

**THE ROLES OF THE ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL CRIMES COMMISSION IN CRIME
REDUCTION IN NIGERIA**

BY:

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CERTIFICATION

This project has been read and approved by the undersigned on behalf of the Department of Public Administration, Institute of Finance and Management Studies (IFMS), Kwara State Polytechnic, Ilorin. As meeting the requirement for award of National Diploma in Public Administration.

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DDEDICATION

I dedicated this project to Almighty Allah (the guidance) who has guided me throughout the attainment of my National Diploma Certificate in Public Administration.

This project also dedicated to my family for their moral and financial support in the completion of the program, may Almighty Allah bless them abundantly.

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ABSTRACT

Corruption as a "monster" subverts public institutions and their capacity to perform their assigned tasks efficiently, thereby damaging the substantive interest and endangering the lives of citizens whom these institutions are meant to serve. This indicates that the higher the propensity and will of the state to combat corruption the lower the dangers underdevelopment and societal disintegration, and vice-versa. The main objective of the study is to assess the role of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission in combating corruption. The secondary source of data collection was used for this study. The study revealed that political interference hinders the EFCC from performing its role in the fight against corruption. Also, the study also found out that the EFCC has played a role in reducing the level of corruption in the public sector. It was recommended that the federal government should be committed to the sincere translation of the expressed political will of fighting corruption into reality by allowing the anti-corruption institutions to operate without political intervention in order not to compromise with their statutorily assigned responsibilities.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Globally, economic and financial crimes pose a serious threat to national development, governance, and international financial stability. These crimes, including money laundering, fraud, and corruption, divert public resources from development-oriented projects, distort economic planning, and reduce public trust in institutions (OECD, 2021). According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2023), financial crimes undermine global security, contribute to the funding of organized crime, and perpetuate inequality. To combat this menace, many countries have established specialized anti-corruption agencies and adopted international frameworks such as the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC), emphasizing the importance of institutional enforcement in crime prevention and reduction. In Africa, economic and financial crimes have become increasingly sophisticated and systemic, weakening democratic governance and deterring foreign direct investment.

The African Union (AU) recognizes corruption and financial crimes as major impediments to the continent's socio-economic transformation (AU, 2020). Several countries, including South Africa, Kenya, and Ghana, have instituted anti-graft a

agencies with mandates similar to Nigeria's EFCC, yet challenges such as weak institutional capacity, political interference, and lack of legal autonomy have hindered progress (Hope, 2017). Research shows that despite the presence of anti-corruption frameworks, implementation and enforcement remain inconsistent across the region (Transparency International, 2022).

In Nigeria, the fight against economic and financial crimes became more pronounced with the establishment of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) in 2003. The EFCC was created to investigate and prosecute financial crimes such as advance fee fraud, money laundering, and misappropriation of public funds. Since its inception, the Commission has recorded notable successes, including the prosecution of high-profile individuals and the recovery of billions of naira in stolen assets (EFCC, 2024). However, the prevalence of corruption, cybercrime, and fraud continues to raise concerns about the effectiveness of the EFCC.

According to Adebayo and Olayemi (2021), while the EFCC has contributed to crime control, it often faces political and legal challenges that limit its operational efficiency. The commission's credibility and independence have also been questioned in recent years, especially regarding the perceived selectivity in its investigations (Odiaka, 2020).

This study focuses on two core variables: the roles of the EFCC and crime r

education in Nigeria. The former involves examining the Commission's statutory functions, operational strategies, institutional capacity, and public engagement in tackling economic and financial crimes. The latter refers to the measurable decline in financial and economic criminal activities attributable to the EFCC's interventions. By analyzing the relationship between these variables, the study aims to assess the effectiveness of the EFCC's roles in reducing crime and recommend strategies for strengthening anti-crime institutions in Nigeria.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite global, regional, and national efforts to curb economic and financial crimes, these offences remain deeply entrenched in Nigeria, posing serious threats to governance, economic development, and public confidence in institutions. International frameworks such as the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) and regional initiatives led by the African Union have emphasized the importance of strong institutional mechanisms to combat financial crimes (UNODC, 2023; AU, 2020). Yet, in Nigeria, despite the establishment of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) in 2003, the incidence of corruption, money laundering, cybercrime, and embezzlement of public funds remains alarmingly high (Transparency International, 2022).

