

**DISCORDANT COUPLE IN NATIONAL SERVICE: A CRITICAL  
STUDY OF THE NIGERIA POLICE'S CRIMINAL  
INVESTIGATION SUPERSTRUCTURE AND ITS USE OF  
FORENSIC SCIENCE**

**Mohammed Bashir Badr\***

**Abstract**

*Looking around, it will only take modesty to admit that the police authority in Nigeria has a solution to the multifaceted security challenges bedeviling the country since about 2014, soon after over 200 Chibok school girls were kidnapped in Borno State, the North-Eastern part of Nigeria. The continued experience of killings in the North-central part of Nigeria has left an average Nigerian without hope. Kidnapping is no longer limited to the North-West or South-South part of Nigeria, but now occurs in every part of the country. Kidnapping is now a volume crime. Every conscious observer would question the mystery behind the commission of these crimes and the method of collating crime record data in the country. This study will be different from a failed state theory, but the security apparatus in the country have done very little to allay the fears of an average Nigerian. Despite the popularity of Forensic investigation of crime at the international scene in stemming the tides of criminality in cosmopolitan environments such as Nigeria, our country is yet to embrace the use of forensic education in combating crime. This paper critically reviewed the criminal investigation of the security apparatus of the country vis-à-vis the use of forensic science. This research therefore proposes the adoption of modern forensic technology in the investigation of crimes generally in Nigeria and especially the volume crimes.*

---

\* PhD, Nigeria Police Academy, Wudil – Kano. Email: [bashirbadr@polac.edu.ng](mailto:bashirbadr@polac.edu.ng)

*The methodology used in this research is doctrinal with a mix of quantitative research approach.*

**Keywords:** Volume Crime, Forensic education, Police investigation, Technology

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Quest for fair interrogation to collect admissible evidence may be as old as the justice system itself, and scientific and technological aids have played a magical role in criminal investigation and civil adjudication across the globe. The relevance of forensic science in the criminal justice system dates back to ancient Greece and the Romans, who were the first to apply forensic science to crime on record. Forensic science has come a long way since it recorded its beginning in the 700s, when the Chinese used fingerprints to establish the identity of a document and clay sculptures. History has always considered Archimedes (287-212 BC) as the world's first forensic scientist after he discovered that a crown was not made of gold, as was popularly claimed.<sup>1</sup>

For instance, it has been opined that one key problem faced by those investigating corruption is that, unlike many traditional crimes such as robbery or murder, there is no clear victim to complain or overt occurrence likely to be reported by witnesses. In corruption cases, those with direct knowledge of the offence generally profit in some way, making them unlikely to report it. Corruption is not a "victimless" crime, but the only victim in many cases is the general public interest, which is not aware of the crime or in a position to report or complain about it. For

---

<sup>1</sup> Henry C. Lee and Elaine M. Pagliaro, 'Forensic Evidence and Crime Scene Investigation' (2013) *Journal of Forensic Investigation*

this reason, any anti-corruption strategy should include elements intended to bring to light the presence of corruption.<sup>2</sup>

The concept of security and insecurity are two sides of the same coin. When one is visible, the other is rarely known. The absence of security gives prominence to the manifestation of insecurity; because insecurity reigns in an environment where security is void. Traditionally, most concerns on security have been those that emphasized the need for the state, its institutions and operators to be safe and free from external aggression and internal insurrection. Least was it previously realized that, mostly, insecurity is most threatening when it seeks to annihilate man and his interests. Equally surprising is the fact that almost all of the indices of insecurity borne out of the social milieu are human inflicted and human affecting. Hence, so much emphasis is now placed on human security as the centerpiece of security concerns and analysis. According to the United Nations Developing Programme Commission on Human Security (UNDP CHS, 2003), the need for a new paradigm of security is associated with two sets of dynamics. First, human security is needed in response to the complexity and the interrelatedness of both old and new security threats – from chronic and persistent poverty to ethnic violence, human trafficking, climate change, health pandemics, cross-border terrorism, and sudden economic and financial downturns. These forms of threats are usually transnational dimensions, thereby moving beyond traditional notions of security that focus on external military aggressions alone. Secondly, human security represents a comprehensive approach that utilizes the wide range of new opportunities to tackle such threats in an integrated manner.

---

<sup>2</sup> Anti-Corruption Tool-kit, Version 4, last edited 11 November 2002

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of August 2025, France24 reports, "Gunmen kidnapped more than 50 people in northwest Nigeria in a mass abduction".<sup>3</sup> "Armed bandits" targeted the village of Sabon Garin Damri in Zamfara state on Friday, the report said, the latest attack in a region where residents in rural hinterlands have long suffered from gangs who kidnap for ransom, loot villages and demand taxes. The report said this was the first "mass capture" incident in the Bakura local government area this year, "the recent trend of mass captures in Zamfara has been concerning", noting "a shift in bandit strategy towards more large-scale attacks in northern Zamfara".

