

Effectiveness of Security Responses in Kwara State: Assessing the Roles of the Nigerian Police Force, Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), and the Nigerian Military

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Abstract: Kwara State, though historically peaceful, has recently faced rising security threats such as cultism, armed robbery, kidnapping, herder-farmer clashes, and cross-border crimes. These challenges expose gaps in the effectiveness, coordination, and public trust of security agencies, particularly the Police, NSCDC, and the Military. This study examines the effectiveness of security responses in Kwara State using a mixed-methods approach. Data were collected through qualitative interviews with 15 security personnel and a quantitative survey of 367 residents. The interviews provided insights into agency roles, challenges, and inter-agency collaboration, while the survey assessed public perceptions of responsiveness, patrol visibility, and safety. Findings reveal that, although security agencies are generally perceived as effective in crime control and public safety, their efforts are hampered by inadequate manpower, poor logistics, limited technology, and weak coordination. The state's porous border with Benin further compounds insecurity by enabling smuggling and cross-border crimes. Public views reflected both appreciation of security efforts and concerns over occasional harassment and limited community engagement. The study recommends enhanced inter-agency collaboration, the adoption of modern technology, improved resource allocation, and stronger community relations to strengthen internal security frameworks in Kwara State and Nigeria at large.

Keywords: Security Response; Internal Security; Inter-agency Collaboration; Crisis Management

Introduction: In recent years, the complexities of global security have intensified, fundamentally altering the responsibilities shouldered by states and their institutions. Security is no longer confined to traditional military or police functions; it has emerged as a foundational element for national cohesion and progress. The contemporary era is marked by an expanding variety of threats, ranging from cyber-attacks and terrorist networks to climate-related crises and persistent civil unrest. These multifaceted dangers do not discriminate based on a nation's size or global influence, compelling all governments to recalibrate their approaches to safeguarding their populations [1].

Africa stands as a particularly stark example of these challenges. Despite its abundant natural resources and rich cultural heritage, the continent is persistently hampered by security issues that impede sustainable development. Weak state structures, deep-seated ethnic divisions, porous borders, widespread poverty, and the exacerbating effects of climate change have acted together to fuel both internal and transnational conflicts. This has resulted in significant instability in countries such as Mali, Sudan, Somalia, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Nigeria, nations that have frequently required both regional and international interventions to restore order [2]. Focusing on West Africa, the Sahel region has become especially vulnerable, with escalating insecurity driven by terrorist organizations such as Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), in addition to localized banditry and armed conflict. These dynamics have severely strained governance, undermining the ability of states to maintain public order and protect their citizens. The cumulative effect is a profound disruption to community life and national development, underscoring the urgent need for comprehensive, adaptable security strategies across the continent [3].

Nigeria, often referred to as Africa's most populous nation and a major economic force on the continent, illustrates the significant challenges involved in managing security within a diverse, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious society. The country is confronted with an array of security threats: the Boko Haram insurgency in the Northeast, rampant banditry and kidnapping in the Northwest, separatist agitations in the Southeast, and persistent herder-farmer conflicts in the North Central region. Despite the deployment of various security agencies, including the Nigerian Police Force, the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), and the Nigerian Military serious concerns remain regarding the effectiveness, coordination, and public confidence in these efforts. Within this broader national context, Kwara State, situated in North-Central Nigeria, has traditionally enjoyed a reputation for peace and relative stability. Nevertheless, recent developments demonstrate that Kwara is not immune to the broader insecurity affecting the country. Both urban centers such as Ilorin and more rural areas like Baruten, Kaiama, and Offa have begun to experience an increase in security challenges, raising serious concerns about threats to life, property, and social cohesion [4,5].

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Kwara State, particularly Ilorin and surrounding urban areas, is facing a serious rise in cultism and youth gang violence, with frequent clashes involving students and unemployed youths causing injuries, deaths, and widespread fear among residents. These persistent confrontations reveal an urgent need for more effective security interventions. Similarly, the state has witnessed severe armed robbery incidents, most notably the April 4, 2018 Offa bank robbery, where 33 people including nine police officers were killed as heavily armed criminals attacked multiple banks with little resistance. The incident exposed major gaps in security preparedness and response, raising serious concerns about the ability of security agencies to safeguard lives and property [6,7]. Kwara State has experienced recurring clashes between herders and farmers, notably in Baruten and Kaiama Local Government Areas. These conflicts usually start over disputes regarding grazing rights and the destruction of crops, but they can quickly escalate into violent confrontations, resulting in loss of life, property damage, and prolonged community tension [8].

