

Decentralized Security and Crime Control: Assessing the Effectiveness of Forest Guards in Kwara State, Nigeria

Akeem Ayanda ARABA, PhD*
Tawakalitu Bola YUSUF, PhD***

Kafayat Toyin ARABA, PhD**
Taoheed Opeyemi MUHAMMED****

*Department of Politics & Governance, Faculty of Management and Social Sciences,
Kwara State University, Malete, Nigeria
e-mail: araba.akeem@kwasu.edu.ng

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1517-1238>

**Department of Sociology, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences,
Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin, Kwara State
e-mail: arabatoyinkafayat@gmail.com

***Department of Social Justice and Security Studies, Faculty of Management
and Social Sciences, Kwara State University, Malete, Nigeria
e-mail: tawakalitu.yusuf@kwasu.edu.ng

****Department of Politics & Governance, Faculty of Management and Social Sciences,
Kwara State University, Malete, Nigeria
e-mail: muhammedtaoheed@gmail.com

Abstract

The persistence of insecurity and criminal activity in Nigeria has intensified debates over the limits of centralized policing and the need for decentralized, community-based security arrangements. In Kwara State, the establishment of Forest Guards represents a subnational response to forest-based crimes such as kidnapping, banditry, illegal logging, and illegal mining, which thrive in remote and weakly governed terrains. This study assesses the effectiveness of Forest Guards in enhancing crime control and local security governance in Ifelodun, Asa, and Kaiama LGAs. Anchored in decentralized security governance and routine activity theory, the study adopts a mixed-methods design, combining survey data from 362 respondents across key stakeholder groups with secondary sources. Findings reveal that Forest Guards play important roles in patrol, surveillance, intelligence gathering, and community engagement. Respondents report moderate reductions in forest-based crimes through deterrence and improved monitoring. However, effectiveness is constrained by logistical, institutional, and legal challenges, including inadequate equipment, poor welfare, and unclear statutory mandates. The study concludes that strengthening legal frameworks, coordination, and funding is essential for sustainable impact.

Keywords:

Decentralized Security; Crime Control; Forest Guards; Local Governance; Kwara State; Nigeria.

Article info

Received: 16 November 2025; Revised: 22 December 2025; Accepted: 27 May 2026; Available online: 30 June 2026

Citation: Araba, A.A., T.B. Yusuf, K.T. Araba, and T.O. Muhammed. 2026. "Decentralized Security and Crime Control: Assessing the Effectiveness of Forest Guards in Kwara State, Nigeria." *Bulletin of "Carol I" National Defence University*, 15(2): 161-184. <https://doi.org/10.53477/2284-9378-26-23>



© „Carol I” National Defence University Publishing House

This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY-NC-SA)

Introduction

Across the globe, security decentralization has emerged as a response to the limits of centralized policing. Rising insecurity and the growing complexity of crime have strained state security institutions, especially in the Global South, where challenges include limited resources, wide territorial coverage, weak intelligence, and poor responsiveness to local threats. This has led to the delegation of security functions to subnational and community actors such as vigilante groups, auxiliary forces, and community policing initiatives that rely on local knowledge and proximity for rapid response (Baker 2010; Abrahamsen and Williams 2011). While these arrangements can improve crime control, they also raise concerns about coordination, accountability, and effectiveness.

A critical dimension of this global shift is the growing importance of ungoverned and forested spaces as hubs of criminal activity. Across regions such as Latin America, Southeast Asia, and Africa, forests have become strategic operational environments for kidnapping syndicates, illegal logging networks, wildlife traffickers, and armed insurgent groups. These areas often combine difficult terrain with weak state presence and limited surveillance capacity, creating ideal conditions for illicit activities (UNODC 2021). Consequently, decentralized security actors such as forest guards have gained prominence as mechanisms for territorial control and localized crime management. Their emergence reflects an adaptive security process in which states attempt to extend authority into hard-to-reach areas through locally embedded structures.

In Nigeria, the dynamics of insecurity have intensified this shift toward decentralized security. Over the past two decades, the country has experienced a steady escalation of violent crime and organized criminality, including terrorism, banditry, kidnapping for ransom, armed robbery, farmer-herder conflicts, and environmental crimes such as illegal logging and wildlife trafficking. These challenges have not only undermined public safety but have also weakened state authority, disrupted economic activities, and eroded public trust in the government's capacity to provide security as a fundamental public good (Akinwale and Aderinto 2011; Okoli and Ugwu 2019). Despite reliance on a centralized policing system anchored by the Nigeria Police Force (NPF), insecurity continues to spread across both urban and rural areas, revealing deep structural deficiencies within the national security architecture.

Nigeria's centralized policing system, inherited from colonial administration, places primary responsibility for internal security on federal authorities. While intended to ensure uniformity and cohesion, it has become increasingly ineffective in addressing diverse local security challenges. Studies report persistent problems such as manpower shortages, inadequate funding, weak intelligence, corruption, poor community relations, and slow response times, especially in remote areas (Ajibade et al. 2025; Hills 2012). These gaps have led states and communities to adopt decentralized security approaches to complement formal policing.

This shift has produced various local security actors, including state-backed outfits, vigilante groups, and auxiliary forces. Examples include the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) in the North-East, the Amotekun Corps in the South-West, neighborhood watch groups, and emerging forest guard systems in several states. These initiatives reflect a move toward community-based security, where local actors support surveillance, intelligence gathering, and crime prevention ([Abrahamsen and Williams 2011](#); [Baker 2010](#)). However, their growth has raised concerns about legal status, effectiveness, accountability, and human rights.

One of the most pressing security challenges in Nigeria is the increasing use of forested and ungoverned spaces as bases for criminal operations. Forest reserves and borderland areas have become critical sites for kidnapping camps, bandit hideouts, arms trafficking routes, and illegal resource extraction activities such as logging and charcoal production ([Okoli and Okpaleke 2014](#)). These forest-based crimes present multidimensional threats that combine conventional security risks with environmental degradation and economic losses. Moreover, the rugged and expansive nature of forest terrains makes them difficult to police using conventional methods, thereby necessitating alternative approaches rooted in localized surveillance and territorial control ([Rufai 2017](#)).

In North-Central Nigeria, particularly in Kwara State, these dynamics have become more pronounced. The state serves as a key transit corridor linking northern and southern Nigeria and shares boundaries with several states. Its extensive forest reserves have recently been linked to kidnapping, armed robbery, and other cross-border criminal activities, raising public concern and exposing the limits of relying solely on federal security agencies for forest protection. In response, the Kwara State Government introduced the Forest Guards initiative as a decentralized security strategy to monitor forests, prevent criminal infiltration, and support formal security agencies.

The establishment of Forest Guards represents a decentralization of security based on local knowledge and proximity. Recruited mainly from host communities, they patrol forest areas, gather intelligence, prevent illegal activities such as logging and poaching, and collaborate with law enforcement agencies. The initiative reflects a broader effort by subnational governments to address security gaps left by overstretched federal institutions. However, there is still limited empirical evidence on their effectiveness, capacity, and overall contribution to crime control. Existing literature on decentralized security in Nigeria has predominantly focused on high-profile actors such as vigilante groups and regional security outfits, with relatively little attention given to forest guards as specialized security actors. Similarly, studies on forest-based crimes often emphasize environmental and conservation perspectives while neglecting their security implications ([Osemeobo 2005](#); [Olaleru and Egonmwan 2014](#)). This creates a significant gap in understanding how forest guards operate within Nigeria's evolving security architecture and whether they meaningfully contribute to enhancing public safety.

