah, (2018) asserts that the wide spread of financial fraud in modern organization worldwide have made the traditional auditing and investigation ineffective and inefficient in the detection, prevention and reduction of fraud confronting both the public and private sectors. Also, the failure of statutory audit to prevent and reduce misappropriation of fraud and increase in crime has put pressure on the accounting professionals to find a better way of exposing fraudulent activities. However, there is the expectation that forensic accounting and auditing may be able to stem the tides of financial wrongful conduct witnessed in public sector of Nigeria economy. Fraud otherwise known as corruption in the developing nation is seen as a tradition or a way of life in public service. It is the biggest problem in business organization which has been attracting more concern since the rising tide of fraudulent activities in financial institution has been visible in recent years.

The application of forensic accounting and fraud detection techniques in State Ministries will be of significant benefits. By detecting and preventing fraud, State Ministries can

safeguard public funds, enhance transparency and accountability, and restore public trust. Furthermore, the implementation of forensic accounting and fraud detection techniques can help State Ministries improve their financial management practices and ensure compliance with regulatory requirements. This allows them to identify any irregularities or discrepancies that may indicate fraudulent activities, such as embezzlement, misappropriation of funds, or conflicts of interest. Furthermore, forensic accounting practices can help Rivers State Ministries to strengthen their internal controls and prevent future instances of fraud.

Several studies have been carried out on forensic accounting and fraud management in Nigeria with divergent findings some showed positive relationship between forensic accounting and fraud detection in the various organization studied (Erasmus, (2021), Oyedokun & Durowaiye, (2022), Obiara, (2022), Okoye & Ndah, (2019), while others showed negative relationship (Joseph, 2023). The various studies lack consistency in their findings and none of the study examined forensic accounting practices and fraud prevention in State Ministries in Nigeria which create gap in literature. It is against this background that this study investigated forensic accounting practices and fraud prevention in Rivers state Ministries, Nigeria.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES**

### **Theoretical Underpinnings**

#### **Fraud Triangle Theory**

The Fraud Triangle is a theory developed by Cressey . (1953). to explain the three essential elements that must be present for fraud to occur: pressure, opportunity, and rationalization. The Fraud Triangle suggests that fraud is more likely to occur when these three elements are present and in balance. Pressure refers to the internal or external forces that drive an individual to commit fraud. This pressure can come from various sources, such as financial difficulties, personal problems, or the desire for personal gain. Pressure can be either internal or external, and it can be driven by various factors, including greed, ego, or the need to cover up other financial problems (Berton, & Rittenhouse, 2008).

Opportunity refers to the presence of a perceived chance to commit fraud. This opportunity can arise from various factors, such as weak internal controls, inadequate supervision, or the absence of segregation of duties. Also be created by the organization's culture, which may encourage or tolerate fraudulent behaviour. Rationalization refers to the justification or excuse that the fraudster uses to convince them that their actions are justified or necessary. Rationalization can take many forms, such as believing that they are entitled to the money, that they are being unfairly treated by the organization, or that they need the money to cover up other financial problems. The Fraud Triangle suggests that fraud is more likely to occur when these three elements are present and in balance. By understanding these elements, forensic accountants can help organizations identify and address potential fraud risks and vulnerabilities (Brecht, & Sack, 2000).

#### **Concept of Forensic Accounting Practices**

Forensic accounting practices refer to the application of accounting, auditing, and investigative techniques to gather evidence and provide expert opinions in legal proceedings. Forensic accountants use their expertise in accounting, finance, and

business to analyse financial data, identify discrepancies or fraud, and provide objective and unbiased opinions to help resolve disputes or investigate financial crimes.