Incidents of kidnapping and banditry have become increasingly prevalent in Kwara State, with remote communities and major transportation routes being particularly vulnerable. The targets of these abductions are diverse, encompassing schoolchildren, commuters, and even religious leaders, many of whom are held for ransom. Reports suggest that a significant portion of these criminal acts may be orchestrated by groups infiltrating from adjacent states, who are able to exploit the lack of cohesive security measures and the state's existing vulnerabilities [9]. Kwara's geographical position, sharing a border with the Republic of Benin, further complicates the security landscape. The state has emerged as a focal point for smuggling activities and illicit cross-border trade, especially in commodities such as foreign rice, petroleum products, and firearms. These smuggling routes not only undermine the local economy but also serve as corridors for criminal elements and traffickers, thereby exacerbating the challenges faced by law enforcement and weakening national security efforts [10,11].

The surge in substance abuse among youths is deeply concerning. Increasing numbers of young people are misusing drugs like tramadol, codeine, and marijuana. This isn't just a public health issue; it's also driving up rates of violent behavior, criminal activity, and even cult-related killings. On top of that, cybercrime locally called "Yahoo Yahoo" or "Yahoo Plus" is becoming more common. It often involves internet fraud, and in extreme cases, ritual practices aimed at acquiring wealth. These trends are seriously reshaping both the moral standards and the security environment in urban areas [12,13]. Given how complex these security challenges are, it's crucial to examine how effective current security responses have been in the state. This research will evaluate the efforts of the Nigerian Police Force, the Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), and the Nigerian Military in addressing these threats in Kwara State. It also aims to understand public perceptions of these agencies, highlight existing gaps and challenges, and identify opportunities for improving security strategies. Enhancing the effectiveness of these responses is essential, not just for public safety, but also for fostering social cohesion, economic prosperity, and sustainable development in Kwara State and beyond.

Numerous scholars have assessed the functioning of Nigeria's security agencies, with particular attention to how the Police, NSCDC, and Military maintain public order during crises. Gberinyer, Okoro, and Adishi found that coordinated operations among these agencies significantly improved crime detection and reduced communal tensions in the North-Central region. Their study underscores inter-agency collaboration as a vital factor in effective security management [14]. In a related vein, Kaning Agbongiasede reported that joint security patrols exerted a deterrent effect on violent crimes, particularly in urban centers experiencing surges in cultism and gang-related violence. The study highlighted the significance of both visibility and prompt response in mitigating youth-driven criminal activity [15]. Suleiman explored the strategic deployment of military personnel during episodes of civil disturbance in areas such as Southern Kaduna and parts of Kogi State. While military involvement often contributed to restoring order, the research identified persistent concerns regarding civil-military relations and the potential for human rights violations [16]. These observations parallel the conclusions of Musa and Heinecken, who cautioned that habitual reliance on military solutions for internal security challenges may undermine the normative foundations of civil policing and erode public confidence in the principles of democratic accountability [17].

Recent discussions about security in Kwara State have centered on both specific incidents and ongoing challenges. Take the 2018 Offa bank robbery, for example; Ambe's analysis of this event highlighted notable deficiencies in how security agencies coordinated their responses. Even though police units were stationed nearby, their lack of effective communication contributed to the high number of casualties and widespread alarm within the community [18]. Agbamu's comprehensive assessment of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) across North-Central Nigeria, including Kwara State, revealed the Corps' important contributions in intelligence gathering and the protection of public infrastructure [19]. Similarly, Elechi and Ohazuruike examined the value of civil-military cooperation in managing communal disputes. Their study found that security interventions were more effective in communities where military personnel had received training in civil engagement and conflict mediation [20]. In Kwara State, such approaches proved valuable during herder-farmer conflicts in Baruten and Kaiama Local Government Areas. There, military-led responses accompanied by community dialogue successfully prevented further escalation of violence.

Ishola and Abdulbaki conducted an in-depth analysis of youth involvement in cultism and drug abuse within Ilorin metropolis. Their research underscores the shortcomings in youth-focused crime prevention, noting that law enforcement often responded only after incidents occurred, rather than taking proactive measures to mitigate risks [21]. The issue of cybercrime locally referred to as "Yahoo Yahoo" also features prominently in the literature. Balogun, Abdulrahman, and Aka documented a significant rise in internet fraud among urban youth in Ilorin, attributing this trend primarily to socioeconomic frustrations and the influence of peers. Although security agencies have made attempts to address cybercrime through arrests and public

awareness campaigns, weak coordination between specialized cybercrime units and traditional police structures has resulted in inconsistent outcomes [22]. Additionally, Seun, Moshood, and Abdullahi examined the security challenges along Nigeria's western borders, with particular emphasis on Kwara State's proximity to neighboring countries. Their study highlights the critical role played by the NSCDC and Nigerian Customs Service in intercepting illegal arms, smuggled goods, and trafficking suspects [23]. Rosemary, Kente, and Ogande explored the impact of media coverage on public perceptions of security agencies in North-Central Nigeria. Their findings indicate that negative media reporting particularly following operational failures or allegations of misconduct undermines public trust in state institutions [24].