The problem addressed in this study, therefore, centers on the limited scholarly and policy understanding of the effectiveness of forest guards as decentralized security actors in Nigeria, with specific reference to Kwara State. While recent developments, including the federal deployment of over 7,000 trained forest guards across frontline states and the recruitment of additional personnel in Kwara, indicate growing institutional commitment, critical questions remain regarding their legal mandate, training, coordination with formal security agencies, and overall impact on crime reduction. Against this backdrop, this study examines the effectiveness of Forest Guards in improving crime control and security governance in Kwara State. It focuses on their operational roles, contributions to reducing forest-based crimes, challenges affecting their performance, and relationships with formal security agencies and local communities. The study is guided by three research questions on roles, impact, and challenges. The study is significant to both academic and policy discourse. It contributes to existing literature by highlighting the role of decentralized security and providing insights into grassroots security practices. It also offers recommendations for strengthening decentralized security frameworks, improving accountability, and enhancing crime control strategies in Nigeria's forested and rural areas.

Justification for the case study

This study focuses on Kwara State for three analytically significant reasons: First, Kwara occupies a strategic geo-security position as a transit corridor between northern and southern Nigeria, making it vulnerable to cross-regional criminal flows. Second, the state has experienced a recent escalation in forest-based crimes, particularly in Ifelodun, Kaiama, and Asa LGAs, where kidnapping and banditry have been linked to forest reserves. Third, Kwara represents a policy-relevant case of active decentralization, having institutionalized the Forest Guards initiative with over 3,300 personnel (700 initial + 2,600 additional recruits). Thus, Kwara State is selected not as a random case but as a critical case study where decentralized forest security is both operationalized and evolving, making it ideal for empirical assessment.

Literature Review: Decentralized Security and Crime Control

The decentralization of security provides a compelling framework for understanding contemporary transformations in crime control, particularly in low-capacity, post-colonial states such as Nigeria. Rather than viewing security as the exclusive responsibility of the state, decentralization refers to the process through which security functions such as surveillance, intelligence gathering, and enforcement are redistributed across multiple actors at national, subnational, and community levels. In contexts where state institutions face fiscal, logistical, and institutional limitations, this process becomes not merely an option but a practical necessity. In Nigeria, the persistence of complex and localized security threats has exposed the limitations of centralized policing, thereby accelerating the shift toward decentralized and hybrid security arrangements (Suleiman and Maiangwa 2017).

This shift aligns with plural policing, which challenges the idea of the state as the sole provider of security. Instead, security is increasingly delivered through partnerships between state and non-state actors within broader policing networks (Mazerolle et al. 2024). Scholars such as Cooper-Knock et al. (2024) describe this as “security assemblages,” where the state acts as a coordinating hub among community groups, private security providers, and auxiliary forces. This is especially evident in developing countries, where complex threats and limited state capacity require shared responsibility in crime control. From a sociological perspective, collective efficacy explains the value of decentralized security, emphasizing community cohesion and participation in maintaining order. Local actors have better contextual knowledge, terrain familiarity, and social networks that improve detection and response, particularly in rural and forest areas where formal policing is weak. However, decentralization also carries risks such as vigilantism, exclusion, and abuse if not properly regulated (Okeke-Ogbuafor, Gray, and Stead 2017).

Recent studies argue that while state-backed vigilante groups have strong local intelligence and trust, they often lack the capacity to confront armed criminal networks. This makes stronger collaboration between federal and state governments essential for training, equipping, and regulating decentralized actors under standardized and human rights-based frameworks (Araba and Muhammed 2026). A key concern is accountability, as unclear mandates in decentralized systems create “accountability gaps” where responsibility for misconduct becomes difficult to assign. Scholars therefore stress the need for transparency and legal oversight (Lister and Jones 2015).

The literature increasingly supports a hybrid security model where the state remains a regulator and coordinator rather than the sole provider of security. This is particularly relevant in post-colonial states like Nigeria, where centralized policing coexists with demands for localized security responses (Cooper-Knock, Berg, and Diphhoorn 2024).

In Nigeria, decentralization is closely linked to the problem of “ungoverned spaces,” especially forests used by bandits, kidnappers, and illegal resource actors (Okoli and Okpaleke 2014). Forest guards are seen as useful due to their local knowledge and community embeddedness, making them effective for intelligence gathering and rapid response. However, they face major constraints, including poor funding, weak training, inadequate equipment, and a lack of clear legal backing (Crawford 2006). Coordination challenges with agencies like the Nigeria Police Force and the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps also limit effectiveness due to overlapping mandates and weak communication (Cooper-Knock, Berg, and Diphhoorn 2024). Overall, decentralization offers an adaptive response to state capacity limits, and forest guards play a growing role in localized security in areas like Kwara State. However, their effectiveness depends on strong legal frameworks, adequate resources, professional training, and effective inter-agency coordination; without these, decentralization risks becoming fragmented and ineffective.

Empirical Review of Related Studies

Beyond conceptual debates, empirical studies have increasingly examined decentralized and community-based security arrangements in Nigeria. Ojizele (2025), in the *Political and Security Studies Scholarly Journal*, investigated the motivations for establishing Amotekun in Southwestern Nigeria using a qualitative exploratory design grounded in situational crime prevention theory and 31 interviews with members in Ondo State. Findings showed that Amotekun emerged in response to perceived failures of Nigeria's centralized security system in tackling kidnapping, robbery, and farmer-herder conflicts. The study also noted ethnic exclusivity and Yoruba socio-political alignment, suggesting a dual role in security provision and regional identity formation. It concluded that Amotekun reflects both crime control needs and broader regional political dynamics.

Similarly, Akano (2024), in the *Global Scientific Journal*, assessed Amotekun's impact on crime reduction in Ibadan, Oyo State, using surveys and qualitative interviews with officials, community leaders, and residents in Akinyele and Ibadan North LGAs (351 questionnaires and 12 interviews). Findings indicated improved crime control through 24-hour patrols and faster response times, leading to public acceptance. However, challenges such as inadequate funding, limited personnel, and a lack of equipment were identified. The study concluded that Amotekun's sustainability depends on stronger government support and improved resources.

Onwuzuruigbo (2021), in *African Studies Review*, employed a qualitative case-study design supported by field interviews and conflict-event data analysis. The study examined "enclaves of banditry" in northern Nigeria, showing how forested spaces function as operational bases for armed groups and how local geography shapes insurgent survival strategies. Onuoha and Okolie-Osemene (2019), in the *Palgrave Handbook on Internal Security Management in Nigeria*, adopted a qualitative documentary and policy analysis approach, synthesizing secondary data, policy reports, and empirical case studies on kidnapping-for-ransom. The study traced the evolution of kidnapping networks and examined how forest environments structurally enable hostage-taking economies.

Agbibo (2020), in *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, examined the emergence of the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) in north-eastern Nigeria as a youth-led vigilante response to Boko Haram. Using a qualitative approach based on field observations and local accounts, the study showed that the CJTF developed from a collective duty to protect communities, with youths supporting military operations by identifying insurgents. It also found that participation cut across ethnic and religious lines, challenging identity-based explanations of vigilantism. The study concluded that the CJTF represents community-based counterinsurgency where civilians complement state security efforts.