A report by the BBC<sup>4</sup> says, "Kidnappers in Nigeria have killed at least 35 people they abducted from a village in northern Zamfara State, despite ransoms being paid for their release, a local official told the BBC. In recent years, criminal gangs in the region, known in the country as bandits, have taken to kidnapping people as a means to raise money. In this incident, 56 people were taken from Banga village, Kauran Namoda local government area in March. The gunmen then demanded a ransom of one million naira (\$655; £485) per captive, media in Nigeria report. Local government chairman Manniru Haidara Kaura said that most of those killed were young people who "were slaughtered like rams".<sup>5</sup>

## **2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW**

Most writers have concentrated on the detection of fraud using forensic methods; however, this study is intended to propose the use of forensic

---

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.france24.com/en/africa/20250529-amnesty-over-10-000-killed-in-two-years-of-violence-in-north-and-central-nigeria>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cm2vyw9prlzo>

<sup>5</sup> BBC report Ibid

education in the detection and combating volume crime in Nigeria. Chijioke<sup>6</sup> examined the investigative strategies and techniques adopted by the police in Enugu State, Nigeria, and found inadequacies but omitted to recommend forensic education as one of the sure measures in proper investigation and detection of crimes. Amake and Ikhatua<sup>7</sup> were more concerned about the economic fraud and devoted their study to Forensic Accounting in curbing public sector's fraud.

The literature on the Nigeria Police Force (NPF)'s criminal investigation superstructure and its use of forensic science reveals a consistent theme: while forensic methods hold immense potential for enhancing investigative outcomes, their application in Nigeria remains severely limited by structural, institutional, and resource-related constraints. This review synthesizes key scholarly works, primarily from the 2010s to mid-2020s, focusing on challenges, adoption barriers, effectiveness, and reform needs.

Early assessments highlight the NPF's historical reliance on traditional, non-scientific methods (e.g., confessions, witness statements, and informant networks), which often lead to inefficiencies, wrongful accusations, and low clearance rates for serious crimes like murder. Nte<sup>8</sup> evaluated challenges in forensic investigation and unsolved murders,

---

<sup>6</sup>CHINWOKWU Eke Chijioke, *Crime and Criminal Investigation in Nigeria: A Study of Police Criminal Investigation in Enugu State*, International Journal of African and Asian Studies - An Open Access International Journal Vol.1 2013

<sup>7</sup>Amake&Ikhatua, *Forensic Accounting And Fraud Detection In Nigerian Public Sector*, Igbinedion University Journal of Accounting Vol. 2 August, 2016 . 148

<sup>8</sup> Nte, N. D. (2012). 'An evaluation of the challenges of forensic investigation and unsolved murders in Nigeria'. *African Journal of Criminology and Justice Studies*, 6(1&2), 143-162

noting that objectives of criminal probes—crime identification, suspect arrest, property recovery, and evidence evaluation—are undermined by inadequate forensic capabilities. Many cases remain unsolved due to poor evidence handling and lack of scientific tools.

Subsequent studies emphasize systemic deficiencies. Sarki<sup>9</sup> reviewed critical issues in NPF forensic investigations, pointing to inadequate training, limited equipment, corruption, lack of interagency cooperation, and undue interference as major barriers. Forensic intelligence and databases, which could enable pattern recognition and predictive policing, are hampered by unreliable data stemming from these challenges. Empirical findings show statistically significant associations between corruption, poor cooperation, and unreliable forensic databases, reducing overall investigative efficacy.

Ohazulike<sup>10</sup> examined challenges in using forensic science for crime prevention and control, framing the issue within deterrence theory. Despite over three decades of purported adoption, concerns persist about outdated or underutilized forensic approaches. Key problems include poor legal education standards, insufficient forensic skills among officers, and equipment shortages (e.g., few DNA labs, limited ballistics experts, rare fingerprint analysis). These results in most crimes being investigated conventionally, with forensic evidence rarely collected or presented in court.

---

<sup>9</sup> Sarki, Z. M. (2023). The Nigeria Police Reform and Utilisation of Forensic Science: Has the Latter Been Part of the Former? (ResearchGate). Highlights calls for forensic inclusion in reforms. Available at <https://share.google/eo4JEBYHk6WehqaYl>

<sup>10</sup> Ohazulike, G. A. (2025). Challenges in the use of forensic science by the police for crime prevention and control in Nigeria. *Journal of Psychology, Sociology, History and International Studies*, 1(2), 98-110. Available at <https://share.google/22mTUVJz3795>

Shittu<sup>11</sup> focused on murder investigations, arguing that NPF investigators often deviate from forensically validated procedures. Factors like inadequate funding, forensic infrastructure deficits, absent legislation mandating scientific protocols, and poor training contribute to stagnant clearance rates despite reform commitments.

