

Evaluating Capacity-Building and Training Strategies Under Operation Okwok And Their Impact on Crime Control in Cross River State, Nigeria

Augustine I. Wonor
City University, Cambodia

Maryjane Y. Oghogho
City University, Cambodia

Osazuwa M. Christopher
City University, Cambodia

Received: 03 Feb 2026 | Received Revised Version: 20 Feb 2026 | Accepted: 10 Mar 2026 | Published: 31 Mar 2026

Volume 08 Issue 03 2026 | Crossref DOI: 10.37547/tajssei/Volume08Issue03-12

Abstract

This study evaluates the impact of training and capacity-building strategies under Operation Okwok on crime management in Cross River State, Nigeria. Against the backdrop of rising insecurity including kidnapping, cultism, and trans-border crimes, the research identifies gaps in the competence, coordination, and professionalism of joint security operatives. Despite the strategic intent of Operation Okwok, fragmented training schedules, poor inter-agency synergy, and weak institutional frameworks have undermined its effectiveness. The study aims to assess the structure, relevance, and implementation of training programs and their influence on operational coordination and crime control outcomes. Anchored on Human Capital Theory and Systems Theory, the research posits that crime management success depends on the synergy between individual competence and institutional cohesion. Using a qualitative exploratory case study design, data were collected through Key Informant Interviews with 15 security stakeholders and triangulated with secondary sources. Findings reveal that while tactical training and joint simulations exist, they are irregular, generic, and poorly adapted to local security realities. Capacity-building efforts remain donor-dependent and lack sustainability, resulting in uneven professionalism and strained community relations. The study recommends institutionalizing continuous, context-sensitive training, establishing unified performance evaluation systems, and strengthening inter-agency collaboration through shared protocols and leadership development. The study concludes that, the effectiveness of Operation Okwok hinges on integrating structured training with sustainable capacity-building to foster a disciplined, responsive, and coordinated security apparatus capable of addressing the evolving threats in Cross River State.

Keywords: Operation Okwok, training interventions, capacity-building, crime management.

© 2026 Augustine I. Wonor, Maryjane Y. Oghogho, & Osazuwa M. Christopher. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0). The authors retain copyright and allow others to share, adapt, or redistribute the work with proper attribution.

Cite This Article: Augustine I. Wonor, Maryjane Y. Oghogho, & Osazuwa M. Christopher. (2026). Evaluating Capacity-Building and Training Strategies Under Operation Okwok And Their Impact on Crime Control in Cross River State, Nigeria. The American Journal of Social Science and Education Innovations, 8(03), 116–128. <https://doi.org/10.37547/tajssei/Volume08Issue03-12>

1. Introduction

Globally, the efficiency of security operations is

determined not only by the size and equipment of security forces, but also by personnel skill, coordination, and ethics. The current security scene has become increasingly complicated, with the rise of terrorism, insurgency, cross-border crimes, and organised criminal networks necessitating flexible, well-trained, and institutionally anchored personnel. Countries that invest in systematic and continuing training interventions are more likely to witness progress in intelligence collection, operational response, and human rights compliance (Eze & Okonkwo, 2022; Ibrahim & Salihu, 2022). These findings show that capacity building and professional development are critical components of effective security governance and long-term peace. Training provides operatives with specific technical and tactical abilities, whereas capacity building strengthens the institutional structures and leadership systems required to maintain those skills over time (Chukwuma & Adeyemi, 2021). Thus, although training provides immediate operational competency, capacity building promotes long-term institutional resilience.

In Africa, cooperative security operations have become a popular tactic for dealing with the various and interconnected risks to stability, such as insurgency, communal violence, and organised crime (Adetunji & Musa, 2023). Such operations frequently bring together numerous agencies; military, police, paramilitary, and intelligence services, under a single command to maximise efficiency and resource sharing. Despite their strategic importance, these operations are typically hampered by insufficient training, poor coordination, and limited institutional capacity (Nwankwo, 2021; Ekanem, 2023). The end consequence is frequently operational inconsistencies, human rights breaches, and a loss of community trust (Ayaya, 2025; Ibrahim & Salihu, 2022). These problems highlight the need of not only employing security people, but also ensuring that they are properly trained and institutionally supported to carry out their tasks successfully and ethically.