Badiora (2019), in *Policing: An International Journal of Police Strategies & Management*, studied community perceptions of vigilantism in Lagos using survey data from 768 residents, with 386 valid responses from those with recent contact with vigilante groups. Findings showed that support for vigilantism was shaped less by perceived effectiveness and more by legitimacy, procedural justice, and communal values. Residents were more supportive when vigilante groups were seen as fair and respectful. The study concluded that legitimacy and fair treatment are key to sustaining community-based security groups.

These studies show that decentralized security groups in Nigeria contribute to crime reduction, but modestly. Their effectiveness is mainly limited by legal and logistical constraints, while legitimacy based on fairness and inclusion strongly influences success. They also highlight the need for place-based security in forest areas. This study extends the literature by empirically examining Forest Guards in north-central Nigeria using primary data.

Theoretical Frameworks

The effectiveness of Forest Guards is best understood through the lenses of Plural Policing and Collective Efficacy.

Plural Policing and Security Assemblages

Traditional security discourse, rooted in Weberian theory, posits that the state must maintain a monopoly on the legitimate use of force. However, recent scholarship by Bayley and Shearing (2001) suggests a move toward “multilateralization,” where security is co-produced by a network of state and non-state actors. In Kwara State, the Forest Guard initiative functions as a Security Assemblage, a fluid collaboration between the Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA), the Kwara State Government, and local community recruits. This hybrid model allows the state to “anchor” security while leveraging the specialized skills of localized units.

Routine Activity Theory and Capable Guardianship

According to Routine Activity Theory (Cohen and Felson 1979), crime occurs when a motivated offender and a suitable target converge in the absence of a “capable guardian”. Historically, Nigerian forests lacked this guardianship, leading to their exploitation by criminal networks. The deployment of 1,000 newly trained Forest Guards in Kwara State (2025) represents the institutionalization of guardianship. By maintaining a constant presence in “deep forest” zones, these guards disrupt the “routine” of criminal elements that previously operated with impunity due to the absence of state presence.

Methodology

The research employed a descriptive survey approach, utilizing data gathered from both primary (questionnaires and interviews) and secondary (textbooks, journals, government documents, newspapers, and internet sources) sources.

Research Design

This study adopts a descriptive survey design using a mixed-methods approach. According to John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell (2018) mixed methods combine quantitative and qualitative data to provide a broader and deeper understanding. The quantitative aspect uses a structured Likert-scale questionnaire to assess perceptions of security effectiveness, while the qualitative aspect relies on secondary sources such as official reports and publications for contextual support. This design is suitable for security studies in Nigeria, where crime statistics are often underreported, making stakeholder perceptions and documented evidence important.

Study Area

The study is situated in Kwara State, North-Central Nigeria. Kwara is strategically significant due to its vast forest reserves, including the Kainji Lake National Park (partially extending into the state) and several designated forest reserves in the Kwara South and North senatorial districts. These forests have recently become flashpoints for banditry and communal clashes, prompting the state government to deploy over 1,000 Forest Guards in 2025. The geographical diversity of the state, ranging from savannah to dense forest patches, provides a robust landscape for assessing how decentralized guards manage varied terrains.

Justification of the Study Population

The study population includes security actors and community members for methodological balance. Community members provide perceptions of safety and effectiveness, while Forest Guards, Police, and NSCDC offer operational perspectives. Traditional rulers add governance and legitimacy insights. However, using only community respondents would create perception bias, while multiple stakeholders are included to ensure balanced and triangulated findings.

Population of the Study

The study population comprises residents and security stakeholders from the forest-prone LGAs of Ifelodun, Asa, and Kaiama in Kwara State, selected due to their large forest reserves and recurring forest-related crimes such as kidnapping, banditry, illegal logging, and farmer-herder conflicts (Okoli and Okpaleke 2014; Akinwale and Aderinto 2011). Based on 2022 projected figures, the populations of Ifelodun (307,700), Asa (187,200), and Kaiama (186,200) give a combined population of 681,100 (City Population, 2022). However, the total study population was estimated at 752,000 persons.

The population includes forest guards, rural residents and farmers in forest-adjacent communities, officers of the Nigeria Police Force and Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps, as well as traditional rulers. Including both security personnel and community members ensured balanced and triangulated findings, as community members provided perception-based assessments, while security agencies and traditional rulers contributed operational and governance perspectives.

Sample Size Determination

The sample size for the study was determined using the Taro Yamane (1967) formula, which is appropriate for large populations:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where:

n = sample size

N = population size (752,000)

e = margin of error (0.05)

Substituting:

$$n = \frac{752,000}{1 + 752,000(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{752,000}{1 + 752,000(0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{752,000}{1 + 1,880}$$

$$n = \frac{752,000}{1,881}$$

$$n = 399.787, \quad n \approx 400$$

Therefore, the study adopts a sample size of 400 respondents, representing the selected LGAs at a 5% margin of error and 95% confidence level.

Sampling Technique

A multi-stage sampling technique was used to ensure representativeness across Kwara State's three senatorial districts (Kwara Central, North, and South). In the first stage, purposive sampling was used to select Local Government Areas such as Kaiama, Asa, and Ifelodun due to their high concentration of forest reserves and history of forest-related crimes. In the second stage, stratified random sampling divided respondents into four groups: Forest Guards, rural residents/farmers, formal security personnel, and traditional rulers. In the final stage, simple random sampling was used to select individual respondents from each group.

Sample Frame

Table 1 presents the proportionate allocation of the sample size across the selected LGAs and respondent categories. The distribution is based on population size, ensuring that

TABLE 1: Sample Frame Distribution Across Selected LGAs and Respondent Categories

LGA	Population	Total Sample	Residents/ Farmers	Forest Guards	Police/ NSCDC	Traditional Rulers
Ifelodun	307,700	181	127	27	18	9
Asa	187,200	110	77	17	11	5
Kaiama	186,200	109	76	16	11	6
Total	681,100	400	280	60	40	20

LGAs with larger populations, such as Ifelodun, receive a correspondingly larger share of the sample. Within each LGA, respondents are further distributed across four strata: rural residents/farmers, forest guards, Police/NSCDC officers, and traditional rulers, using proportional allocation. This approach ensures representativeness, minimizes sampling bias, and enhances the validity of findings by capturing perspectives from both community members and security stakeholders.

Research Instrumentation

The study employs the forest security effectiveness questionnaire (FSEQ) as the primary instrument. The FSEQ is a structured questionnaire divided into four sections aligned with the research objectives: Roles, Impact, Challenges, and Interactions. Items are measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “Strongly Agree” to “Strongly Disagree”. In addition to the questionnaire, the study utilizes secondary data sources, including official reports, publications, and other documented materials, to provide context and support the analysis of the survey results. These sources help to validate findings and offer insights into legal frameworks, inter-agency collaboration, and operational challenges in forest security.

Validity and Reliability

To ensure content validity, the research instruments were reviewed by experts in Criminology and Security Studies at Kwara State University and Al-Hikmah University. For reliability, a pilot study was conducted in a neighboring state (e.g., Ekiti or Osun), and the data were analyzed using Cronbach’s Alpha, with a coefficient of 0.70 or higher considered acceptable for the main study.