Broader evaluations reinforce these patterns. Works on forensic evidence in Nigeria's criminal justice system for example Ndubusi & Ndukwe<sup>12</sup> identify legal challenges, institutional gaps, and policy reform imperatives. Forensic science is praised for its reliability in substantiating or refuting theories, yet integration remains weak due to underdeveloped infrastructure and personnel shortages. Perceptions among investigating police officers (IPOs) vary, with some studies (e.g., on adaptability traits) showing mixed views on forensic compatibility and validity, often linked to low awareness or resistance to change.

Regional and comparative insights (e.g., African forensic DNA symposia) underscore Nigeria's lag behind global standards, with calls for collaboration, legal frameworks, and capacity building.

Overall, the literature portrays the NPF's criminal investigation superstructure as outdated and forensic science as underutilized. High unsolved case rates (historically over 50% in some periods) stem from these gaps rather than inherent investigative flaws. Reforms—enhanced

---

<sup>11</sup> Shittu, O. T., & Saat, G. A. M. (2024). Murder investigation in Nigeria: Implication for forensic science application. *European Journal of Social Sciences Studies*, 9(6), 19-30. Available at <https://www.oapub.org/soc>

<sup>12</sup> Ndubusi C.E. & Ndukwe S.C (2025) Forensic Evidence in Nigeria's Criminal Justice System: Legal Challenges, Institutional Deficiencies and The Imperative for Policy Reform. <https://emsajpublishers.org/ijcjr/article/view/144>

training, dedicated forensic units, funding increases, and legislative support—are repeatedly advocated to align Nigeria with evidence-based policing.<sup>13</sup>

It is not surprising that the literature on Nigeria Police issues has failed to address the lack of forensic technology skills as a separate problem. Despite the need for research on forensic technology, a review of the literature found that not many studies focused either partly or entirely on forensic investigation within the Nigerian Police. In general, prior research on Nigerian police issues has concentrated on reforming the entire police force for better performance and creating a different police system.

### **3.0 THE NIGERIA POLICE FORCE**

The Nigeria Police Force (NPF) serves as the primary law enforcement agency in Nigeria, constitutionally mandated under Section 214 of the 1999 Constitution (as amended) to prevent and detect crime, apprehend offenders, preserve law and order, and protect lives and property.<sup>14</sup> The criminal investigation superstructure is primarily housed within the Force Criminal Investigation and Intelligence Department (FCIID), which operates at federal, zonal, and state levels. This department is responsible for intelligence gathering, forensic analysis, and investigative processes leading to prosecution. The Police Act 2020 further delineates these duties, emphasizing the role of investigation in effective policing.<sup>15</sup> However, the system has evolved through structural changes, such as the decentralization of investigative units to improve efficiency, though these

---

<sup>13</sup> Nigeria Police Force. (2016). Commissioning of Nigeria Police Forensic Laboratory and Digital Resource Centre at the Force Headquarters, Abuja. Remarks by IGP Solomon E. Arase. Available at: <https://www.npf.gov.ng/news/details/78>

<sup>14</sup> Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (As Amended)

<sup>15</sup> Nigeria Police Act 2020 Sections, 1, 4, 35 and 62.

reforms have been critiqued for limited impact due to persistent institutional challenges.

Criminal investigations in Nigeria typically follow a traditional model: initial reporting at police stations, preliminary inquiries by divisional police officers, escalation to state Criminal Investigation Departments (CID) for serious crimes, and potential involvement of federal units like the FCIID for high-profile cases. Forensic science, which involves the application of scientific methods to collect, analyze, and interpret evidence (e.g., DNA, ballistics, toxicology, fingerprints, and digital forensics), is intended to play a pivotal role in this process. Yet, its integration remains underdeveloped, leading to reliance on conventional techniques like eyewitness testimonies and confessions, often obtained under duress.

#### **4.0 FORENSIC EDUCATION**

Forensic education in Nigeria, particularly in the context of forensic science, is an emerging field with limited but growing academic and professional programs. It focuses on training in areas like crime scene investigation, DNA analysis, toxicology, and related disciplines to support criminal justice, law enforcement, and fraud prevention. These draw from studies emphasizing the need for expanded education to address gaps in Nigeria's forensic capabilities.