Theoretical Framework: This study relies on Systems Theory, which essentially highlights how organisations and institutions are interconnected, what happens in one area inevitably affects the others. Originally developed by Ludwig von Bertalanffy, a biologist, and later adopted by disciplines such as sociology, political science, and management, the theory suggests that no single unit operates in a vacuum. Instead, every component is part of a wider system [25]. Within this framework, analysing the effectiveness of the Nigerian Police Force, the Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), and the Nigerian Military means viewing them as subsystems within the country's broader security structure. For public safety and internal security to be effective, each agency must fulfill its responsibilities efficiently, communicate clearly, and coordinate with the others. Security threats in Kwara State, whether cultism, armed robbery, kidnapping, farmer-herder conflicts, cybercrime, or border-related offenses are multidimensional and often interconnected. Addressing these challenges goes beyond isolated responses; it requires integrated roles, information sharing, joint operations, and strategic collaboration among the security agencies. From a Systems Theory perspective, a breakdown in any one subsystem like inadequate police response or weak NSCDC intelligence can undermine the entire system, making it easier for insecurity to escalate.

Methodology:

Research Design: This study employs a mixed-method design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to assess security responses in Kwara State. Structured questionnaires are administered to civilian residents to capture their perceptions. Semi-structured interviews with security personnel from the Police, NSCDC, and Military provide deeper insights into their roles, inter-agency coordination, challenges, and strategies in addressing security issues.

Population, Sample and Sampling Techniques: For the qualitative component, the study population comprised security personnel from the Nigerian Police, NSCDC, and Military engaged in operations across Kwara State's three senatorial zones. For the quantitative part, it included 8,236 residents with direct or indirect experiences of security issues across selected urban and rural LGAs. Using stratified, purposive, and convenience sampling, 15 security officers were selected for in-depth interviews. Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table determined a sample of 367 civilian respondents, chosen through stratified, purposive, and simple random sampling to ensure representation across zones and affected communities. This multi-stage approach captured diverse perspectives, enhancing the depth and reliability of findings.

Instrumentation: This study employed two instruments: a semi-structured interview guide and a structured questionnaire titled Security Agencies and Public Safety Questionnaire (SAPSQ). The interview guide, with open-ended questions, collected qualitative data from Police, NSCDC, and Military personnel, while the questionnaire, consisting of closed-ended and Likert-scale items, was administered to civilian residents in Kwara State. Both instruments were validated by experts in Peace and Security Studies at Al-Hikmah University and pilot-tested with five security officers and sixty civilians to ensure clarity and reliability.

Procedure for Data Collection: To ensure ethical compliance, informed consent was obtained, with anonymity and confidentiality guaranteed in line with research standards. Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews with Police, NSCDC, and Military personnel in Kwara State, using tools such as audio recorders, jotters, and laptops, conducted in-person or virtually depending on availability. Quantitative data were gathered via structured questionnaires distributed to civilian residents through face-to-face, telephone, and Google Forms. Trained research assistants provided clarification or translation where needed, ensuring inclusiveness and accurate responses.

Method of Data Analysis: A mixed-method approach was used to analyse data on security responses in Kwara State. Thematic analysis was applied to interviews with Police, NSCDC, and Military personnel, while quantitative data from civilians were analysed using SPSS (Version 22). Descriptive statistics summarized perceptions of agency performance, responsiveness, and trust. Integrating thematic and statistical techniques provided a well-rounded assessment, combining lived experiences with measurable trends.

Results:

Qualitative Approach: Transcription and codification were central to the qualitative analysis of security responses in Kwara State. Audio interviews with Police, NSCDC, and Military personnel were transcribed to capture both verbal and contextual details, preserving the richness of responses. The transcripts were then coded to identify themes such as inter-agency collaboration, operational challenges, public engagement, and strategic effectiveness. This process, which produced a 17-page coded document, formed the basis for thematic analysis and highlighted key patterns in frontline security operations.