The EFCC was created to serve as a frontline institution for detecting, inves

investigating, and prosecuting economic and financial crimes. While the Commission has recorded notable achievements in terms of arrests, asset recovery, and public sensitization, the persistence of high-profile corruption cases, coupled with increasing public skepticism, raises concerns about the effectiveness and sustainability of its operations (Adebayo & Olayemi, 2021; EFCC, 2024). Critics argue that political interference, limited autonomy, weak judicial collaboration, and selective prosecution continue to hinder the Commission's credibility and impact (Odiaka, 2020).

Furthermore, there is a noticeable gap in empirical studies that rigorously assess the actual roles played by the EFCC in reducing economic and financial crimes across Nigeria. While its legal and institutional framework is well-documented, the extent to which its operations translate into measurable crime reduction outcomes remains unclear. This disconnect between institutional effort and societal impact highlights the need for a comprehensive examination of the EFCC's performance in relation to crime reduction. Therefore, this study seeks to critically investigate the roles of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission in crime reduction in Nigeria.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

- i. To assess the statutory roles of the EFCC in combating economic and financial crimes in Nigeria.

- ii. To evaluate the extent to which the EFCC's operations have contributed to the reduction of economic and financial crimes.
- iii. To examine public perception of the EFCC's effectiveness in crime reduction.
- iv. To identify the challenges facing the EFCC in the execution of its crime-fighting mandate.

1.4 Research Questions

- i. What are the statutory roles of the EFCC in fighting economic and financial crimes in Nigeria?
- ii. To what extent has the EFCC contributed to the reduction of economic and financial crimes in Nigeria?
- iii. How do Nigerians perceive the performance of the EFCC in reducing crime?
- iv. What are the major challenges hindering the effective performance of the EFCC?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is significant for several reasons. First, it contributes to the growing body of academic literature on anti-corruption efforts and crime control, particularly in Nigeria and other developing countries, by offering empirical insights into the roles of the EFCC. Secondly, it holds strong policy relevance, as the findings will

It will provide evidence-based recommendations that can guide policymakers in reforming and strengthening the EFCC and similar institutions to enhance their effectiveness. Additionally, the study offers practical value to the EFCC and other law enforcement agencies by enabling them to assess their current strategies and make informed improvements to their operational frameworks. Lastly, the study is essential for raising public awareness about the actual roles, achievements, and challenges of the EFCC, thereby fostering greater civic engagement and support for national anti-corruption initiatives.

1.6 Scope and Limitations of the Study

This study focuses on the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and its role in reducing economic and financial crimes in Nigeria. It specifically examines the Commission's activities within the period from 2015 to 2024. The study aims to analyze key indicators such as prosecution and conviction rates, asset recovery efforts, public engagement strategies, and overall institutional performance. To achieve a comprehensive analysis, both primary and secondary data sources may be utilized where applicable.

However, the study is subject to certain limitations. First, data accessibility poses a challenge, as restricted access to confidential EFCC records and internal reports may limit the depth of empirical analysis. Secondly, public perception data,

which may be gathered through interviews or surveys, could be influenced by political affiliations or regional biases, potentially affecting objectivity. Lastly, the ten-year period under review may not fully capture the long-term impacts and sustainability of the EFCC's interventions, especially given the evolving nature of financial crimes and enforcement responses.

1.8 Definition of Terms

- i. Economic and Financial Crimes:** Illegal acts committed by individuals or groups for financial gain, including corruption, fraud, money laundering, and embezzlement.
- ii. Crime Reduction:** The measurable decline in the occurrence or impact of crimes over a specified period due to intervention efforts.
- iii. EFCC (Economic and Financial Crimes Commission):** A Nigerian law enforcement agency established in 2003 with the mandate to combat economic and financial crimes.
- iv. Anti-Corruption:** Efforts or actions taken to prevent, detect, and punish corrupt practices in public and private sectors.
- v. Institutional Effectiveness:** The ability of an organization to achieve its goals and objectives efficiently and sustainably.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a comprehensive review of existing literature related to economic and financial crimes, crime reduction strategies, and the institutional roles of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) in Nigeria. The review explores scholarly contributions from global, continental, and national perspectives, emphasizing the theoretical and empirical underpinnings relevant to the study. The chapter also highlights key concepts such as economic and financial crimes, institutional effectiveness, crime prevention, and anti-corruption enforcement.