Majority of the literature on forensic in Nigeria is concentrated on fraud and forensic accounting. The term forensic science cuts across a wide range of disciplines with different practices. These disciplines present wide variability with regards to its techniques and methods, some disciplines are laboratory based such as Drug analysis and toxicology, some are based on the interpretation of observed patterns by the experts such as Finger marks, tool marks, while some of the activities requires the expertise, trained as scientist in analyzing them (chemist or biology),

some other activities are conducted by personnel trained as law enforcement agents and scientists (blood spatter experts, crime scene investigators, crime reconstruction experts) Medicine, such as forensic Pathologist, laboratory methodologist such as lab technologist.<sup>16</sup>

Dukku and Ibrahim<sup>17</sup> in 'Developing Forensic Science Capabilities in Nigeria: Challenges and Prospects, ' examined gaps in forensic integration for addressing security issues like insurgency, murder, and theft. It highlights significant challenges in education and training, including inadequate manpower, reliance on outdated methods, and limited local expertise (e.g., DNA analysis was outsourced abroad until 2017 due to a lack of trained professionals). Prospects include establishing domestic facilities like Nigeria's first DNA forensic center in 2017 to build training programs, government adoption of modern tools for capacity building, and long-term improvements in investigative efficiency through education. The authors advocate for enhanced manpower development to reduce crime and promote national security.

While Ohazulike in his paper, 'Challenges in the Use of Forensic Science by the Police for Crime Investigation in Nigeria'<sup>18</sup> decried that only a

---

<sup>16</sup>Mbaya, B.(2016), 'The state of forensic investigation in Kenya. A Master of Arts thesis submitted to the institution of anthropology, gender and African Studies, University of Nairobi Kenya.

<sup>17</sup> Dukku, A. M., & Ibrahim, B. (2021). Developing forensic science capabilities in Nigeria: Challenges and prospects. *International Journal of Management, Social Sciences, Peace and Conflict Studies (IJMSSPCS)*, 4(3), 373–383. ISSN: 2682-6135. Available at: <https://www.ijmsspcs.com/index.php/IJMSSPCS/article/view/282/311>

<sup>18</sup> Ohazulike, G. A. (2025). Challenges in the use of forensic science by the police for crime prevention and control in Nigeria. *Journal of Psychology, Sociology, History and International Studies*, 1(2), 98–?. Available at: <https://nigerianjournalonline.org/index.php/JPSHIS/article/view/3140>

small percentage of Nigerian higher education institutions offer forensic science programs, often lacking necessary knowledge, tools, and qualified professionals. It discusses how this educational shortfall contributes to ineffective police investigations and prosecutions. His recommendations include integrating forensic science into university curricula to train specialists, raise awareness, and foster specialization, ultimately improving crime resolution and public trust in the justice system. This resolution particularly resonates with this present paper.

Ofomata et al<sup>19</sup> argues that introducing forensic science into higher institutions would prepare specialists, spark interest, and lead to proficiency. Challenges include underdeveloped infrastructure and inadequate training, which hinder effective use of forensics in prosecutions. The paper calls for funding forensic labs, expert training, and curriculum reforms to modernize the system.

Monday Efut<sup>20</sup> focused on forensic accounting education, they conducted a survey-based study (n=261) showing how training in forensic techniques strengthens fraud detection and internal controls in educational administration. The paper addresses issues like unutilized funds (e.g., over N20 billion in 2013) and malpractices such as ghost workers. While not

---

<sup>19</sup> Ofomata et al. (2025). 'Role of forensic evidence in criminal justice system in Nigeria. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science (IJRISS)*, 9(7), 2394–2404. Available at: <https://rsisinternational.org/journals/ijriss/articles/role-of-forensic-evidence-in-criminal-justice-system-in-nigeria>

<sup>20</sup> Monday R.E. (2016). The role of forensic education in the detection and prevention of fraud in the Federal Ministry of Education Headquarters, Nigeria. (Survey-based study; available via Academia.edu or related repositories). Full text/PDF at: [https://www.academia.edu/49435612/The\\_Role\\_of\\_Forensic\\_Education\\_in\\_The\\_Detection\\_and\\_Prevention\\_of\\_Fraud\\_in\\_the\\_Federal\\_Ministry\\_of\\_Education\\_Headquarters\\_Nigeria](https://www.academia.edu/49435612/The_Role_of_Forensic_Education_in_The_Detection_and_Prevention_of_Fraud_in_the_Federal_Ministry_of_Education_Headquarters_Nigeria)

strictly forensic science, it demonstrates the broader application of forensic education in public sectors, recommending integrated training programs to build skills and awareness. Barriers include limited program availability, aligning with calls for expanded forensic curricula in Nigeria.