Table 1: Code Assigned to Participants.

S/N	PARTICIPANTS	CODE
1	Nigerian Police Force	NP1, NP2, NP3, NP4, NP5
2	NSCDC	NCD1, NCD2, NCD3, NCD4, NCD5
3	Nigerian Military	NM1, NM2, NM3, NM4, NM5

Table 2: General Theme on Effectiveness of Security Responses in Kwara State.

Theme One: Effectiveness in Crime Prevention and Control Sub-Themes: 1. Responsiveness to Emergencies 2. Crime Prevention and Control 3. Visibility and Patrol Presence 4. Public Safety Outcomes
Theme Two: Inter-Agency Collaboration in Security Response Sub-Themes: 1. Information Sharing 2. Intelligence Coordination 3. Joint Operations and Task Forces
Theme Three: Public Perception of Security Agencies' Roles and Performance Sub-Themes: 1. Perceived Effectiveness in Crime Control 2. Public Satisfaction with Security Operations 3. Fear of Harassment or Abuse
Theme Four: Challenges to Effective Security Response Sub-Themes: 1. Inadequate Manpower and Logistics 2. Limited Use of AI and Modern Technology 3. Porous Border

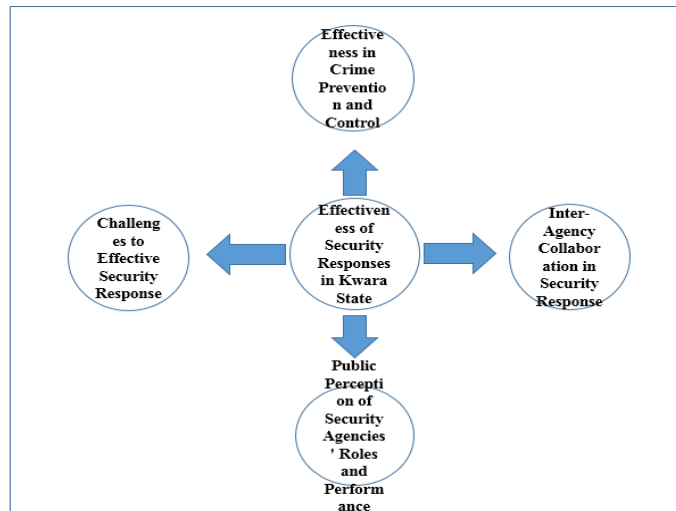


Fig. 1: General Model on the Effectiveness of Security Responses in Kwara State, Nigeria.

Results: The following are some insights shared by the participants.

Research Questions 1: How effective are the Police, NSCDC, and Military in addressing security threats in Kwara State?

The views of participants regarding the effectiveness of security responses are presented below:

According to Nigerian Military (NM1) & (NM4):

“The primary responsibility of the Nigerian Army is to protect the nation’s sovereignty and ensure the safety of its citizens. However, in Kwara, the Army’s focus extends beyond traditional military duties to encompass fostering peace and security within local communities, which is essential for overall societal stability. In terms of responsiveness to emergencies, the military usually steps in when situations escalate beyond the control of the Police or other Security Agencies.”

Nigerian Police (NP2) & (NP5) emphasized that:

“In an effort to enhance crime prevention and control in Kwara State, the Nigeria Police Force has implemented community policing strategies and conducted regular raids in areas identified as hotspots for cult-related activities, drug abuse, and other criminal behaviours. These proactive operations have contributed significantly to the reduction of street

cultism, primarily through intelligence gathering, public sensitisation campaigns, and youth-focused engagement initiatives.”

Nigeria Civil Defence Corps (NCD3) & NP4 stated that:

“Officers of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) and the Nigerian Police Force are routinely deployed on both foot and motorised patrols as part of efforts to maintain visibility and reinforce public security.”

NCD1 remarked that:

“The collaboration between the military, police, and other security agencies has been central to improving crisis management in Kwara State. This multi-layered approach ensures that all stakeholders operate in coordination to protect the lives and property of civilians. Security agencies remain deeply committed to enhancing public safety and ensuring the overall well-being of communities within the state.”

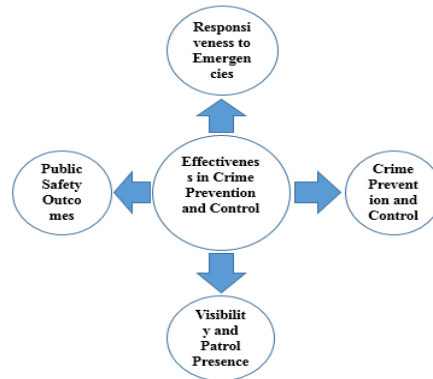


Fig. 2: Perception on Effectiveness in Crime Prevention and Control.