The primary goal of forensic accounting practices is to provide reliable and admissible evidence in legal proceedings, such as civil or criminal litigation, arbitration, or mediation. Forensic accountants may be called upon to perform various tasks, including: Financial analysis and investigation: Forensic accountants analyse financial records, transactions, and statements to identify any irregularities, discrepancies, or potential fraud. They may also gather evidence, such as bank statements, invoices, or contracts, to support their findings. Expert testimony: Forensic accountants may be called upon to provide expert testimony in court, explaining complex financial concepts and presenting their findings in a clear and understandable manner. They may also be required to cross-examine witnesses or provide rebuttal testimony. Dispute resolution: Forensic accountants may be hired to help resolve disputes between parties, such as shareholders, partners, or clients, by providing objective and unbiased opinions on financial matters. Fraud investigation: Forensic accountants may be hired to investigate allegations of fraud or financial misconduct, such as embezzlement, money laundering, or Ponzi schemes. They may work with law enforcement agencies, attorneys, or internal audit departments to gather evidence and build a case. The use of forensic accounting practices has become increasingly important in today's business environment, as financial disputes and fraud investigations have become more common. Forensic accountants play a critical role in helping to uncover the truth, provide evidence, and help resolve disputes in a fair and impartial manner.

### **Investigative Accounting**

Investigation accounting is a critical component of forensic accounting practices, as it involves providing assistance and expertise to investigators, attorneys, and other stakeholders involved in financial investigations and dispute resolution. Forensic accountants play a vital role in supporting the investigation process by analysing financial data, identifying potential evidence, and providing objective and unbiased opinions.

The primary goal of investigative support in forensic accounting is to help investigators and attorneys gather evidence, understand complex financial concepts, and build a strong case. Forensic accountants may provide various forms of support, including: Financial analysis and investigation: Forensic accountants analyse financial records, transactions, and statements to identify any irregularities, discrepancies, or potential fraud. They may also gather evidence, such as bank statements, invoices, or contracts, to support their findings. Expert testimony: Forensic accountants may be called upon to provide expert testimony in court, explaining complex financial concepts and presenting their findings in a clear and understandable manner. They may also be required to cross-examine witnesses or provide rebuttal testimony. Dispute resolution: Forensic accountants may be hired to help resolve disputes between parties, such as shareholders, partners, or clients, by providing objective and unbiased opinions on financial matters. Fraud investigation: Forensic accountants may be hired to investigate allegations of fraud or financial misconduct, such as embezzlement, money laundering, or Ponzi schemes. They may work with law enforcement agencies, attorneys, or internal audit departments to gather evidence and build a case (Ozcan, 2019). The use of investigation support in forensic accounting has become increasingly important in today's business environment, as financial disputes and fraud investigations have become more common.

### **Litigation Support Services**

Litigation support is a critical component of forensic accounting practices, as it involves providing assistance and expertise to attorneys and other stakeholders involved in legal proceedings related to financial disputes or fraud investigations. Forensic accountants play a vital role in supporting the litigation process by analysing financial data, identifying potential evidence, and providing objective and unbiased opinions (Kolawole, 2018).

The primary goal of litigation support in forensic accounting is to help attorneys build a strong case and effectively present their arguments in court. Forensic accountants may provide various forms of support, including:

- Financial analysis and investigation:** Forensic accountants analyse financial records, transactions, and statements to identify any irregularities, discrepancies, or potential fraud. They may also gather evidence, such as bank statements, invoices, or contracts, to support their findings.
- Expert testimony:** Forensic accountants may be called upon to provide expert testimony in court, explaining complex financial concepts and presenting their findings in a clear and understandable manner. They may also be required to cross-examine witnesses or provide rebuttal testimony.
- Dispute resolution:** Forensic accountants may be hired to help resolve disputes between parties, such as shareholders, partners, or clients, by providing objective and unbiased opinions on financial matters.
- Fraud investigation:** Forensic accountants may be hired to investigate allegations of fraud or financial misconduct, such as embezzlement, money laundering, or Ponzi schemes. They may work with law enforcement agencies, attorneys, or internal audit departments to gather evidence and build a case (Mammen & Edakalathor, 2019).

The use of litigation support in forensic accounting has become increasingly important in today's business environment, as financial disputes and fraud investigations have become more common. Forensic accountants play a critical role in helping to uncover the truth, provide evidence, and help resolve disputes in a fair and impartial manner.

### **Fraud Prevention**

Fraud prevention is a critical component of forensic accounting practices, as it involves implementing strategies and controls to prevent and deter fraudulent activities within an organization. Forensic accountants play a vital role in helping organizations develop and implement effective fraud prevention measures to protect their financial assets and reputation.