Umukoro and Elijah,<sup>21</sup> while advocating the cognizance of forensic pharmacology indicate that forensic pharmacology is rudimentary in Nigeria, with calls for advancement through education. It stresses the need for specialized training programs to build expertise in drug analysis and toxicology, addressing institutional deficiencies and supporting criminal investigations.

Forensic science being a multi-disciplinary field provides multiple options in the tracking and apprehension of offenders or perpetrators of crime by the agents of criminal justice. In the process of criminal investigation, empirical forensic evidence provides a better option, which may be authentic and preferable to the testimony of witnesses and confession (obtained by force or otherwise).<sup>22</sup> Forensic science has been defined to mean, the study and the application of biochemical and other scientific techniques in the investigation of crime<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> Umukoro, E. K., Elijah, O. B., Igben, V. O., Chidebe, E. O., & Moke, E. G. (2024). Making the case for Development of Forensic science in a developing country with emphasis on Forensic Pharmacology: The Nigerian perspective. *Journal of Applied Sciences and Environmental Management*, 28(7), 2095–2104.

<https://doi.org/10.4314/jasem.v28i7.22>

<sup>22</sup>CHINWOKWU Eke Chijioke, *Crime and Criminal Investigation in Nigeria: A Study of Police Criminal Investigation in Enugu State*. *International Journal of African and Asian Studies - An Open Access International Journal* Vol.1 2013

<sup>23</sup> The advanced Oxford Dictionary (9<sup>th</sup> ed), claredon press ,Oxford, 1998

Forensic science provides objective, scientific evidence that can link suspects to crime scenes, identify victims, establish timelines, and exonerate the innocent. Global best practices encompass disciplines such as ballistics (firearm analysis), document examination, DNA profiling, geo-location tracking, handwriting analysis, and toxicology. In Nigeria, forensic evidence is admissible under the Evidence Act 2011,<sup>24</sup> where it can be tendered by expert witnesses or investigating officers. It aids in resolving complex cases like murder, rape, kidnapping, and cybercrimes by offering irrefutable data that traditional methods cannot provide.

For instance, forensic tools can digitize fingerprints for database searches, conduct polygraph tests to assess deception, or analyze digital footprints in cyber investigations. When effectively utilized, forensics enhances case resolution rates by up to 30%, as seen in some international contexts, and promotes equity in the justice system by reducing reliance on potentially biased human accounts.

## **5.0 POLICE INVESTIGATION**

There is no doubt that the spate of insecurity in the country is alarming. Several security challenges cut across the nooks and crannies of the country. The most common one is the terrorists' attacks in major parts of the Northern region. This, according to Achumba et al.,<sup>25</sup> has made national security threat to be a major issue for the government and has prompted huge allocations of the national budget to security. The rate of violent crimes such as terrorism, kidnapping, armed robbery and banditry,

---

<sup>24</sup> Evidence Act 2011; sections 52 and 55

<sup>25</sup> Achumba C, Ighomereho, O. S and Akpor –Robaro, M. O. M (2013). Security Challenges in Nigeria and the Implications for Business Activities and Sustainable Development *Journal of Economics and Sustainable Development* .Vol. 14, (2), pp 79-99

suicide bombing, religious killing, ethnic clashes, politically-motivated killing, and other forms of criminal activities in the country is becoming an increasingly regular occurrence that characterizes life in the nation.

The rate at which innocent blood is wasted daily and the display of bottled-up frustration by the citizens remain a cause for concern. Nwaze<sup>26</sup> explains that the rate of bloodshed during the Nigerian civil war is child's play compared to the terrorist attacks in a few months.

The problem of insecurity in the country seems to have grown beyond government capacity. Uhunmwuango & Aluforo<sup>27</sup> in Achumba, et al<sup>28</sup> are of the view that the efforts of the government have not yielded enough positive results. In looking at the causes of this abnormality, Onifade, Imhonopi, and Urim<sup>29</sup> posited that there is a connection between increasing ethnic hate, religious bigotry, political rivalry, and a growing population of disgruntled citizens in the country who feel short-changed and have limited or no access to the common inheritance.

## **6.0 CURRENT STATE OF FORENSIC SCIENCE UTILIZATION IN NIGERIA POLICE INVESTIGATIONS**

---

<sup>26</sup>Nwaze, C. (2011). *Corruption in Nigeria; Terrorism in Nigeria*. University of Ibadan Press, Ibadan

<sup>27</sup>Uhunmwuango, S.O. and Aluforo, E. (2011) Challenges and Solutions to Ethno-Religious Conflicts in Nigeria: Case Study of the Jos Crises, *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*, Volume 13, No.5, 109-124.