Research Question 2: To what extent do these agencies collaborate in responding to insecurity?

The following excerpts reflect participants’ perspectives on the extent to which these agencies collaborate in responding to insecurity.

The view of NM2 & NP3 are:

“Collaboration between the military, the Nigeria Police Force, the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), and other security agencies has been central to improving crisis management in Kwara State. A notable example is Operation Harmony, a joint initiative where the military, police, civil defence, and local security groups work together to maintain peace across the state.”

NM3 & NP1 opined that:

“In the area of intelligence coordination, the military primarily depends on its internal sources and established military intelligence networks. However, actionable intelligence is occasionally received from external sources such as the Nigeria Police Force and the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC).”

According to NM5 & NCD2

“Close collaboration among security agencies, including the Nigerian Police Force, the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), the Nigerian Military and other security agencies has been instrumental in promoting a coordinated approach to conflict resolution in Kwara State.”

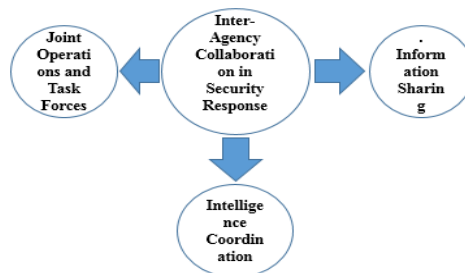


Fig. 3: Perception on Inter-agency Collaboration in Security Response.

Research Question 3: How do residents perceive the roles and performance of these security agencies?

The views of participants regarding the public perception of security agencies' roles and performance are presented below:

NCD4 & NCD5 maintains that:

"The Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) has been actively engaged in efforts to reduce crime across Kwara State. With offices established in all 16 local government areas, the Corps maintains a strong presence within local communities. On average, the NSCDC receives nearly 1,000 cases daily across the state, ranging from civil disputes to more serious criminal offences."

NM1 & NM5 asserts that:

"Observations from field operations indicate that many civilians perceive the military as a last resort, typically deployed when situations escalate beyond the capacity of the Police or the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC). The deployment of military personnel often contributes to stabilising volatile environments, particularly during incidents such as herder-farmer clashes, cult-related violence, and post-election unrest."

NCD1 stated that:

"Residents, particularly in rural communities where the presence of other security agencies is limited, often express appreciation for the efforts of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC). The agency's Peace and Conflict Resolution Unit has been instrumental in mediating local disputes, which has contributed to building public trust."

According to NM2 & NM4

"Members of the public sometimes express fear toward the military, largely due to the nature of its operations, rules of engagement, and the use of heavy weaponry. This perception is particularly common when compared to other security agencies with less visible force presence. However, the military maintains strict discipline and professionalism during deployments, especially in joint operations. Efforts are also being made to strengthen civil-military relations to reduce fear and enhance public cooperation."

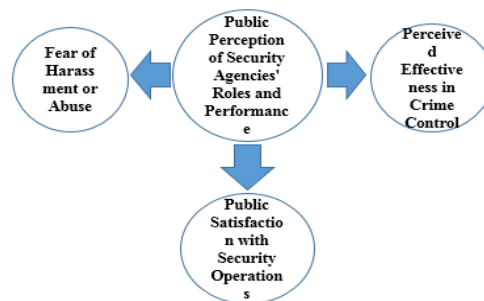


Fig. 4: Perception on Public Perception of Security Agencies' Roles and Performance.

Research Question 4: What are the main challenges affecting the effectiveness of security responses in Kwara State?

Participants' views on the challenges affecting the effectiveness of security responses are outlined below:

NP4 maintains that:

"Manpower shortages place immense pressure on existing officers and limit their capacity to respond effectively to emergencies or provide adequate protection for the country's vital assets. The Inspector General of Police previously stated that the Nigeria Police Force requires an additional 190,000 personnel to meet the United Nations' recommended police-to-population ratio."

NCD1 & NP5 argued that:

"The use of modern technologies, such as surveillance cameras, centralised crime databases, and artificial intelligence tools like facial recognition or predictive analytics is minimal or entirely absent. These technological gaps limit operational efficiency and delay response times in addressing criminal activity."