In Nigeria, the emergence of complex security concerns forced the formation of joint security task teams such as Operation Lafiya Dole, Delta Safe, and Okwok. These measures are intended to increase inter-agency coordination in tackling regional security concerns (Ogundele, 2022). Operation Okwok, which was developed to address escalating security concerns in Cross River State, is one example of a coordinated reaction. It unifies the military, police, Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), and other law

enforcement agencies to combat crimes such as kidnapping, cult-related violence, communal clashes, and trans-border smuggling (Otu, 2025; The Investigator, 2025). While the operation's multi-agency approach reflects a strategic effort to improve coordination and efficiency, concerns have grown about the adequacy and consistency of the training and capacity-building programs provided to its operatives (Ayaya, 2025; Eze & Okonkwo, 2022). Field reports and observations show variable degrees of competence, discipline, and coordination among personnel, indicating gaps in training standardisation, inter-agency communication, and performance evaluation (Akinola, 2023; Adetunji & Musa, 2023).

There is a significant contrast between training and capacity building in the context of cooperative security operations. Drills, workshops, and simulations are examples of systematic, short-term interventions aimed to improve technical, tactical, and operational competence. Capacity-building, on the other hand, refers to the larger institutional mechanisms that ensure long-term effectiveness, such as leadership development, inter-agency collaboration, organisational learning, and logistical strengthening (Chukwuma & Adeyemi, 2021; Ogundele, 2022). The sustainability of any combined operation is determined by how well these two components are interwoven. While short-term training efforts have been implemented for Operation Okwok, they frequently lack the institutional continuity, assessment systems, and inter-agency harmonisation required to modify operational behaviour over time (Nwankwo, 2021; Ekanem, 2023). The operation's experience thus provides an important background for investigating how training and capacity-building interact to determine the success or failure of multi-agency crime management frameworks.

Despite the strategic objectives of Operation Okwok, Cross River State continues to face chronic security concerns including as kidnapping, cultism, illicit logging, and border-related crimes (The Investigator, 2025; Otu, 2025). These repeated issues raise questions about the effectiveness of the operation's training and development mechanisms. Evidence suggests that training interventions among participating agencies are fragmented, sporadic, and inadequately tailored to the state's changing security circumstances (Ayaya, 2025; Eze & Okonkwo, 2022). The lack of uniform standards and ongoing retraining has resulted in variable performance levels among operatives and reduced inter-

agency cooperation (Akinola, 2023; Adetunji & Musa, 2023). Differences in organisational culture, communication protocols, and command hierarchy exacerbate collaboration, frequently resulting in duplication of efforts and lower operational impact (Ibrahim & Salihu, 2022; Ogundele, 2022). These limitations show a serious deficiency in the operation's current human capacity development structure.

Furthermore, much of the existing research on Nigeria's security sector reforms focused on military or police training, with little emphasis paid to how inter-agency training interventions affect joint operations (Chukwuma & Adeyemi, 2021; Ekanem, 2023). There is insufficient empirical information to determine if the current training and capacity-building measures implemented under Operation Okwok have effectively improved coordination, professionalism, and criminal response. This gap necessitates a thorough examination of the operation's capacity-building structure to determine its strengths, weaknesses, and impact on overall crime management outcomes (Ogundele, 2022; Nwankwo, 2021). Without such an examination, opportunities to improve operational efficiency, promote collaboration, and build long-term institutional capacity may go unrealised.

The aim of this research is to assess the impact of training and capacity-building initiatives in Operation Okwok on crime management in Cross River State. The study's objectives are to explore the organisation, substance, and implementation of training programs within the operation; assess their appropriateness and relevance to the state's security concerns; and analyse their impact on operational coordination and inter-agency collaboration. The project aims to offer evidence-based insights that might support the creation of more successful capacity-building models for joint security initiatives in Nigeria by determining the amount to which these interventions influence operative behaviour, efficiency, and professionalism.

This study uses a mixed-methods approach, using both primary and secondary data. Primary data will be gathered through Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with chosen officers, trainers, and stakeholders involved in Operation Okwok, while secondary data will come from official reports, government policy documents, academic studies, and assessment records. This dual approach ensures a thorough awareness of both the practical and institutional aspects of training and capacity building in the operation. The analysis will use empirical facts and

professional insights to determine how current actions create operational outcomes and influence the state's overall crime management tactics.