2.2 Conceptual Clarifications

2.2.1 Economic and Financial Crimes

Economic and financial crimes refer to non-violent criminal acts committed for financial gain. These include corruption, money laundering, advance fee fraud (commonly known as "419"), embezzlement, tax evasion, cybercrime, and illegal financial transactions. Such crimes distort economic planning, hinder national development, and erode public confidence in governance structures (UNODC, 2023). In Nigeria, these crimes have become widespread across both public and private sectors, often involving high-profile individuals and multinational networks.

2.2.2 Crime Reduction

Crime reduction involves all strategies, policies, and actions aimed at decreasing the frequency and impact of criminal activities. It includes both preventive measures and punitive responses such as investigation, prosecution, conviction, and rehabilitation. Effective crime reduction depends on strong institutions, legal enforcement mechanisms, public cooperation, and social development initiatives (OECD, 2021).

2.2.3 Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC)

The EFCC is a Nigerian law enforcement agency established in 2003 under the EFCC (Establishment) Act. It was created to combat financial crimes such as advance fee fraud, money laundering, and corruption. The Commission has powers to investigate, arrest, prosecute, and enforce laws related to financial crimes. It also engages in public sensitization and international collaboration. Its performance, however, has often been a subject of both praise and criticism due to political, legal, and institutional challenges (Adebayo & Olayemi, 2021).

2.2.4 Institutional Effectiveness

Institutional effectiveness refers to the degree to which an organization ac

achieves its stated goals and objectives. In the context of anti-corruption, it involves the ability of agencies like the EFCC to carry out investigations, secure convictions, recover assets, and deter future crimes without undue interference or inefficiency (Hope, 2017).

2.3 Empirical Review

Adebayo and Olayemi (2021) conducted a comprehensive assessment of the effectiveness of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) in Nigeria between 2015 and 2020. Descriptive statistical tools were used to analyze trends in prosecutions and recoveries, while content analysis was applied to interpret qualitative responses. The findings revealed that the EFCC achieved several high-profile convictions and recovered significant sums of looted funds and properties during the review period.

Additionally, the Commission engaged in public sensitization efforts, which contributed to increased awareness about financial crimes and their consequences. However, the study also identified major challenges limiting the EFCC's effectiveness, including political interference, inadequate funding, judicial delays, and limited institutional autonomy. The study recommended reforms such as enhancing

g the EFCC's operational and financial independence, increasing budgetary support, accelerating judicial processes for corruption cases, instituting effective oversight mechanisms, and promoting non-selective, evidence-based prosecutions to strengthen the Commission's credibility and long-term impact.

Odiaka (2020) conducted a critical study examining the limitations facing the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) in fulfilling its mandate of reducing economic and financial crimes in Nigeria. The study employed a qualitative research design. The study identified that while the EFCC has made notable efforts in initiating investigations and filing charges against economic offenders, its overall impact on crime reduction has been significantly hampered by delayed judicial processes. Many corruption and financial crime cases, according to the findings, linger in courts for years without conclusion, thereby weakening the deterrent effect of prosecution. The study recommended judicial reforms aimed at expediting the adjudication of corruption cases, including the establishment of special courts for economic and financial crimes. Additionally, the study called for stronger institutional checks to ensure that the EFCC operates independently and transparently, free from political influence, and with a commitment to impartial enforcement of anti-corruption laws.

Hope (2017) conducted a region-wide analysis of anti-corruption bodies ac

ross Africa, focusing on their structural and operational challenges in combating economic and financial crimes. The study employed a comparative institutional analysis method, drawing on case studies, policy reviews, and interviews with officials from various anti-corruption agencies across African countries. The study revealed that many of these bodies suffer from weak operational autonomy, with limited control over their budgets, staffing, and strategic direction, which makes them vulnerable to external influence and manipulation. Additionally, overlapping mandates between anti-corruption agencies and other law enforcement or security institutions lead to jurisdictional conflicts and inefficiencies, weakening overall anti-corruption efforts. The study recommended institutional realignment, legal reforms, and improved inter-agency coordination as critical steps toward strengthening anti-corruption mechanisms across the continent.