<sup>28</sup>Achumba C, Ighomereho, O. S and Akpor –Robaro, M. O. M (2013). Security Challenges in Nigeria and the Implications for Business Activities and Sustainable Development *Journal of Economics and Sustainable Development* .Vol. 14, (2), pp 79-99

<sup>29</sup>Onifade, C., Imhonopi D. and Urim, U. M. (2013), Addressing the Insecurity Challenges in Nigeria; the Imperative of Moral Values and Virtue Ethics. *Global journal of Human Science and Political Science*. Vol 13, Issue 2,

Despite its potential, the application of forensic science in Nigeria remains limited and inconsistent. The NPF has forensic units, including laboratories in Lagos (before it was burnt during the *endsars* riot) and Abuja, but these are under-resourced and often outsourced to private or international facilities for advanced analyses like DNA testing. A review of NPF practices indicates that forensic methods are employed in only a fraction of cases, primarily high-profile ones, while routine investigations depend on outdated techniques.

Positive developments include partnerships with institutions like the Federal Institute of Industrial Research Oshodi (FIIRO) for forensic examinations and the enactment of the Cybercrimes Act 2015, which mandates digital forensics in cyber-related probes. However, the overall superstructure is criticized for its entanglement within police command structures, which compromises independence and credibility.<sup>30</sup> Data compilation at state CIDs, such as in Lagos, helps identify crime patterns, but forensic integration is hampered by systemic issues.

Contemporary law enforcement has greatly expanded its ability to solve crimes by the adoption of forensic techniques and procedures.<sup>31</sup> Today, crimes can often be solved by a detailed examination of the crime scene and analysis of forensic evidence.<sup>32</sup> The work of forensic scientists is not

---

<sup>30</sup> Lagos State DNA & Forensic Center (LSD&FC). Established/commissioned in 2017 as Nigeria's first high-powered DNA forensic lab (public-private partnership under Lagos State Government).

<sup>31</sup>Inman K, Rudin N. (2001) p 41 in *Principle and Practice of Crimnalistics: the profession of forensic science*. CRC Press, Boca Raton, FL.

<sup>32</sup>Joseph L. Peterson, John P. Ryan, Pauline J Houlden , Steven ihajlovic (1986) *Forensic Science and the Courts: The Uses and Effects of Scientific Evidence in Criminal Case Processing*, NCJRS Reports. U.S. Department of Justice, Washington, DC.

only crucial in criminal investigations and prosecutions, but is also vital in civil litigations, major man-made and natural disasters, and the investigation of global crimes. The success of the analysis of the forensic evidence is based upon a system that emphasizes teamwork, advanced investigative skills and tools (such as GPS positioning, cell phone tracking, video image analysis, artificial intelligence and data mining), and the ability to process a crime scene properly by recognizing, collecting and preserving all relevant physical evidence.<sup>33</sup>

## **7.0 CASES WHERE FORENSIC SCIENCE HAS HELPED INVESTIGATION OF CRIME**

### *i. Colin Pitchfork's case*

There have been cases where the input of forensic science has helped in resolving some murder cases. The first DNA conviction in 1986 in the United Kingdom involved Colin Pitchfork. In the village of Narborough, two teenage girls were brutally raped and murdered. The police employed the dragnet investigative mechanism and a lot of men were arrested. Semen's' samples were collected and DNA testing was conducted over a thousand men in the village. The semen found on the girls matched that of Colin Pitchfork who later confessed to the commission of the crime. He was later convicted and sentenced.

### *ii. The Bundy's case*

Another case was the Bundy's case in the United States in 1970. Ted Bundy became notorious with murder of several women. One of the victims of Bundy had a bite mark on her body. Forensic odontology (bite

---

<sup>33</sup>Gaensslen, RE, Harris H, Lee, HC (2008) Introduction to Forensic Science and Criminalistics. Pp 61-79. McGraw-Hill, New York.

mark analysis) was deployed and the bite mark matched that of Bundy, he was subsequently convicted.

*iii. Denis Rader's case*

Between 1974 and 1991 in the United States, Denis was serially killing his victims and covering his tracks. So far he has murdered 10 people. The combined efforts of DNA test and digital forensic helped resolve the decades-old crime. The floppy disk sent to the police by Rader during communication was traced to a disk in a church computer, and the DNA from the crime scene matched Rader's daughters. Rader was convicted.