NM5 & NCD5 remarked that:

"The absence of clear demarcations between legal and illegal border crossings further exacerbates the problem of porous borders, enabling the unrestricted movement of people and goods. This porosity facilitates irregular migration and trans-border crimes, including the smuggling of small arms and light weapons, human trafficking, drug trafficking, and

terrorism. The situation is further compounded by limited surveillance technology, which hampers the ability of security agencies to detect and respond effectively to cross-border activities.”

NM1 emphasized that:

“Porous border facilitate the smuggling of small arms and light weapons into Nigeria, which then fall into the hands of non-state actors like terrorism, bandits and criminal gangs. These weapons exacerbated existing conflicts and contribute to a general climate of violence.”

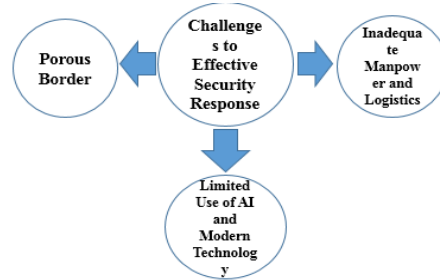


Fig 5: Perception on Challenges Associated with Effective Security Response.

Quantitative Approach: The table indicates that a majority of participants agree that security agencies are effective in responding to emergencies, while a smaller proportion disagree or strongly disagree. It also reflects a range of perceptions regarding crime prevention and control, visibility and patrol presence, and public safety outcomes. A large number of participants expressed agree or strongly agree in these areas, although a notable minority indicated disagree or strongly disagree.

Table 3: Perceptions on Security Response Effectiveness in Kwara State.

S/N	Item	N	SD	D	A	SA	Remark
1	Responsiveness to Emergencies	367	19	28	192	128	Agreed
2	Crime Prevention and Control	367	22	36	178	131	Agreed
3	Visibility and Patrol Presence	367	17	25	149	176	Agreed
4	Public Safety Outcomes	367	24	27	155	161	Agreed

Table 4: Respondents’ Perception on Inter-Agency Collaboration among Security Agencies.

S/N	Item	N	SD	D	A	SA	Remark
1	Information Sharing	367	16	30	189	132	Agreed
2	Intelligence Coordination	367	21	27	178	141	Agreed
3	Joint Operations and Task Forces	367	18	22	164	163	Agreed

The data reflects that a majority of respondents perceive information sharing among security agencies as effective, though a smaller segment holds a contrary view. Regarding intelligence coordination and joint operations, responses are somewhat mixed, a substantial portion of the respondents express agree or strongly agree with their effectiveness, while a notable minority remain skeptical, indicating disagree or strongly disagree. In all, while the prevailing sentiment is positive, there is clear evidence of divergent opinions within the group.

Table 5: Perceptions on how residents view the roles and performance of security agencies.

S/N	Item	N	SD	D	A	SA	Remark
1	Perceived Effectiveness in Crime Control	367	20	31	185	131	Agreed
2	Public Satisfaction with Security Operations	367	26	29	177	135	Agreed
3	Fear of Harassment or Abuse	367	23	38	169	137	Agreed

The table shows that a majority of participants agree that security agencies are effective in crime control, while a smaller number disagree or strongly disagree with this statement. Additionally, the table reflects a range of perceptions regarding public satisfaction with security operations and fear of harassment or abuse, with a considerable number of participants expressing agree or strongly agree, though a notable minority expressed disagree or strongly disagree.

Table 6: Perceptions on Challenges to Effective Security Response in Kwara State.

S/N	Item	N	SD	D	A	SA	Remark
1	Inadequate Manpower and Logistics	367	18	26	189	134	Agreed
2	Limited Use of AI and Modern Technology	367	21	33	182	131	Agreed
3	Porous Border	367	16	30	176	145	Agreed

The table shows that a majority of participants agree that inadequate manpower and logistics present a major challenge to effective security operations, while a smaller proportion disagree or strongly disagree. It also reflects varied perceptions regarding the limited use of artificial intelligence and modern technology, as well as the issue of porous borders. A considerable number of participants expressed agree or strongly agree on these issues, although a notable minority expressed disagree or strongly disagree.