Reliability Results

A pilot test was conducted with 30 respondents in Osun State (Ola-Oluwa LGA), a neighbouring state with similar forest-adjacent rural settlements, before the main fieldwork. Item analysis was performed on each construct of the Forest Security Effectiveness Questionnaire (FSEQ), and minor revisions were made to three items based on pilot feedback. For the main study (N = 362), Cronbach’s alpha coefficients were computed using SPSS v28.0. As shown in Table 2, all constructs and the overall scale exceeded the 0.70 threshold, indicating acceptable to excellent internal consistency.

TABLE 2. Reliability Analysis: Cronbach’s Alpha by Construct (N = 362)

Construct	No. of items	Cronbach’s α	Interpretation
Roles of Forest Guards	9	0.756	Acceptable
Impact on Crime Reduction	8	0.848	Good
Institutional, Operational & Legal Challenges	10	0.881	Good

Source: Authors’ computation from the survey data (SPSS v28.0).

The Cronbach's alpha coefficients in Table 2 indicate that all three constructs exceed the acceptable 0.70 threshold (Roles $\alpha = 0.756$; Impact $\alpha = 0.848$; Challenges $\alpha = 0.881$), while the overall 27-item scale shows excellent reliability ($\alpha = 0.939$). The Roles scale demonstrates acceptable reliability, whereas the Impact and Challenges scales show good reliability. The slightly lower Roles coefficient is linked to item R9 (training adequacy), which was retained for theoretical completeness. Overall, the results support the use of summative mean scores for further analysis.

Method of Data Collection

Data collection was conducted over six weeks. Due to the remote nature of the forest communities, Field Research Assistants were trained to administer questionnaires in local languages (Yoruba, Hausa, and Baruba), enabling non-literate respondents to participate through guided interviews. Ethical considerations, including informed consent and respondent anonymity, were strictly maintained because of the sensitive nature of the security-related discussions.

Method of Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS version 28.0. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, and mean scores, were used to summarize respondent demographics and Likert-scale responses, with a 3.0 mean score serving as the threshold for agreement. Secondary data from reports and official statistics were reviewed and integrated to support and validate the survey findings.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Kwara State University Postgraduate Research Ethics Committee, the Kwara State Ministry of Tertiary Education, and relevant Institutional Review Boards before fieldwork commenced. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, while confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the study. Participants were protected from harm, and their privacy and dignity were respected at all stages. The dataset was anonymized before being deposited in the Open Science Framework (OSF).

Results

Out of the 400 questionnaires administered, 362 were properly completed and returned, representing a response rate of 90.5%. The remaining 38 questionnaires (9.5%) were either not returned or were excluded due to incomplete or invalid responses.

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Demographic data show that, out of the 362 respondents, rural residents and farmers make up the largest share of respondents (50.3%), followed by Forest Guards (23.2%), formal security personnel (18.2%), and traditional rulers (8.3%), ensuring a balance of perception, operational, institutional, and governance perspectives. Respondents

are drawn from Ifelodun (40.9%), Asa (31.2%), and Kaiama (27.9%), reflecting their relative population distribution. The age profile is mainly concentrated in the 30-49 years group (63.5%), while 60.0% of respondents have at least secondary education. In addition, 61.3% have lived in their LGAs for over ten years, indicating strong familiarity with local forest and security dynamics. Overall, the sample provides informed and contextually grounded responses.

Research Objectives 1: *What roles do Forest Guards play in crime control and security provision in Kwara State?*

TABLE 3.1.: Perception of the Roles of Forest Guards in Kwara State (N = 362)

Code	Item Statement	SA n(%)	A n(%)	N n(%)	D n(%)	SD n(%)	Mean (SD)
R1	Forest Guards provide critical intelligence on suspicious movements in forest areas	113 (31.2)	182 (50.3)	54 (14.9)	13 (3.6)	0 (0.0)	4.09 (0.77)
R2	Forest Guards are effective in navigating difficult forest terrains	132 (36.5)	163 (45.0)	47 (13.0)	18 (5.0)	2 (0.6)	4.12 (0.85)
R3	Regular patrols by Forest Guards reduce kidnappers' and bandits' hideouts	103 (28.5)	182 (50.3)	55 (15.2)	18 (5.0)	4 (1.1)	4.00 (0.86)
R4	Regular patrols discourage illegal mining activities in forest reserves	86 (23.8)	199 (55.0)	58 (16.0)	18 (5.0)	1 (0.3)	3.97 (0.79)
R5	Forest Guards strengthen security collaboration, particularly with the NSCDC	106 (29.3)	182 (50.3)	54 (14.9)	19 (5.2)	1 (0.3)	4.03 (0.82)
R6	Illegal logging and deforestation have reduced due to enforcement activities	85 (23.5)	199 (55.0)	58 (16.0)	19 (5.2)	1 (0.3)	3.96 (0.79)
R7	Recruiting local indigenes as Forest Guards improves community trust	109 (30.1)	182 (50.3)	55 (15.2)	16 (4.4)	0 (0.0)	4.06 (0.79)
R8	Communities feel safer engaging in forest-related activities	103 (28.5)	182 (50.3)	55 (15.2)	18 (5.0)	4 (1.1)	4.00 (0.86)
R9	Forest Guards have sufficient training to confront armed criminals in forests	32 (8.8)	110 (30.4)	126 (34.8)	65 (18.0)	29 (8.0)	3.14 (1.07)
Grand Mean							3.93

Source: Field Survey (2026). Note: SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, N = Neutral, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree. Decision rule: mean \geq 3.00 indicates agreement.

Table 3.1 demonstrates a broad consensus that Forest Guards make a meaningful contribution across the operational functions assessed. Eight of the nine items return means above 3.95, with respondents most strongly affirming the Guards' navigational advantage in difficult forest terrain (R2, M = 4.12, SD = 0.85), the value of the intelligence they generate (R1, M = 4.09, SD = 0.77), and the legitimacy that flows from local recruitment (R7, M = 4.06, SD = 0.79). The grand mean of 3.93 sits comfortably above the 3.00 decision threshold, indicating that the role profile of Forest Guards is widely endorsed by all four stakeholder categories. The single departure from this pattern is item R9 (training adequacy, M = 3.14, SD = 1.07), where the distribution shifts toward neutrality and disagreement, with roughly

26% of respondents disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. The contrast between the affirmation of what Forest Guards do and the skepticism about whether they are adequately trained to do it against armed adversaries provides the first empirical signal in the dataset that operational ambition is outrunning institutional capacity, a tension developed further in the analysis of Table 3.3.