*iv. O.J. Simpson's case*

One of the most famous cases showing the role and controversy of forensic evidence in court is the O.J. Simpson case. In 1994, in the United States of America, Simpson was accused of murdering his ex-wife and her friend. DNA samples were collected, especially the bloody gloves found at the crime scene, in 1995 Simpson was acquitted despite significant evidence. It is a legal principle that crime must be proved beyond a reasonable doubt. The court will not convict an offender where an element of doubt is available. However, Simpson did not totally escape the long arm of the law as he was later convicted of another controversial crime and sent to prison in 2007 before he died in 2024.

It must be acknowledged that Forensic science helps law enforcement by identifying criminals through DNA, matching suspects using fingerprints, using dental records and bite marks, analyzing digital evidence, reconstructing crime scenes scientifically as these techniques increase the accuracy, fairness, and effectiveness of criminal investigations.

In 2017, the Nigeria case of Maryam Sanda who was alleged to have cause the death of her husband was convicted of murder through the medical forensic report which contained the bloodstain analysis which showed the deceased sustained multiple knife wounds and autopsy examination. Although the Mohbad<sup>34</sup> case is still foot-dragging and becoming almost unresolved.

## **8.0 CRITICAL CHALLENGES AND CRITICISMS**

The Nigerian Police's criminal investigation framework faces multifaceted challenges that undermine forensic science's effectiveness, contributing to high rates of unsolved crimes, miscarriages of justice, and public distrust.

i. ***Inadequate Infrastructure and Resources:*** Nigeria lacks comprehensive forensic laboratories equipped for advanced analyses. Most facilities are outdated, with shortages in equipment for DNA, ballistics, and toxicology. Investigations often require overseas processing, which is costly and time-consuming, creating inequities for indigent victims who bear investigation costs. The NPF's forensic system is described as "broken," with analyses prone to errors due to incompetence, understaffing, and corruption.

ii. ***Limited Training and Skills:*** Police officers receive obsolete training, with curricula not aligned to modern forensic standards. There's a dearth of specialized forensic experts, leading to underutilization of available tools. Legal education in Nigeria is also critiqued for not emphasizing forensics, affecting judicial appreciation of such evidence.

---

<sup>34</sup> Ilerioluwa Aloba Joseph (aka Mohbad), Hiphop singer who died under suspicious circumstances in 2023.

- iii. ***Reliance on Traditional Methods:*** Despite advancements globally, the NPF heavily depends on eyewitness accounts, confessions (often coerced), and torture, which violate human rights and lead to unreliable outcomes. This "traditional investigative technique" loophole exacerbates inefficiencies, with forensics sidelined in favor of quicker, less scientific approaches.
- v. ***Legal and Institutional Deficiencies:*** The Evidence Act 2011 allows forensic evidence but lacks specific criteria for admissibility, leading to judicial indifference. There's no comprehensive legislation for forensics, and expert rebuttals are challenging for defendants without resources. Corruption, poor funding, and administrative bottlenecks further impede progress, resulting in undetected cases and escalating crime rates like kidnapping, armed robbery, and terrorism.
- vi. ***Public Distrust and Inefficiency:*** Over 30 years of forensic adoption has yielded minimal impact, with public criticism focusing on the NPF's inability to solve crimes. This fosters insecurity, as evidenced by rising violent crimes and a high backlog of cases.
- vii.

## **9.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **(A) Short- to Medium-Term Recommendations (1–3 Years, High Feasibility)**

#### *9.1. Prioritize Comprehensive, Regular Training and Capacity Building*

Expand mandatory, hands-on forensic training for investigators, scene-of-crime officers, and forensic lab personnel. Partner with private firms (e.g., Pearl Forensic Risk Advisory Services model from 2026), universities, and international bodies (UNODC, INL) for specialized programs in

evidence collection, preservation, DNA basics, digital forensics, fraud detection, and chain-of-custody protocols.

i. **Workable steps:** Mandate annual refresher courses for at least 20–30% of Criminal Investigation Department (CID) staff; integrate forensic modules into police academy curricula (leveraging the 2025 Police Institutes Establishment Act). Track progress via certification rates and pre/post-training performance audits.

ii. **Expected impact:** Reduces mishandling/contamination and boosts officer confidence in scientific methods.

### *9.2. Strengthen Evidence Storage, Preservation, and Chain-of-Custody Systems*

Build on recent UNODC-supported renovations (e.g., evidence storage facilities in Borno and other commands) by standardizing secure, climate-controlled storage nationwide, with digital logging for chain-of-custody.

i. **Workable steps:** Roll out low-cost digital tracking apps or barcode systems (piloted in high-volume states like Lagos, Abuja, and Rivers); enforce strict protocols to prevent degradation of biological evidence.

ii. **Expected impact:** Improves court admissibility and reduces case dismissals due to tainted evidence.