The study's scope is limited to Cross River State, where Operation Okwok has been implemented in numerous local government districts. The study focusses on the joint operation's training and capacity-building features, investigating how these interventions affect personnel performance, coordination, and overall crime management. The analysis includes several security agencies involved in the operation, such as the military, police, civil defence corps, and other related law enforcement groups. It also includes the opinions of key community stakeholders who work directly with the operatives. The study does not intend to analyse Cross River State's whole security architecture, but rather to contextualise the analysis within the human capacity building component of Operation Okwok, which remains critical to understanding its operational successes and weaknesses.

2. Literature Review

Structure, content, and implementation of training programs in joint security operations

Joint security operations training programs are essential for improving tactical readiness, facilitating inter-agency coordination, and promoting professional conduct. Current evidence indicates that these programs in Nigeria are disjointed and lack strategic coherence. Eze and Okonkwo (2022) and Ogundele (2022) note that the majority of training initiatives are confined to specific agencies, exhibiting minimal collaboration across institutional boundaries. Comparative analyses of operations, including Operation Delta Safe and Operation Lafiya Dole, indicate that tactical drills and workshops are often implemented; however, these efforts tend to be short-term and reactive rather than systematic and continuous (Akinola, 2023; Ibrahim & Salihu, 2022).

Operation Okwok exhibits analogous patterns. The initiative incorporates various security actors, such as the military, police, NSCDC, and civilian components; however, its training programs exhibit inconsistent schedules, limited joint simulations, and insufficient evaluation mechanisms (Otu, 2025; Ayaya, 2025). The Investigator (2025), reports that the operation commenced with significant expectations but has faced challenges in aligning its training initiatives with the swiftly changing security environment in Cross River

State. This challenge highlights systemic weaknesses in Nigeria's security architecture, characterised by underfunding, fragmented implementation, and inadequate monitoring, which compromise the long-term effectiveness of training (Chukwuma & Adeyemi, 2021).

Adequacy and Relevance of Training to the Cross River State's Security Challenges

Cross River State exhibits a multifaceted security landscape marked by cultism, kidnapping, illegal logging, and trans-border criminal activities. These complex threats require training tailored to specific contexts, incorporating local intelligence, community collaboration, and flexible tactical strategies (Nwankwo, 2021; Adetunji & Musa, 2023). Research indicates that most training interventions under Operation Okwok are generic and inadequately tailored to the state's geographic and socio-political contexts (Ayaya, 2025; Ekanem, 2023).

The absence of localised content has resulted in operational discrepancies, as personnel trained with standardised modules frequently lack preparedness to address particular criminal dynamics. Cult-related violence in Calabar and smuggling activities along the Obudu border corridors necessitate distinct tactical responses; however, uniform training models continue to be implemented across all units (Ogundele, 2022). This generalised approach reduces the responsiveness of operatives and limits the adaptability of joint forces. Comparative regional studies emphasise that this gap highlights the necessity for contextualised and problem-oriented training frameworks (Eze & Okonkwo, 2022).

The impact of training on operational coordination and inter-agency collaboration

Successful joint operations rely significantly on the effective coordination of participating agencies. In Nigeria, inter-agency cooperation is often limited by organisational rivalry, bureaucratic fragmentation, and incompatible communication systems (Adetunji & Musa, 2023; Ibrahim & Salihu, 2022). Operation Okwok presents challenges characterised by duplicated functions, ambiguous command hierarchies, and restricted information sharing (Otu, 2025; The Investigator, 2025).

Empirical evidence indicates that structured joint training, which includes shared operational protocols, coordinated simulations, and collaborative scenario planning, enhances inter-agency synergy (Akinola,

2023). However, comprehensive training frameworks are infrequently institutionalised in Nigeria. Chukwuma and Adeyemi (2021) argue that the absence of formalised joint training and performance evaluation systems will perpetuate fragmentation, operational inefficiencies, and reduced trust among agencies in collaborative security operations. The lack of measurable performance indicators complicates the connection between training and real-world outcomes (Ogundele, 2022).

The influence of capacity-building on professionalism and crime management results

Capacity-building includes a wider range of elements beyond training, such as leadership development, organisational learning, and support mechanisms for infrastructure. In Nigeria, capacity-building initiatives have exhibited inconsistency, reliance on donors, and insufficient institutionalisation (Nwankwo, 2021; Ekanem, 2023). Operation Okwok has experienced some logistical improvements, including vehicle procurement and equipment donations; however, these enhancements have not been complemented by sustainable investments in human resource development (Ayaya, 2025; Otu, 2025).