Discussion: Survey findings revealed that, out of 367 respondents, 320 (87.2%) indicated that security agencies are effective in responding to emergencies, with only 47 respondents (12.8%) expressing disagreement. Support for the agencies' efforts in crime prevention and control was also high, as reflected by 309 respondents (84.2%) affirming this role. Additionally, 325 respondents (88.5%) acknowledged the agencies' visibility through regular patrols. Collectively, these findings suggest that the Police, NSCDC, and Military are broadly regarded as reliable actors in maintaining public safety and managing crime, particularly within urban environments. These quantitative results are strongly supported by the interview data. For instance, NM1 and NM4 emphasized that the Nigerian Army plays a vital role in emergency responsiveness, stepping in when situations escalate beyond the capacity of other agencies. They cited the deployment of the 22 Armoured Brigade to Patigi, which successfully dismantled a kidnappers' enclave. This illustrates why residents perceive the military as effective in handling high-level security threats. Similarly, NP2 and NP5 described the adoption of community policing strategies, targeted raids in hotspots, and intelligence-driven patrols, which they believe have contributed to reducing cult-related activities in Ilorin.

Their testimonies reinforce the survey finding that the Police are effective in crime prevention and control. In addition, NCD3 and NP4 reported that routine foot and motorized patrols by NSCDC and Police personnel strengthen visibility and public confidence. NCD1 further explained that collaboration among the agencies has improved rapid response capacity and crisis management in local communities. These qualitative insights directly align with the 88.5% of survey respondents who affirmed the visibility and patrol presence of security agencies. Taken together, the convergence of survey data and interview evidence shows that the Nigerian Police, NSCDC, and Military are not only perceived as effective by the public but also demonstrate practical measures such as patrol visibility, community policing, and rapid military interventions that justify these perceptions. When it comes to collaboration, a substantial majority of respondents 87.5% believe that security agencies share information effectively. Nearly as many (87%) acknowledge the presence of intelligence coordination, and an even higher proportion (89.1%) recognize the effectiveness of joint operations. These findings indicate that local residents generally view inter-agency cooperation as a meaningful contributor to public safety. The interview data provides strong support for these survey results. NM2 and NP3 explained that collaboration among the military, police, and NSCDC has been central to improving crisis management in Kwara State, citing instances where intelligence shared by the Police enabled the military to conduct successful raids on cult groups. Similarly, NM5 and NCD2 highlighted joint initiatives such as Operation Harmony and Exercise Apejopo Idi, where agencies pooled resources and conducted coordinated patrols. They stressed that such collaborations were instrumental in combating armed robbery, kidnapping, and politically motivated violence, directly reflecting the high percentage of survey respondents who recognized the effectiveness of joint operations. At the same time, some limitations emerged from the qualitative accounts. While NCD1 acknowledged the positive impact of inter-agency patrols in building community trust, several officers admitted that information sharing often occurs informally and reactively rather than through institutionalized frameworks. This nuance contrasts with the survey perception of strong collaboration and suggests that, although agencies do cooperate, the absence of formal coordination mechanisms may undermine long-term consistency and sustainability. Taken together, the convergence of quantitative and qualitative findings shows that inter-agency collaboration is both valued by the public and practiced by security actors. However, the slight tension between public perceptions of effective coordination and officers' reports of informal, ad hoc arrangements indicates a need to institutionalize structured frameworks for information sharing and joint planning.

Public attitudes toward security agencies reveal a complex relationship between trust and perceived effectiveness. Out of 367 respondents, 316 (86%) agreed that these agencies are effective in crime control, and 312 (85%) expressed satisfaction with their performance. At the same time, however, 306 respondents (83%) admitted to fearing harassment or abuse from the very agencies they rely on for safety. This dual perception reflects both appreciation for the contribution of security actors and persistent concerns about professionalism and accountability. The interview data illustrates this tension. NCD4 and NCD5 pointed out that the NSCDC remains highly visible across Kwara State, receiving nearly 1,000 cases daily ranging from civil disputes to criminal offenses. Their testimonies confirm the survey finding that many residents acknowledge the Corps' role in maintaining safety and order. NCD1 further emphasized that the Peace and Conflict Resolution Unit has successfully mediated community disputes, which has built public trust evidence that supports the 85% of respondents who expressed satisfaction with agency performance.

On the other hand, NM1 and NM5 explained that communities often view the military as a “last resort,” particularly in crises such as farmer-herder clashes and cult-related violence. While their deployment reassures residents about swift intervention, NM2 and NM4 acknowledged that the presence of heavily armed personnel sometimes generates fear and reluctance to engage with security forces.