Transparency International (2022), in its annual Corruption Perceptions Index report and supporting policy briefings, emphasized the urgent need for anti-corruption agencies, particularly in developing and politically unstable nations, to operate with greater independence and proactivity. The study pointed out that without the ability to investigate and prosecute offenders freely regardless of their political status such institutions risk becoming tools of selective justice or political vendettas. Transparency International argued that when anti-corruption agencies, like

Nigeria's Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), are politicized or underfunded, their capacity to deter high-level corruption is severely weakened. The study recommended legislative safeguards to protect institutional independence, increased financial and technical resources, and stronger public accountability frameworks. The organization also advocated for the de-politicization of appointments and disciplinary processes within anti-corruption bodies to ensure neutrality, professionalism, and sustained public trust in their operations.

Globally, the OECD (2021) emphasized that effective anti-corruption efforts depend heavily on transparency, public trust, and international cooperation. The report stressed that transparent governance practices such as open contracting, accessible public records, and independent audits are crucial for preventing corruption and ensuring accountability. It also noted that when citizens perceive anti-corruption bodies as fair, impartial, and effective, public trust increases, which in turn encourages greater civic engagement and compliance with laws. The report recommended that countries invest in institutional capacity-building, adopt integrity-based governance systems, and participate actively in global anti-corruption networks to enhance both national and international efforts in combating financial crimes.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2023) underscored

the critical need for data-driven and intelligence-led strategies in the fight against financial crimes. The report emphasized that anti-corruption agencies, including those in developing countries like Nigeria, must leverage real-time data analytics, financial intelligence, and risk-based assessments to proactively detect, prevent, and disrupt illicit financial activities. According to the UNODC, intelligence-led policing enables better resource allocation, strategic targeting of high-risk actors, and more efficient prosecution outcomes. Moreover, it called for stronger inter-agency data sharing and the integration of technological tools such as digital forensics, AI, and blockchain tracking systems to enhance investigative capacity. The report concluded that a shift toward evidence-based decision-making not only improves the credibility and effectiveness of anti-corruption institutions like the EFCC but also reinforces public confidence in justice and accountability systems.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

2.4.1 Routine Activity Theory

The theory was developed by Cohen and Felson (1979), Routine Activity Theory explains crime as a convergence of three essential elements: a motivated offender, a suitable target, and the absence of a capable guardian. The theory assumes that criminal acts are not solely the result of deep-seated social or psychological issues but are significantly influenced by everyday patterns of behavior and the

opportunities they create for crime to occur. In essence, crime is likely when potential offenders encounter accessible targets without sufficient protective measures in place.

In the context of economic and financial crimes in Nigeria, this theory finds strong relevance. The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) can be conceptualized as the "capable guardian" whose responsibility is to prevent and disrupt opportunities for corruption, fraud, money laundering, and other financial offenses. The theory supports the view that when law enforcement institutions like the EFCC are strong, proactive, and visible, they increase the risk of apprehension for offenders and reduce the attractiveness of potential criminal opportunities. Thus, the EFCC's presence, investigations, public sensitization, and successful prosecutions function as deterrents that limit the convergence of offenders and suitable targets.

The relevance of Routine Activity Theory to this study lies in its direct link to crime prevention through institutional presence and surveillance. It provides a theoretical foundation for examining how the operational efficiency and institutional robustness of the EFCC impact crime rates in Nigeria. The theory also reinforces the argument that crime prevention is not only about punishing offenders but also about altering environments and routines to make criminal opportunities less viable.

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However, Routine Activity Theory has been critiqued for its limited attention to broader structural and socio-economic factors that influence criminal behavior, such as poverty, inequality, unemployment, and weak governance. While the theory effectively explains the situational elements that facilitate crime namely the convergence of a motivated offender, a suitable target, and the absence of a capable guardian. It largely neglects the underlying causes that motivate individuals to commit crimes in the first place (Messner & Tardiff, 1986; Sampson & Lauritsen, 1994).

Critics argue that focusing primarily on deterrence and opportunity structures renders the theory more applicable to explaining the "how" of crime, rather than the "why." In contexts such as Nigeria, where financial crimes are often linked to systemic corruption, institutional failure, and economic hardship, this omission is particularly significant. Moreover, the theory tends to assume rational decision-making on the part of offenders, disregarding emotional, psychological, or socio-cultural influences that may also play crucial roles in criminal decision-making (Hayward, 2007). As such, while Routine Activity Theory is useful for analyzing the situational conditions under which crimes occur, it may provide an incomplete framework for understanding the complex socio-political dynamics that drive economic an

d financial crimes in developing societies.