Research Objectives 2: *To what extent have Forest Guards contributed to reducing forest-based crimes such as kidnapping, banditry, and illegal logging?*

TABLE 3.2.: Perception of the Roles of Forest Guards in Kwara State (N = 362)

Code	Item Statement	SA n(%)	A n(%)	N n(%)	D n(%)	SD n(%)	Mean (SD)
I1	Forest Guards enhance vigilance and support arrests of suspected criminals	84 (23.2)	199 (55.0)	58 (16.0)	19 (5.2)	2 (0.6)	3.95 (0.81)
I2	Increased patrol activity discourages criminals from using forests as safe havens	88 (24.3)	199 (55.0)	58 (16.0)	17 (4.7)	0 (0.0)	3.99 (0.77)
I3	There is a noticeable decline in kidnapping incidents linked to forest zones	85 (23.5)	199 (55.0)	58 (16.0)	19 (5.2)	1 (0.3)	3.96 (0.79)
I4	Criminals find it more difficult to use forests as operational bases	87 (24.0)	199 (55.0)	58 (16.0)	18 (5.0)	0 (0.0)	3.98 (0.78)
I5	Forest Guards have helped dismantle temporary bandit camps in forest reserves	71 (19.6)	200 (55.2)	72 (19.9)	18 (5.0)	1 (0.3)	3.89 (0.78)
I6	Improved security presence has reduced farmer displacement in affected communities	79 (21.8)	200 (55.2)	58 (16.0)	18 (5.0)	7 (1.9)	3.90 (0.86)
I7	Illegal timber transportation through forest routes has been reduced	69 (19.1)	200 (55.2)	72 (19.9)	19 (5.2)	2 (0.6)	3.87 (0.80)
I8	Monitoring of forest entry and exit points has improved	64 (17.7)	201 (55.5)	72 (19.9)	18 (5.0)	7 (1.9)	3.82 (0.85)
Grand Mean							3.92

Source: Field Survey (2026). Note: SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, N = Neutral, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree. Decision rule: mean \geq 3.00 indicates agreement.

Table 3.2 shows that respondents perceive a moderate but uniformly positive impact of Forest Guards on the major categories of forest-based crime. All eight items fall within the narrow band 3.82-3.99, producing a grand mean of 3.92. The most strongly endorsed effects relate to deterrence (I2, M = 3.99, SD = 0.77) and the operational disruption of criminal sanctuaries (I4, M = 3.98, SD = 0.78), while perceptions of upstream monitoring at entry and exit points (I8, M = 3.82, SD = 0.85) and downstream interdiction of illegal timber transportation (I7, M = 3.87, SD = 0.80) trail slightly. The salient feature of this distribution is its compression: standard deviations cluster tightly around 0.80, and no item drops below the 3.80 mark. This suggests a settled and broadly shared view that the Forest Guard deployment is delivering measurable, if incremental, reductions in forest-based crime rather than transformative ones. The pattern is consistent with the impact

profile typical of newly deployed decentralized security forces operating below their intended capacity and points to the importance of sustained institutional investment if these early gains are to be consolidated.

Research Objectives 3: *What institutional, operational, and legal challenges affect the effectiveness of Forest Guards in Kwara State?*

TABLE 3.3.: Perception of the Roles of Forest Guards in Kwara State (N = 362)

Code	Item Statement	SA n(%)	A n(%)	N n(%)	D n(%)	SD n(%)	Mean (SD)
C1	Forest Guards lack modern communication tools (radios, GPS, surveillance devices)	164 (45.3)	138 (38.1)	37 (10.2)	18 (5.0)	5 (1.4)	4.21 (0.91)
C2	Forest Guards lack adequate patrol logistics (vehicles, motorcycles, fuel)	166 (45.9)	138 (38.1)	36 (9.9)	19 (5.2)	3 (0.8)	4.23 (0.89)
C3	Rivalry and institutional competition hinder cooperation with formal security agencies	86 (23.8)	199 (55.0)	58 (16.0)	18 (5.0)	1 (0.3)	3.97 (0.79)
C4	There is insufficient specialized training in human rights and intelligence-led policing	133 (36.7)	163 (45.0)	47 (13.0)	18 (5.0)	1 (0.3)	4.13 (0.84)
C5	Forest Guards are less equipped than the criminal actors they confront	168 (46.4)	138 (38.1)	36 (9.9)	18 (5.0)	2 (0.6)	4.25 (0.87)
C6	Irregular payment of salaries and allowances undermines the motivation of Forest Guards	134 (37.0)	163 (45.0)	47 (13.0)	18 (5.0)	0 (0.0)	4.14 (0.83)
C7	There is no clear legal framework guiding Forest Guards' powers of arrest and prosecution	163 (45.0)	138 (38.1)	37 (10.2)	18 (5.0)	6 (1.7)	4.20 (0.93)
C8	Political interference and elite influence weaken the professional integrity of Forest Guards	110 (30.4)	182 (50.3)	55 (15.2)	15 (4.1)	0 (0.0)	4.07 (0.79)
C9	Political or elite interference may facilitate the release of arrested offenders	130 (35.9)	163 (45.0)	47 (13.0)	19 (5.2)	3 (0.8)	4.10 (0.88)
C10	Absence of permanent surveillance outposts restricts continuous presence in forest areas	140 (38.7)	163 (45.0)	47 (13.0)	12 (3.3)	0 (0.0)	4.19 (0.78)
Grand Mean							4.15

Source: Field Survey (2026). Note: SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, N = Neutral, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree. Decision rule: mean \geq 3.00 indicates agreement.

Table 3.3 shows the strongest and most internally consistent agreement of the construct in the study. All ten items score above 3.97, and the grand mean of 4.15 is the highest recorded in this dataset. Respondents most agreed that Forest Guards are out-armed by the criminals they confront (C5, M = 4.25, SD = 0.87), that they lack adequate patrol logistics (C2, M = 4.23, SD = 0.89), and that they lack modern communication tools (C1, M = 4.21, SD = 0.91). The legal-mandate deficit (C7, M = 4.20) and the absence of permanent surveillance outposts (C10, M = 4.19) follow closely, while the lowest-ranked challenge, institutional rivalry with formal

agencies (C3, M = 3.97), still sits well above the threshold of agreement. The cluster, therefore, identifies a tightly coupled constraint system in which logistical under-provision, legal indeterminacy, and welfare deficits operate in the same direction and compound each other. The policy implication is that piecemeal intervention is unlikely to shift Forest Guard performance, because the binding constraints sit simultaneously across the equipment, legal, and welfare domains.

Discussions of Findings

Research Objective One: *Examining the Roles of Forest Guards in Crime Control and Security Provision in Kwara State*

This section addresses the first research objective, which examines the roles of Forest Guards in crime control and security provision in Kwara State, Nigeria. The discussion is grounded in the broader framework of decentralized security governance, which emphasizes the growing involvement of subnational and community-based actors in addressing public safety challenges. In Nigeria, rising insecurity manifested through banditry, kidnapping, armed robbery, illegal logging, and communal violence, particularly in rural and forested regions, has exposed the limitations of conventional policing and military responses (Onuoha and Okolie-Osemene 2019). These challenges have necessitated complementary security arrangements beyond centralized institutions. Within this context, Forest Guards have emerged as relevant actors in localized crime control and environmental protection. Survey findings support this position, with generally high mean scores (3.14-4.12), indicating broad agreement that Forest Guards make meaningful contributions to security provision in Kwara State.

Forest Guards in Kwara State were initially established to protect forest reserves from illegal activities such as unauthorized logging, poaching, and encroachment. However, their responsibilities have expanded significantly due to the increasing use of forests as operational bases for criminal groups. Forests in Nigeria now serve as hideouts for kidnappers, bandits, and other armed actors because of their remoteness and weak surveillance presence (Okoli and Ogayi 2018). As a result, Forest Guards perform hybrid roles that combine environmental protection with security enforcement. Their functions include surveillance and patrol operations, intelligence gathering, collaboration with formal security agencies, community engagement, and crime deterrence. Consistent with this classification, respondents strongly agreed that Forest Guards provide critical intelligence (Mean = 4.09) and are effective in navigating difficult forest terrains (Mean = 4.12), highlighting the advantage of localized knowledge in forest-based security operations.