The primary goal of fraud prevention in forensic accounting is to help organizations identify, assess, and mitigate the risks of fraud and financial misconduct. Forensic accountants may provide various forms of support, including:

- Fraud risk assessment:** Forensic accountants analyse an organization's internal controls, financial processes, and governance structure to identify potential vulnerabilities and risks of fraud. They may also assess the organization's fraud prevention policies and procedures to identify areas for improvement.
- Fraud prevention training:** Forensic accountants may provide training and education to employees and management on fraud prevention best practices, including how to identify and report suspicious activities and how to implement internal controls to prevent fraud.
- Prevention consulting:** Forensic accountants may be hired to provide consulting services to organizations, helping them develop and implement effective fraud prevention strategies, such as fraud risk assessments, internal control evaluations, and fraud prevention policies and procedures.
- Fraud investigation:** Forensic accountants may be hired to investigate allegations of fraud or financial misconduct,



working with law enforcement agencies, attorneys, or internal audit departments to gather evidence and build a case (Ewa, 2022).

The use of fraud prevention in forensic accounting has become increasingly important in today's business environment, as fraud and financial misconduct have become more common. Forensic accountants play a critical role in helping organizations protect their financial assets and reputation by identifying and addressing potential fraud risks and vulnerabilities.

### **Payroll Fraud**

Payroll fraud detection is the process of identifying and preventing instances where individuals, such as employees or managers, misrepresent their employment status, hours worked, or other payroll-related information to receive fraudulent payments or benefits. This type of fraud can result in significant financial losses for an organization, as well as damage to its reputation and legal repercussions.

Singleton and Sungleton (2010) opines that payroll fraud is a scheme in which an employee causes his or her employer to issue a payment by making a false claim for compensation. Payroll fraud occurs when an employee make false claim for compensation or an employee cheats the payroll system in order to receive funds to which they are not entitled. Payroll fraud deal with falsification of wages which also includes falsifying overtime and other allowances, false person on the payroll (ghost worker) and delayed termination of separated staff from the payroll. Payroll fraud detection is an ongoing process that requires a combination of human expertise, technology, and robust internal controls. By implementing effective fraud detection mechanisms, organizations can protect themselves from payroll fraud and maintain the trust of their stakeholders (Joseph, 2023)

Wells (2017) stated that there are different payroll fraud detection techniques such as payroll audits, surprise audit, review payroll report each pay period, payroll staffs job rotation, require payroll employee to take mandatory time off, require supervisor approval on time sheet and overtime, internal audit of payroll tax, segregate payroll jobs and duties, review payroll staffs and employee bank statement. Yasmin (2023) stated that financial fraud involves intentional and deceptive actions aimed at manipulating financial information for personal or organizational gain. It encompasses activities like manipulating payroll, financial statements, misappropriate. Erasmus (2021) stated that fraud can be committed internally or externally from a public sector establishment by employees, customers, vendors and other parties. Internal fraud is a type fraud that originates from within an organisation or establishment and is committed by employees. External fraud is committed by outsiders. It involves any scheme in which the perpetrator is not an employee, manager, officer or owner of the Victims Company or establishment.

### **Empirical Review**

Erasmus (2021) investigated forensic accounting and fraud detection of federal government parastatals in Nigeria. The study adopted the use of fraud triangle theory and survey research design. The population of study comprises of 150 employees of federal government parastatals out of which 130 questionnaires were issued and collected for analysis. The data collected were analysed using Pearson product moment correlation coefficient aided by SPSS version 20.0. The result of the finding depicted a positive significant relationship between investigative accounting and payroll fraud detection as well as asset misappropriation detection. Likewise a significant positive relationship exists

between litigation support service and payroll fraud detection as well as asset misappropriation detection. The study concluded that forensic accounting is a strategic and dynamic tool for fraud detection in federal government parastatals in Nigeria. The study recommended that internal audit staff in federal government parastatals should be trained to acquire forensic accounting skills.

