

Evaluating the Performance of the Nigerian Police Force in Combating Kidnapping along the Abuja–Kaduna Corridor: A Problem-Oriented Policing Approach

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Abstract

Original Research Article

This study assesses the operational performance of the Nigerian Police Force (NPF) in combating kidnapping along the Abuja–Kaduna corridor between 2010 and 2021. Drawing on data collected from 400 respondents (residents, commuters, and police personnel) and police records, the research evaluates public perceptions, institutional challenges, and adopted countermeasures. A mixed-method design combining quantitative and qualitative approaches was employed, using structured questionnaires and key informant interviews. Results indicate that although police presence along the corridor has increased, the effectiveness of interventions remains limited due to poor logistics, inadequate manpower, lack of advanced surveillance equipment, and public mistrust. Over 65% of respondents rated police performance as “below average,” citing corruption, delayed response, and low intelligence coordination. The study concludes that enhancing police capacity, inter-agency collaboration, and community involvement are crucial for improving the security situation.

Keywords: Kidnapping, Police Performance, Abuja–Kaduna Corridor, Security Challenges, Public Perception.

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1. Introduction

In recent times, Kaduna, one of the states in North – West Nigeria, has been in the news for kidnap-related cases. The Kaduna- Abuja federal highway has become the den of kidnappers with high profile Nigerians falling victim. Several cases of kidnapping were reported to have taken place along the Kaduna- Abuja high-way (Nairaland Forum, 2019). Many parts of the state have experienced several recorded and unrecorded kidnap cases in recent times. These violent crimes came with different characteristics and mode of operation that seems to take the police unaware since the police trainings fail short of understanding these threats (Ayuba *et al.*, 2017). Combating kidnapping takes varieties of measures and dimensions.

The Abuja–Kaduna highway remains one of Nigeria’s most strategic transport corridors, linking the Federal Capital Territory to the North-West region. However, in recent years it has gained notoriety as a high-risk route due to rampant kidnapping and violent crime. Despite the deployment of several police and military units, insecurity persists, raising questions about the effectiveness of policing operations in the area.

This study evaluates how effectively the Nigerian Police Force (NPF) has responded to kidnapping along this corridor. It examines citizens’ perceptions, identifies operational challenges, and reviews the strategies used by the police in addressing the menace.

2. Study Area

The study area spans approximately 165 km from Abuja through Niger State to Kaduna. It includes major communities such as Goningora, Rijana, Katari, and Jere, which have been identified as kidnapping flashpoints. The area has a diverse topography, forest patches, and sparse settlement patterns that enable criminals to conceal their activities.

3. Methodology

A mixed-method approach was adopted. The quantitative component involved

administering **400 structured questionnaires** to residents, commuters, and police personnel across three state commands (FCT, Niger, and Kaduna). The qualitative component consisted of **15 key informant interviews** with police officers, local leaders, and community vigilantes.

Data were analyzed using **SPSS 25** for descriptive statistics and percentage distributions, while qualitative responses were coded thematically.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Public Perception of Police Performance

Table 1. Respondents' Perception of Police Performance in Combating Kidnapping

Response Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Excellent	18	4.5
Good	58	14.5
Fair	63	15.8
Poor	171	42.8
Very Poor	90	22.5
Total	400	100.0

Interpretation:

Over **65%** of respondents rated police performance as poor or very poor. Interviews

revealed widespread dissatisfaction due to delayed response, lack of patrol consistency, and frequent ransom payments without offender prosecution.

4.2 Challenges Facing the NPF in Combating Kidnapping

Table 2. Major Challenges Confronting the Nigerian Police Force

Challenge	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Inadequate logistics and mobility	96	24.0
Lack of modern equipment	83	20.8

Challenge	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Poor intelligence sharing	71	17.8
Insufficient manpower	67	16.8
Corruption and poor motivation	51	12.8
Weak community cooperation	32	8.0
Total	400	100.0

Interpretation:

The predominant operational barriers are logistical constraints and lack of modern

surveillance tools. Respondents also cited corruption, poor welfare, and communication breakdowns between security agencies as recurring impediments to effective policing.

4.3 Strategies Adopted by the NPF**Table 3. Police Strategies for Combating Kidnapping**

Strategy	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Highway patrol and checkpoints	110	27.5
Collaboration with military/joint task force	95	23.8
Intelligence gathering and informant network	74	18.5
Community policing and vigilante engagement	64	16.0
Public awareness and sensitization	37	9.3
Use of technology (tracking devices, drones)	20	5.0
Total	400	100.0

Interpretation:

While multiple strategies have been deployed, respondents believe that implementation is often inconsistent and reactive rather than proactive. The use of technology and intelligence-led operations remains minimal.

4.4 Discussion of Findings

The study reveals a significant trust deficit between the police and local communities. Despite multiple checkpoints, kidnappers continue to operate freely, suggesting weak intelligence flow and poor coordination.

Respondents observed that police actions are often limited to post-incident responses rather than preventive strategies.

The persistence of kidnapping along this route underscores systemic challenges in logistics, manpower, and technology. Moreover, inadequate funding and delayed government support hinder sustained operations.

5. Recommendations

1. **Enhance Logistics and Equipment:** Provide patrol vehicles, communication gadgets, drones, and GIS tracking systems for continuous surveillance.
2. **Intelligence-Led Policing:** Integrate data analytics and informant networks to predict and preempt criminal activity.
3. **Strengthen Community Partnerships:** Institutionalize collaboration with local vigilantes and residents for real-time intelligence sharing.
4. **Training and Motivation:** Improve welfare, conduct regular counter-kidnapping training, and reward outstanding officers.
5. **Anti-Corruption Reforms:** Introduce accountability mechanisms to monitor operational funds and logistics usage.

6. Conclusion

The Nigerian Police Force's performance in combating kidnapping along the Abuja–Kaduna corridor remains below expectations. Despite visible efforts such as joint patrols and checkpoints, the results indicate persistent gaps in technology use, intelligence sharing, and logistics. A paradigm shift toward intelligence-led, community-based, and technology-driven policing is essential to curb this menace effectively.

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