A core responsibility of Forest Guards is routine surveillance and patrol of forest reserves and adjoining rural communities. Through continuous monitoring, they detect suspicious movements, illegal settlements, and potential criminal hideouts. Surveillance plays a central role in crime prevention, as visible security presence discourages offenders and reduces opportunities for criminal activity (Clarke 2012).

By patrolling forest corridors and access routes, Forest Guards help disrupt criminal operations before they escalate into violent incidents. This aligns with situational crime prevention theory, which emphasizes reducing crime opportunities through environmental monitoring and guardianship (Clarke 2012). Survey results reinforce this role, as respondents agreed that Forest Guards reduce kidnappers' and bandits' hideouts (Mean = 4.00) and that regular patrols discourage illegal mining activities (Mean = 3.97).

Forest Guards also play a significant role in intelligence gathering and early warning systems. Their proximity to local communities and familiarity with forest terrain enable them to identify unusual activities, track unfamiliar movements, and detect emerging threats. This locally generated intelligence is shared with agencies such as the Nigeria Police Force and the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), thereby improving inter-agency coordination and response times. Decentralized security frameworks are widely recognized for enhancing grassroots intelligence essential for addressing rural and asymmetric crimes (Baker 2010). Survey evidence supports this, as respondents agreed that Forest Guards strengthen security collaboration, particularly with the NSCDC (Mean = 4.03).

In addition, Forest Guards help prevent environmental crimes such as illegal logging, charcoal production, and unregulated mining, which degrade ecosystems and can finance criminal networks, worsening insecurity (Ikuomola, Okunola, and Akindutire 2016). By enforcing forestry regulations and protecting natural resources, they also support social stability and sustainable development. Environmental degradation has been linked to resource conflicts and rural poverty that can intensify insecurity (Homer-Dixon 1999). Survey results support this, as respondents agreed that illegal logging and deforestation have reduced due to enforcement (Mean = 3.96).

Forest Guards also improve community engagement and trust in security provision. In many rural areas of Kwara State, limited confidence in centralized law enforcement has created gaps in security reporting. As locally recruited personnel, Forest Guards are more accessible and often act as first responders. Their interaction with community members strengthens cooperation and vigilance. Community-based security literature highlights trust and legitimacy as key to effective crime control (Tankebe 2013). Accordingly, respondents agreed that local recruitment improves trust (Mean = 4.06) and that communities feel safer engaging in forest-related activities (Mean = 4.00).

Finally, Forest Guards contribute to deterrence and territorial control by maintaining presence in forest areas often considered "ungoverned spaces", which are vulnerable to criminal activity (Raleigh and Dowd 2013). By monitoring these areas, they extend state authority into previously under-policed regions, helping to counter kidnapping and banditry that rely on forest hideouts. However, a key limitation remains, as

the lowest mean score (3.14) indicates insufficient training for confronting armed criminals, reflecting limited confidence in their tactical capacity.

Research Objective Two: *Assessing the extent to which Forest Guards have contributed to reducing Forest-based Crimes in Kwara State*

This section addresses the second research objective, which evaluates the extent to which Forest Guards have contributed to reducing forest-based crimes such as kidnapping, banditry, and illegal logging in Kwara State, Nigeria. The analysis is situated within the broader framework of decentralized security governance, which emphasizes the role of subnational and community-based actors in addressing security threats that exceed the capacity of centralized policing systems. In Nigeria, the growing use of forested areas as operational bases for criminal activities has intensified insecurity, particularly in rural and peri-urban communities. Forests now serve as strategic hideouts for kidnapers, bandits, and illegal loggers due to weak surveillance and difficult terrain ([Onuoha and Okolie-Osemene 2019](#); [Onwuzuruigbo 2021](#)). Against this backdrop, Forest Guards were introduced as a localized security mechanism to strengthen monitoring, improve intelligence gathering, and enhance territorial control. Survey findings indicate generally positive but moderate perceptions of their impact, with mean scores ranging from 3.82 to 3.99, suggesting that respondents acknowledge noticeable, but still evolving, contributions to crime reduction.

From a theoretical and practical standpoint, Forest Guards operate within decentralized security systems, where non-central actors complement overstretched federal institutions in managing localized threats ([Baker 2010](#)). In Nigeria, weaknesses in centralized policing, especially in remote forest areas, create response gaps that delay intervention in criminal incidents ([Hills 2012](#)). Forest Guards help bridge these gaps through a continuous presence in vulnerable locations. Survey results support this, as respondents agreed that they enhance vigilance and support arrests (Mean = 3.95) and discourage criminals from using forests as safe havens (Mean = 3.99).

A key impact is the disruption of kidnapping operations. Forests in Kwara State have historically provided cover for kidnapping syndicates, enabling camps and ransom coordination. Forest Guards have introduced routine patrols and monitoring of entry and exit points, limiting criminal movement. This aligns with situational crime prevention theory, which emphasizes reducing opportunities for crime through environmental control ([Clarke 2012](#)). Respondents reported reduced kidnapping incidents linked to forest areas (Mean = 3.96) and increased difficulty for criminals using forests as bases (Mean = 3.98).

Forest Guards also help mitigate banditry in rural communities bordering forests. Bandits often use forest cover for attacks and escape routes, but local intelligence gathering and collaboration with residents improve early warning and coordination

with formal security agencies. Community-based security literature highlights that locally embedded actors generate more actionable intelligence due to their familiarity with terrain and social networks (Tankebe 2013). Findings show agreement that Forest Guards dismantle temporary bandit camps (Mean = 3.89) and reduce farmer displacement (Mean = 3.90).

In addition, they contribute to addressing environmental crimes such as illegal logging, which degrades ecosystems and funds criminal networks (Ikuomola, Okunola, and Akindutire 2016). Through monitoring timber movement and enforcing forestry regulations, they support both environmental protection and crime control. Environmental security literature also links resource degradation to conflict emergence (Homer-Dixon 1999). Respondents reported reduced illegal timber transport (Mean = 3.87) and improved monitoring of forest access points (Mean = 3.82).

Overall, the findings suggest that Forest Guards have produced a moderate but meaningful reduction in forest-based crimes in Kwara State. Their strongest contributions are improved surveillance, disruption of criminal hideouts, intelligence sharing, and environmental protection. However, effectiveness remains evolving, as reflected in mean scores clustered around 4.00, indicating the need for stronger institutional support, logistics, and integration with formal security agencies.

Research Objective Three: *Institutional, Operational, and Legal Challenges Affecting the Effectiveness of Forest Guards in Kwara State*

This section examines the institutional, operational, and legal challenges affecting the effectiveness of Forest Guards in Kwara State. Although decentralized security initiatives have emerged as important responses to rising insecurity in forested areas of Nigeria, their performance is constrained by structural weaknesses within governance and law enforcement systems. Understanding these limitations is critical for assessing the sustainability and overall impact of Forest Guards in crime control and environmental protection. Survey findings reveal strong consensus among respondents regarding these challenges, with high mean scores ranging from 3.97 to 4.25, indicating that institutional and operational deficiencies are widely perceived as significant.