Onyedokun and Durowaiye (2022) examined forensic audit and fraud prevention in the Nigerian deposit money banks. The methodology adopted was the survey research design and the study was underpinned using fraud triangle theory. The study used primary data on a population of 100 staffs of the selected banks. The collected data were analysed using regression statistical tool. The result of the analysis showed a positive significant relationship between forensic audit and fraud prevention in the Nigerian deposit money banks. The study concludes that forensic audit significantly affect fraud prevention. It was recommended that the management of deposit money banks should undertake regular forensic audit of their operation to effectively prevent fraud that is bedevilling the Nigerian financial sector.

Yasmin (2023) investigated the role of forensic accounting in preventing financial frauds. The methodology used was descriptive survey design. The primary data, used were collected through a questionnaire using five-point likert scales and analysed using descriptive and multiple regression techniques. The finding of the study revealed that forensic accounting significantly prevents financial fraud. The study concluded that forensic accounting prevents financial fraud in India. The study recommended that organisation should priorities investing in forensic accounting techniques and training

Rashid *et al* (2023) studied Forensic Accounting: A blessing for fraud detection. The study adopted a descriptive research survey design and data for analysis was obtained using questionnaire on a target population of professional accountant employee' on private sector in Pakistan. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics, ANOVA and correlation study. The result shows a positive substantial relationship between Forensic Investigation and fraud detection, it also revealed a positive association between Forensic Litigation and Fraud Detection. The study concludes that there was a significant impact of Forensic Investigation, Forensic Litigation and Forensic Accountant Investigation Tenure on Fraud Detection in Private Sector of Pakistan.

Yusuf and Ibrahim (2024) examined Forensic Accounting and Fraud Management in Public Sector Organisation in Nigeria. The Methodology adopted in the study was quantitative survey design and primary data through the administration of Questionnaire on a population of one hundred and thirty-four (134) accountants and internal auditor. The data were analysed through the use of linear regression aided by statistical package for social science version 23.0. The result of the analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between Forensic Accounting and the Detection/prevention of corruption and fraud. An insignificant positive relationship was observed between Forensic Accounting and Bribery in Public sector. The study concluded that the increasing occurrence of Fraud in Public sector requires the services of Forensic Accountants to Detect Fraudulent activities within and outside an organisation. It was recommended that there is need to organise the services of Forensic Accountants in public sector organisations and be provided with the necessary tools to detect fraudulent activities as to prevent crime from being committed.

Based on the review of literature, the following hypotheses were raised:

1. Ho<sub>1</sub>: There is no relationship between Investigative Accounting and payroll fraud prevention in Rivers state ministries
2. Ho<sub>2</sub>: There is no relationship between Litigation support service and payroll fraud prevention in Rivers state ministries

**Methodology**

The survey research design was adopted for this study; the population of the study consist of all accounting staff in the entire ministries in rivers state civic service. The questionnaire used for data collection was structured using 5- scale Likert of strongly agree (5), Agree (4), Undecided (3), Disagree (2), and strongly disagree (1). The simple random sampling techniques were used to select twenty (20) ministries out of twenty-six (26) ministries in Rivers state civil service. Equal number of seven(7) questionnaire making a total of 140 were administered on accounting staff in the selected ministries ( Finance, Budget and Economic Planning, Education, Employment Generation and Empowerment, Environment, Health, Housing, Land and Survey, Justices, Energy and Natural Resources, Local Government Affairs, Commerce and Industries, Agriculture, Power, Work ,Transport, Youth Development ,Water resources and rural development, Social welfare and rehabilitation , and Urban Development). Only 126 questionnaires were retrieved out of which 5 were not validly filled and 121 validly filled are used for the analysis. The valid data retrieved were analysed using descriptive statistics, product moment correlation coefficient and least square regression analysis. . A reliability test for the instrument was conducted on the study variable using crobach alpha coefficient. The items which have alpha value of 0.7 and above are acceptable as reliable. From the table below the entire variable for the study had a crobach alpha above 0.7 hence all the data are reliable

| Construct                  | Number of items | Crobach Alpha coefficient |
|----------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|
| Investigative accounting   | 121             | 0.765                     |
| Litigation Support Service | 121             | 0.751                     |
| Payroll Fraud              | 121             | 0.811                     |