### *9.3. Enhance Existing Databases and Biometric Integration*

Fully operationalize and expand the Nigeria Police Crime and Incident Database (NPCIDB) and National Criminal Data Fusion Centre (NCDFC) for real-time biometric (fingerprint, facial, iris) sharing across divisions.

i. **Workable steps:** Ensure 100% digital upload from divisional stations (as per ACJA 2015 mandates); add modules for linking cases via forensic

intelligence (e.g., ballistics, fingerprints). Conduct regular data quality audits to address unreliability.

ii. **Expected impact:** Enables pattern recognition, faster suspect matching, and predictive policing.

#### *9.4. Decentralize Basic Forensic Tools and Resources*

Equip state commands and divisions with portable field kits (e.g., for fingerprint lifting, presumptive blood testing, photography, and basic DNA sampling).

i. **Workable steps:** Allocate funds from the Nigeria Police Trust Fund (amended 2025) for phased procurement; start with pilot kits in 10–15 high-crime states, training local officers on usage.

ii. **Expected impact:** Reduces central bottlenecks and contamination risks from poor transportation.

### **(B) Medium- to Long-Term Recommendations (3–10 Years, Structural Reforms)**

#### *5. Establish and Expand Dedicated Forensic Infrastructure*

Scale up forensic labs beyond current facilities (e.g., Abuja central lab and Lagos DNA model). Create regional forensic hubs (North, South, East, West) with DNA, toxicology, ballistics, and digital analysis capabilities.

i. **Workable steps:** Legislate a dedicated National Forensic Science Service (autonomous or semi-autonomous agency) for oversight; secure sustained funding via the Police Trust Fund and international grants. Prioritize accreditation (e.g., ISO standards) for credibility.

ii. **Expected impact:** Shortens analysis turnaround times and increases forensic evidence use in prosecutions.

*6. Develop a National DNA Database and Legal Framework*

Legislate and launch a national DNA database (with strict privacy safeguards) linked to the NCDFC, starting with convicted offenders and serious crime scenes.

- i. **Workable steps:** Amend existing laws (e.g., build on ACJA 2015) for mandatory DNA collection in specified cases; collaborate with African forensic networks (e.g., from DNA symposia) for technical support and best practices.
- ii. **Expected impact:** Dramatically improves linking serial crimes, exonerations, and clearance rates for homicides/sexual offenses.

*7. Foster Inter-Agency Collaboration, Oversight, and Anti-Corruption Measures*

Improve coordination between NPF, Government Chemist, NDLEA, and judiciary; introduce independent forensic oversight (e.g., via a forensic audit board).

- i. **Workable steps:** Mandate joint protocols for evidence sharing; implement body cameras for investigators and transparent case tracking to curb interference/corruption.
- ii. **Expected impact:** Builds trust, reduces undue influence, and ensures accountability.

*8. Secure Sustainable Funding and Policy Integration:* Ring-fence forensic budgets within the Police Trust Fund; integrate forensic science explicitly into all future police reform policies.

- i. **Workable steps:** Advocate for 10–15% of annual police funding allocated to forensics/tech; encourage public-private partnerships for equipment/training.
- ii. **Expected impact:** Ensures continuity beyond political cycles.

Despite the criticisms, there are prospects for enhancement. Efforts to develop forensic capabilities include training programs and international collaborations, which could address gaps in criminal profiling and investigation. To foster a more robust system:

- a- Invest in Infrastructure: Establish independent, well-equipped forensic labs nationwide, reducing reliance on outsourcing.
- b- Enhance Training: Update police curricula with forensic modules and conduct mandatory training for officers and judges.
- c- Legislative Reforms: Enact a dedicated Forensic Science Act to standardize admissibility, ensure independence from police structures, and mandate forensics in serious crimes.
- d- Combat Corruption: Implement oversight mechanisms and better funding to improve operational capacity.
- e- Public-Private Partnerships: Collaborate with institutions like universities and international bodies for expertise sharing.

## **10.0 CONCLUSION**

The Nigeria Police's criminal investigation superstructure, while constitutionally sound, is critically undermined by the underutilization of forensic science due to infrastructural, training, legal, and institutional shortcomings. These issues highlight a systemic failure while the superstructure exists on paper, its practical implementation is critiqued as inept, contributing to a dysfunctional criminal justice system.

This results in a justice system plagued by inefficiencies, human rights abuses, and unresolved crimes, eroding public confidence. A critical overhaul, prioritizing scientific integration, is essential for aligning Nigeria's policing with global standards and ensuring safer communities. This paper outlines a thoroughly critical approach to crime investigation and resolution. By investigating the challenges, opportunities, and best practices, this research aims to contribute to multiple suggestions to curbing crimes and improving the security architecture in Nigeria.