This perspective directly aligns with the 83% of survey respondents who admitted fearing harassment or abuse, despite recognizing the agencies’ effectiveness. The integration of these findings highlights a paradox: residents appreciate the discipline and rapid interventions of security agencies, yet their trust is fragile and easily undermined by perceptions of intimidation or excessive force. This duality underscores the importance of strengthening civil-security relations through human rights training, community engagement, and accountability mechanisms. The challenges undermining effective security response are, frankly, quite pronounced. Quantitative and qualitative data both underscore the same issues: a striking 88% of respondents (323 individuals) cited insufficient personnel and logistical resources as major obstacles. Limited adoption of artificial intelligence and surveillance technologies was another concern, with 313 respondents (85.3%) highlighting it as a problem surprising, given the current era. Porous borders also came up repeatedly; 321 respondents (87.5%) identified them as a serious vulnerability. These findings point to systemic weaknesses that cut across all major security agencies. The interviews strongly corroborate these survey results. NP4 maintained that manpower shortages overstretch existing officers and undermine emergency responsiveness, confirming the majority view among respondents. NCD1 and NP5 further stressed that technological support, such as surveillance cameras, centralised crime databases, and AI-driven tools, is minimal or entirely absent, aligning directly with the 85.3% who agreed that limited use of technology weakens security operations. Similarly, NM5 and NCD5 drew attention to porous borders, noting that the absence of clear demarcations between legal and illegal entry points facilitates the smuggling of arms, drugs, and other contraband. NM1 went further, stressing that such weakly monitored borders empower non-state actors including terrorists, bandits, and armed gangs by providing easy access to small arms and light weapons. These accounts reinforce the 87.5% of survey participants who considered porous borders a major security challenge. Taken together, both sets of data present a consistent picture: inadequate manpower, outdated logistics, limited technology, and porous borders collectively undermine the capacity of the security agencies. The triangulation of survey evidence with officers’ testimonies strengthens the validity of these findings, showing that the challenges are not just statistical abstractions but daily operational realities faced by frontline personnel.

The findings suggest that security agencies in Kwara State are widely perceived as competent in crime prevention, emergency response, and inter-agency cooperation. Visible patrols, community policing efforts, NSCDC’s mediation activities, and military interventions contribute significantly to public safety. However, both survey and interview data reveal persistent challenges, including fears of harassment, manpower shortages, inadequate logistics, and porous borders. From a Systems Theory perspective, these issues represent inefficiencies within critical subsystems such as insufficient police manpower, limited NSCDC technological capacity, and weak military border surveillance that collectively weaken the overall security architecture. As a result, a failure in one subsystem affects the effectiveness of others. The evidence highlights the need for coordinated reforms that integrate resources, technology, and community engagement to strengthen the security system in Kwara State.

Conclusion: This study examined the effectiveness of the Nigerian Police Force, the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), and the Nigerian Military in addressing security challenges in Kwara State through both civilian surveys and interviews with security personnel. The findings show that more than four out of five residents consider these agencies effective in emergency response, crime prevention, and maintaining patrol visibility. Joint initiatives such as Operation Harmony were identified as significant collaborative efforts that reduced violent crimes in areas like Offa, demonstrating the value of inter-agency coordination. The analysis further revealed that public trust is enhanced when patrols are visible and interventions are timely, yet nearly 83% of respondents also expressed fear of harassment or abuse, highlighting concerns about professionalism and human rights practices. Another key finding is that systemic barriers persist across agencies. Inadequate manpower was identified by 88% of respondents as a major obstacle, while 85% pointed to the limited use of technology and 87% stressed the challenge of porous borders that enable smuggling and cross-border banditry. These results indicate that although the security agencies play an important role in stabilising communities, their effectiveness is constrained by resource limitations, weak technological integration, and insufficient border surveillance. The study therefore concludes that strengthening security in Kwara State requires institutionalising inter-agency collaboration, modernising security infrastructure, improving logistics and manpower, and rebuilding public trust through ethical, community-focused policing.

Recommendation: Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance the effectiveness of security responses in Kwara State:

1. The government should prioritise the recruitment of more security personnel across all agencies and provide adequate operational equipment such as patrol vehicles, communication tools, protective gear, and fuel supply to enhance mobility and rapid response.
2. There is a need for institutionalised coordination frameworks among the Police, NSCDC, and Military to facilitate consistent intelligence sharing, joint planning, and integrated task forces beyond crisis periods.
3. Security agencies should be equipped with digital surveillance systems, artificial intelligence tools, and data-driven crime detection platforms to improve intelligence gathering, monitoring, and proactive threat responses.

4. Enhanced security infrastructure should be deployed along the Kwara–Benin Republic border, including the use of drones, patrol outposts, and joint border monitoring teams to prevent smuggling, illegal migration, and cross-border crimes.
5. Agencies should invest in community policing, public sensitisation, and human rights training for officers to foster trust, encourage civilian cooperation, and reduce incidents of abuse or intimidation.

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