Sources SPSS version 22.0 output 2024

**Model Specification**

To determine the relationship between forensic accounting practices and fraud prevention in rivers state ministries; it is necessary to specify the appropriate model to be used.

$$FP = B_0 + B_1 FAC + et \text{ ----- (1)}$$

$$NP = B_0 + B_1IA +B_2 LSS + et \text{ ----- (2)}$$

Where:

FP = fraud prevention (PF)

FAC = forensic accounting practices (IA, LSS)

IA = Investigative accounting



LSS = Litigation Support Service  
 PF = Payroll Fraud  
 B<sub>0</sub> = Intercept  
 B<sub>1</sub> – B<sub>2</sub> = Regression Coefficient  
 et = Error Term

**Result And Discussion**

Table 1.0 Analysis of Responses rate on Questionnaire

| Questionnaire        | Frequency | Percentages |
|----------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Administered         | 140       | 100%        |
| Valid Returned       | 121       | 86.4%       |
| Not validly returned | 19        | 13.6%       |

From the above table 140 Questionnaire were distributed to the respondents in rivers state ministries, out of which 121 representing 86.4% was validly retrieved while 19 representing 13.6% was not validly returned.

**Table 1.1 Descriptive statistics on all the variable of the study**

|                    | N         | Minimum   | Maximum   | Sum       | Mean      | Std. Deviation | Skewness  |            | Kurtosis  |            |
|--------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------------|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|
|                    | Statistic | Statistic | Statistic | Statistic | Statistic | Statistic      | Statistic | Std. Error | Statistic | Std. Error |
| IA                 | 121       | 1.00      | 5.00      | 473.00    | 3.9091    | 1.15470        | -1.042    | .220       | .118      | .437       |
| LSS                | 121       | 1.00      | 5.00      | 453.00    | 3.7438    | 1.26180        | -.996     | .220       | -.045     | .437       |
| PF                 | 121       | 1.00      | 5.00      | 466.00    | 3.8512    | 1.18786        | -1.042    | .220       | .210      | .437       |
| FAC                | 121       | 1.00      | 5.00      | 463.00    | 3.8264    | 1.19497        | -1.017    | .220       | -.018     | .437       |
| Valid N (listwise) | 121       |           |           |           |           |                |           |            |           |            |

**Source: SPSS version 22.0 output 2024**

Table 1.1 depicts the descriptive statistics on minimum, maximum, sum, mean, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis, on all the variables of the study. The table showed 121 cases with no missing cases in all the variables. The mean of the data, which indicates the measures of central tendency, is displayed on the table for all variables. Likewise, the standard deviation which indicated the spread of the distribution as a measure of dispersion is also displayed. To determine asymmetry in distribution, skewness is computed, from the table none of the skewness value is above one (1) meaning that the data assumes a normal distribution. The kurtosis show positive and negative values. The kurtosis values are all less than three (3) indicates platykurtic distribution. The minimum and maximum values of the entire variable are indicated in the table above.

*Table 1.2 Correlation Analysis of forensic accounting practices (FAC) and Fraud prevention (PF)*

**Correlations**

|     |                     | FAC    | PF     |
|-----|---------------------|--------|--------|
| FAC | Pearson Correlation | 1      | .780** |
|     | Sig. (2-tailed)     |        | .000   |
|     | N                   | 121    | 121    |
| PF  | Pearson Correlation | .780** | 1      |
|     | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .000   |        |
|     | N                   | 121    | 121    |

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

**Source: SPSS version 22.0 output 2024**

The table 1.2 showed positive correlation coefficient of .780\*\* significant at .000 < 0.05 level of significance. This value indicates a strong relationship between forensic accounting practices and fraud prevention. The positive correlation coefficient observed indicates that increase in fraud prevention is associated with increase in forensic accounting practices. Therefore the researcher concludes that there is significant association between forensic accounting practices and fraud prevention in Rivers State ministries. The finding of the study corroborate that of Onyedokun and Durowaiye (2022), Yusuf and Ibrahim (2024) that observed a positive significant relationship between forensic audit and fraud prevention