At the institutional level, limited funding and inadequate resource allocation constitute major constraints. Decentralized security arrangements in Nigeria often operate under tight budgets, affecting recruitment, training, logistics, and personnel welfare. Insufficient financial support restricts access to essential tools such as modern surveillance equipment, communication devices, protective gear, and transportation facilities required for effective patrols. Given the vast and difficult terrain of forest environments, mobility resources such as motorcycles and patrol vehicles are indispensable. However, the lack of such logistics limits the operational reach of Forest Guards, thereby weakening their deterrence capacity and slowing

their response to criminal activities. This concern is strongly reflected in the survey, where respondents agreed that Forest Guards lack modern communication tools (Mean = 4.21) and adequate patrol logistics (Mean = 4.23).

A major institutional challenge is the weak coordination between Forest Guards and formal security agencies such as the Nigeria Police Force, the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps, and the military. Although effective decentralized security requires clear roles, communication, and coordination, ambiguity in mandates often leads to overlap, gaps, and jurisdictional tensions. Survey results confirm that rivalry and institutional competition hinder collaboration (Mean = 3.97).

Operationally, inadequate training is a key limitation. While local recruitment improves knowledge of terrain and communities, it does not always provide the professional policing skills needed to address kidnapping and banditry. There are gaps in intelligence-led policing and human rights training, and guards are often seen as being less equipped than criminals (Mean = 4.13; 4.25). Poor remuneration and welfare conditions also reduce morale and increase vulnerability to corruption, with irregular payments affecting motivation (Mean = 4.14).

Legally, Forest Guards face uncertainty due to the absence of a clear statutory framework defining their powers, especially regarding arrest and prosecution. This limits their authority and weakens enforcement capacity (Mean = 4.20). Weak oversight and accountability further raise concerns about misconduct, abuse of power, and political interference, which can undermine professionalism and public trust (Mean = 4.07; 4.10).

In addition, poor intelligence systems and a lack of digital infrastructure hinder effective data collection, crime tracking, and evidence-based decision-making. The absence of permanent surveillance outposts also limits sustained monitoring (Mean = 4.19). Finally, difficult terrain and environmental conditions in forest areas restrict access and allow criminals to evade detection, highlighting the need for better logistics, technology, and training.

Conclusion

The investigation into the decentralization of security in Kwara State reveals that the deployment of forest guards represents a pivotal shift toward a more resilient, multi-layered crime control framework. By reclaiming “ungoverned” forest spaces and leveraging localized intelligence, these guards have successfully disrupted the operational cycles of kidnappers and illegal loggers that centralized agencies were previously ill-equipped to manage. However, the study concludes that for this decentralized model to remain sustainable and effective, it must be anchored in a robust legal framework that clarifies mandates and ensures professional accountability. Ultimately, the Kwara State experience suggests that while the state must remain the primary coordinator of security, the integration of specialized,

community-rooted units is indispensable for securing vast rural and ecological terrains in contemporary Nigeria.

Recommendations

Drawing from the empirical findings, this study advances three key recommendations to strengthen the effectiveness of Forest Guards in crime control and security governance in Kwara State, focusing on institutional capacity and role clarity, performance monitoring, and legal reform with accountability mechanisms.

- Firstly, there is a need to strengthen institutional capacity through clear role definition and continuous professional development. Given their wide-ranging duties – surveillance, intelligence gathering, environmental protection, and community engagement – the Kwara State Government should establish a clear policy and legal framework defining their mandate within the wider security structure. This will reduce role duplication and conflicts with agencies such as the Nigeria Police Force and the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps. Regular training in intelligence analysis, human rights compliance, and tactical operations is also essential, alongside adequate provision of logistics such as communication tools, mobility equipment, surveillance technology, and protective gear through sustained budgetary allocation.
- Secondly, the study recommends a strong monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system for evidence-based crime control. This should include systematic data collection, incident reporting, and periodic performance audits to assess Forest Guards' impact on crimes such as kidnapping, banditry, and illegal logging. A centralized digital reporting system would improve data accuracy and support trend analysis over time. Integration with joint intelligence platforms involving formal security agencies would enhance coordination and early warning capacity. In addition, regular community surveys and stakeholder engagement should be conducted to measure public trust and improve participatory security governance. Targeted strategies, such as anti-kidnapping patrols and enforcement against illegal logging, should also be prioritized.
- Finally, comprehensive legal reforms and accountability mechanisms are essential for sustainability. The state government should enact or revise laws to clearly define Forest Guards' powers, including arrest, detention, and inter-agency collaboration. Independent oversight or internal disciplinary systems should be established to ensure transparency and prevent abuse of power. Improved welfare packages and timely remuneration are also necessary to enhance morale and reduce corruption risks. Strengthening formal collaboration agreements and joint training with other security agencies will further improve coordination and reduce operational conflicts.

References

- Aas, Katja Franko.** 2013. *Globalization and Crime*. SAGE Publications.
- Abiodun, T.F., and F.C. Onuoha.** 2025. *Securing the Hinterlands: The Evolution of Sub-National Security Outfits in Nigeria*. African Academic Press.
- Abrahamsen, Rita, and Michael C. Williams.** 2011. *Security Beyond the State: Private Security in International Politics*. Cambridge University Press.
- Agbibo, Daniel E.** 2020. "Vigilante Youths and Counterinsurgency in Northeastern Nigeria: The Civilian Joint Task Force." *Small Wars & Insurgencies*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13600818.2020.1837093>.
- Akano, Oluwatobi Pelumi.** 2024. "Assessing the Performance and Impact of Amotekun Security Network in Crime Mitigation and Reduction in Ibadan." *Global Scientific Journal* 12(7): 525-543. <https://www.globalscientificjournal.com>.
- Akinwale, Akeem Ayofe, and Adeyinka Abideen Aderinto.** 2011. "Crisis of Governance and Urban Violence in Nigeria." *African Journal of Criminology and Justice Studies* 5(1): Article 5. <https://digitalscholarship.tsu.edu/ajcjs/vol5/iss1/5>.
- Albarka.** (2025, September 28). Troops, forest guards repel bandits in fierce Oke-Ode gun battle. <https://albarka.ng/troops-forest-guards-repel-bandits-in-fierce-oke-ode-gun-battle/>.
- Ajibade, A.A., O. Akano, O.F. Idris, and S.O. Sanusi.** 2025. "Comparative analysis of perceived effectiveness of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) and Amotekun on crime control in Ondo State." *International Journal of Criminology and Security Studies (IJCSS)* 4(2). Federal University Oye-Ekiti, Nigeria.
- Alemika, E.E.O., and I.C. Chukwuma.** 2005. *Crime and Policing in Nigeria: Challenges and Prospects*. Lagos: CLEEN Foundation.
- Ambali, A.R., and A.A. Araba.** 2020. Community policing and human security in Nigeria: A study of Lagos State Neighbourhood Safety Corps (LNSC). *Journal of Administrative Science* 17(2): 72-91. <http://jas.uitm.edu.my>.
- Araba, A.A., and O.M. Taoheed.** 2026. "Assessing the Crime Control and Regional Security Responses: An Analytical Study of Operation Fagge Yamma, Nigeria." *Bulletin of "Carol I" National Defence University* 15(1): 39-55. <https://doi.org/10.53477/2284-9378-26-03>.
- Badiora, Adewumi I.** 2019. "Shaping Community Support for Vigilantism: A Nigerian Case Study." *Policing: An International Journal of Police Strategies & Management* 42(2): 240-254. <https://doi.org/10.1108/PIJPSM-08-2017-0101>.
- Baker, Bruce.** 2010. *Security in Post-Conflict Africa: The Role of Non-State Policing*. CRC Press.
- Bayley, David H., and Clifford D. Shearing.** 2001. *The New Structure of Policing: Description, Conceptualization, and Research Agenda*. National Institute of Justice.
- City Population.** 2022. Nigeria: Local government area populations 2022. <https://www.citypopulation.de/en/nigeria/admin/>.