Despite these criticisms, the applicability of Routine Activity Theory to this study remains strong. It helps to conceptualize the EFCC's role as a deterrent mechanism within the criminal justice system and provides a practical framework for analyzing how increased presence, vigilance, and enforcement actions can reduce the incidence of financial crimes in Nigeria. In sum, the theory supports the core objective of the study by emphasizing that effective guardianship represented by a strong, autonomous, and well-resourced EFCC can significantly disrupt the routine opportunities that enable financial crimes to flourish.

2.4.2 Institutional Theory

Institutional Theory, particularly as articulated in the work of Scott (2001), provides a framework for understanding how organizations, including government agencies, function and respond to external and internal pressures. The theory assumes that institutions are shaped not only by formal rules and regulations but also by cultural norms, organizational routines, and expectations from their operating environment. Institutions that conform to socially accepted structures and practices are more likely to gain legitimacy, attract resources, and achieve effectiveness. This theory identifies three key pillars: regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive that influence institutional behavior and performance.

In the context of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Institutional Theory is highly relevant. The EFCC's ability to reduce economic and financial crimes depends heavily on its legal mandate, internal governance structure, availability of resources, and the perception of legitimacy by the public and other state actors. When the EFCC operates within a robust legal and institutional framework characterized by adequate funding, qualified personnel, operational independence, and transparent processes, it is more likely to function effectively and fulfill its mandate. Conversely, institutional weaknesses such as political interference, overlapping mandates with other agencies, or ambiguous laws may hinder its performance and reduce its deterrent effect.

The relevance of Institutional Theory to this study lies in its capacity to explain the institutional conditions that either facilitate or constrain the EFCC's crime reduction efforts. It allows for the examination of both the internal structure of the EFCC (e.g., leadership, accountability, resources) and its external environment (e.g., legal backing, political climate, inter-agency relationships) as factors influencing institutional effectiveness. This is critical in evaluating not just what the EFCC does, but how its design and environment impact what it is able to achieve.

Critics of Institutional Theory argue that it can be overly descriptive and insufficiently analytical, particularly in its treatment of human agency. The theory oft

en assumes that institutional actors behave in accordance with established norms, rules, and structures, thereby underestimating the influence of individual choices, resistance, and innovation within organizations (Battilana, 2006; DiMaggio, 1988). This limitation is particularly relevant in governance contexts like Nigeria, where institutional actors, including those within anti-corruption agencies, frequently navigate and respond to complex informal power dynamics that are not captured by formal institutional analysis (Hyden, 2006).

Nonetheless, the applicability of Institutional Theory to this study remains strong. It offers a valuable lens through which to assess the EFCC's structural strengths and weaknesses and how these institutional characteristics affect its capacity to prevent, investigate, and prosecute financial crimes. In particular, the theory supports the argument that meaningful crime reduction depends not only on punitive actions but also on institutional reform, capacity-building, and the cultivation of legitimacy and trust in public institutions.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methodology adopted for the study titled "An Examination of the Roles of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) on Crime Reduction in Nigeria." It explains the research design, population and sample size, sources of data, method of data collection, method of data analysis.

alysis, and ethical considerations. The methodology is based entirely on secondary data, allowing for a critical and comprehensive analysis of existing information on the EFCC's activities and crime reduction in Nigeria between 2015 and 2024.

3.2 Research Design

The study adopts a qualitative research design using a documentary and descriptive analytical approach. This design is suitable for the analysis of historical and institutional data, official reports, policy documents, scholarly articles, and media publications relevant to the EFCC's role in combating financial and economic crimes in Nigeria. This approach allows for a nuanced understanding of the EFCC's structure, performance, challenges, and impact on crime reduction.

3.3 Sources of Data

Data for this study are entirely derived from secondary sources to ensure a comprehensive and evidence-based analysis of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission's (EFCC) role in crime reduction in Nigeria. The sources include annual reports and publications of the EFCC from 2015 to 2024, which provide official records on investigations, prosecutions, convictions, and asset recovery efforts. Additionally, reports and policy briefs from reputable international organizations such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Transparency International, and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OE