**Table: 1.3 regression analysis on forensic accounting practices and payroll fraud**

**Model Summary<sup>b</sup>**

| Model | R                 | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate | Change Statistics |          |     |     |               | Durbin - Watson |
|-------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|----------|-----|-----|---------------|-----------------|
|       |                   |          |                   |                            | R Square Change   | F Change | df1 | df2 | Sig. F Change |                 |
| 1     | .780 <sup>a</sup> | .608     | .607              | .24020                     | .608              | 1408.416 | 2   | 118 | .000          | 1.867           |

a. Predictors: (Constant), LSS, IA

b. Dependent Variable: PF

**Table: 1.4 ANOVA<sup>a</sup>**

| Model |            | Sum of Squares | Df  | Mean Square | F        | Sig.              |
|-------|------------|----------------|-----|-------------|----------|-------------------|
| 1     | Regression | 162.514        | 2   | 81.257      | 1408.416 | .000 <sup>b</sup> |
|       | Residual   | 6.808          | 118 | .058        |          |                   |
|       | Total      | 169.322        | 120 |             |          |                   |

a. Dependent Variable: PF

b. Predictors: (Constant), LSS, IA

**Table: 1.5 Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

| Model |            | Unstandardized Coefficients |            | Standardized Coefficients | T     | Sig. |
|-------|------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------|------|
|       |            | B                           | Std. Error | Beta                      |       |      |
| 1     | (Constant) | .122                        | .080       |                           | 1.520 | .131 |
|       | IA         | .494                        | .065       | .480                      | 7.610 | .000 |
|       | LSS        | .481                        | .059       | .511                      | 8.099 | .000 |

a. Dependent Variable: PF

Source: SPSS version 22.0 output 2024

From table 1.3 it was observed that Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.780 indicated strong relationship between the regressors and payroll fraud. The coefficient of determination  $r^2 = 0.608$ , implying that 60.8% variation in payroll fraud is described by changes in the regressors while 39.2% variation in payroll fraud is described by factor other than those used in the model. The F. calculated value of |1408.416| had a corresponding probability value of  $0.000 < 0.05$  level of significance; as a result the usefulness of the model was upheld by the researcher. Likewise Durbin Watson statistics in the same table showed 1.867 which indicates the absence of auto correlation, therefore the utility of the model was upheld by the researcher.

**Investigative Accounting (IA),** had a t-calculated value of |7.610| and a significant probability value of  $0.000 < 0.05$  level of significance. Therefore the researcher concludes that Investigative Accounting (IA) significantly influence Payroll Fraud in Rivers State ministries. The finding was in consonance with that of Rashid et al (2023), Yasmin (2023) and Erasmus (2021) who discovered a positive significant relationship between investigative accounting and payroll fraud detection.

**Litigation Support Services (LSS)** had t-calculated value of |8.099| with significant probability value of  $0.000 < 0.05$  level of significant as such the researcher conclude that Litigation Support Services significantly influence Payroll Fraud in Rivers State ministries. The finding concord that of Onyedokun and Durowaiye (2022), Yusuf and Ibrahim (2024)

and Erasmus (2021) who discovered a positive significant relationship between litigation support service and payroll fraud detection

### Conclusion and recommendation

This study was conducted to evaluate the impact of forensic accounting practices and fraud prevention in rivers state ministries. From the findings of the study a significant positive relationship was discovered between forensic accounting practices and fraud prevention in Rivers ministries. This entails that an increase in forensic accounting practices will result to a corresponding increase in and fraud prevention. The study concludes that there is a significant relationship between forensic accounting practices and fraud prevention in rivers state ministries

From the study Investigative Accounting, and Litigation Support Services, show a significant positive relationship with payroll fraud prevention

Based on the above finding the researchers recommend that;

- Government should employ more forensic auditors into Rivers state ministries for inclusion in statutory review report towards preparation for auditor general audit report as it will help to curtail fraudulent activities in the ministries
- Government should establish a functional whistle blowing policy that will ensure effective reporting of all fraudulent act uncover for litigation as to discourage fraudulent practices

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