- Clarke, Ronald V.** 2012. *Situational Crime Prevention: Successful Case Studies*. 2nd ed. Harrow and Heston.
- Cooper-Knock, S.J., J. Berg, and T. Diphooorn.** 2024. "Publics of Policing: Expanding Approaches to Nodal Policing." *Policing and Society* 34(1-2): 87-103. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10439463.2023.2255922>.
- Crawford, Adam.** 2006. "Networked Governance and the Post-modern Condition: The Case of Policing." *Theoretical Criminology* 10 (4): 449-479.
- Creswell, John W., and J. David Creswell.** 2018. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. 5th ed. SAGE Publications.
- De Filippi, Primavera, and Aaron Wright.** 2018. *Blockchain and the Law: The Rule of Code*. Harvard University Press.
- Eru, Eka John.** 2025. Forest Guards and Community Policing in Nigeria: Strategies to Combat Insecurity. NALTF/SCR/008 Volume 1. Abuja: National Assembly Library Trust Fund, Research Department.
- Hills, Alice.** 2012. "Policing a Plurality of Worlds: The Nigeria Police in Metropolitan Kano." *African Affairs* 111(442): 46-66. <https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/adr078>.
- Homer-Dixon, Thomas.** 1999. *Environment, Scarcity, and Violence*. Princeton University Press.
- Ikuomola, A. D., R.A. Okunola, and A.F. Akindutire.** 2016. Criminality: Illegal logging of woods in Nigeria's South-West forest belt. *International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology* 8(5).
- Kwara State Government.** 2025. *Internal Security Report: The Deployment of Forest Guards for Rural Safety*. Kwara State Press.
- Kwara State Ministry of Justice.** 2025. *Operational Guidelines and Legal Mandate for the Forest Guard Corps*. Kwara State Government Press.
- Lister, Stuart, and Trevor Jones.** 2015. "Plural Policing and the Challenge of Democratic Accountability." In *Police Leadership: Rising to the Top*, edited by J. Fleming, 75-92. Routledge. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/283127375_Plural_policing_and_the_challenge_of_democratic_accountability.
- Mazerolle, Lorraine, Kevin Petersen, Michelle Sydes, and Janet Ransley.** 2024. "Partnerships in Policing: How Third Parties Help Police to Reduce Crime and Disorder." *Elements in Criminology*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009472029>.
- Meagher, Kate.** 2014. "Informal Security, Institutional Hybridity and the State in Africa." *Development and Change* 45(5): 1016-1040. <https://doi.org/10.1111/dech.12115>.
- National Assembly Library Trust Fund.** 2025. *Forest Guards and Community Policing: A Dual Strategy for Rural Security*. NALTF Research Department.
- Ojizele, Monday.** 2025. "Motivations Behind the Establishment of Amotekun and Regional Security Dynamics in Southwestern Nigeria." *Political and Security Studies Scholarly Journal* 6(3): 29-40. <https://doi.org/10.33445/psssj.2025.6.3.5>.

- Okeke-Ogbuafor, Nwamaka, Tim Gray, and Selina M. Stead.** 2017. "Two Concepts of Community in the Niger Delta: Social Sense of Communitality, and a Geographical Sense of Place. Are They Compatible?" *Journal of Place Management and Development* 10(3): 254-269. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JPM-D-01-2017-0003>.
- Okoli, A.C., and F.I. Ochim.** 2016. "Forestlands and National Security in Nigeria: A Threat-Import Analysis." *Journal of Political Science and Leadership Research* 2(2): 43. <http://www.iiardpub.org>.
- Okoli, A.C., and F. N. Okpaleke.** 2014. "Banditry and Crisis of Public Safety in Nigeria: Issues in National Security Strategies." *European Scientific Journal* 10(4): 350-362.
- Okoli, Al Chukwuma, and C.O. Ogayi.** 2018. "Herdsman Militancy and Humanitarian Crisis in Nigeria: A Theoretical Briefing." *African Security Review* 27 (2): 129-143.
- Olaleru, F., and A.O. Egonmwan.** 2014. "Wildlife Conservation Challenges in Protected Forest Areas in Nigeria." *African Journal of Environmental Studies* 7(2): 45-58.
- Olowu, Dele, and J. Ayoade.** 2008. *Nigeria's Public Sector Reforms: Issues and Challenges*. Ibadan: Spectrum Books.
- Onuoha, Freedom C., and James Okolie-Osemene.** 2019. "The Evolving Threat of Kidnapping for Ransom in Nigeria." In *Internal Security Management in Nigeria: Perspectives, Challenges and Lessons*, edited by O. O. Oshita, I. M. Alumona, and F. C. Onuoha, 233-258. Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-8215-4_12.
- Onwuzuruigbo, Ifeanyi.** 2021. "Enclaves of Banditry: Ungoverned Forest Spaces and Cattle Rustling in Northern Nigeria." *African Studies Review* 64(1): 168-191. <https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2020.46>.
- Osemeobo, G.J.** 2005. "Living on the Forests: Women and Household Security in Nigeria." *Small-scale Forest Economics, Management and Policy* 4(3): 343-357. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11842-005-0021-x>.
- Raleigh, Clionadh, and Caitriona Dowd.** 2013. "Governance and Conflict in the Sahel's 'Ungoverned Space.'" *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development* 2(2): 1-17.
- Raphael, I.** 2025. Over 1,000 forest guards graduate in Kwara ahead of anti-terror operations. *Western Post*. <https://www.westernpost.ng/over-1000-forest-guards-graduate-in-kwara-ahead-of-anti-terror-operations/>.
- Rufai, M.A.** 2017. "I Am a Bandit: A Decade of Research in Zamfara State Bandits' Camps." *European Scientific Journal* 13(2): 35-52.
- Sowale, T.** 2025. "Decentralized Policing and the Imperative for State-Level Security in Nigeria." *Federal University of Kashere Journal of Politics and International Relations* 4(1).
- Suleiman, M. D., and B. Maiangwa.** 2017. "Nigeria and the 'Making' of Combative Identities." *African Identities* 15(3): 260-277. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14725843.2017.1291324>.
- Tankebe, Justice.** 2013. "Viewing Things Differently: The Dimensions of Public Perceptions of Police Legitimacy." *Criminology* 51(1): 103-135.

Tyler, Tom R. 2006. *Why People Obey the Law*. Princeton University Press.

Warner, J. 2017. "Nigeria and 'Illusory Hegemony' in Foreign and Security Policymaking: Pax-Nigeriana and the Challenges of Boko Haram." *Foreign Policy Analysis* 13(3): 638-661. <https://doi.org/10.1093/fpa/orw051>.

Yamane, Taro. 1967. *Statistics: An Introductory Analysis*. 2nd ed. Harper and Row.

Zedner, Lucia. 2009. *Security*. Routledge.