Consequently, professionalism among operatives is inconsistent, characterised by ongoing reports of indiscipline, excessive use of force, and strained relations with the community (Adetunji & Musa, 2023). The observed behavioural patterns indicate a lack of structured capacity-building frameworks that support ethical standards, accountability, and emotional intelligence within security practice. Comparative analyses demonstrate that nations with ongoing capacity-building initiatives, including Ghana and Kenya, display enhanced institutional professionalism, better inter-agency coordination, and increased public trust in their security forces (Akinola, 2023; Ogundele, 2022). Capacity-building is a crucial factor influencing operational effectiveness and the long-term outcomes of crime management.

Conceptual Clarifications

Training Interventions

Training interventions in security operations refer to structured programs aimed at enhancing the technical, tactical, and ethical competencies of personnel. These include drills, simulations, workshops, and refresher courses tailored to specific operational contexts (DataCalculus, 2025). In joint operations like Operation

Okwok, training serves as a frontline mechanism to improve immediate response capabilities and foster inter-agency coordination. According to the African Union's Operational Guidance Note on Security Sector Reform, effective training must be context-sensitive, continuous, and integrated into broader reform efforts (African Union, 2023).

Without such structured interventions, operatives may lack the preparedness to address dynamic threats such as kidnapping, cultism, and trans-border crimes prevalent in Cross River State.

Capacity Building

Capacity building encompasses the institutional and systemic processes that sustain long-term operational effectiveness. It involves leadership development, logistical enhancement, inter-agency collaboration, and the establishment of accountability frameworks (UN Police Division, 2023). Bayley and Graycar (2020) emphasize that capacity building in law enforcement must go beyond skill acquisition to include organizational learning and resilience. In the Nigerian context, capacity-building efforts are often fragmented and donor-driven, lacking sustainability and institutional ownership. For Operation Okwok, the absence of robust capacity-building structures has contributed to uneven professionalism and limited operational impact.

Joint Security Operations

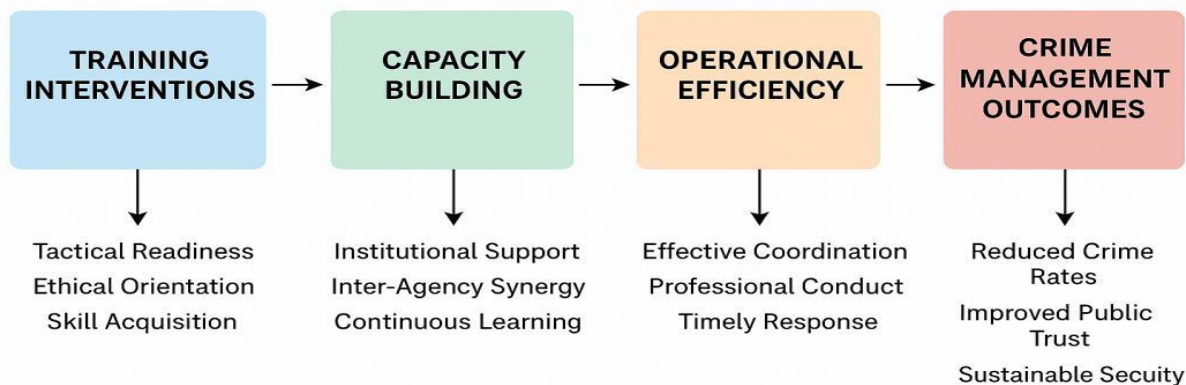
Joint security operations consist of coordinated missions that engage various agencies, including military, police,

paramilitary, and intelligence services, operating under a unified command to tackle complex security threats (Mohammed, Yusuf, & Garba, 2020). The objective of these operations is to utilise the strengths of each agency while reducing redundancy and competition. Success is contingent upon the establishment of shared protocols, integrated command structures, and unified communication channels. Inter-agency cooperation in Nigeria is hindered by cultural differences, ambiguous hierarchies, and varying training standards (Ismail, 2025). Operation Okwok illustrates these dynamics, as coordination failures have compromised crime control efforts despite the initiative's strategic objectives.

Crime Management

Crime management refers to the policies, strategies, and operational responses employed to prevent, detect, and mitigate criminal activities within a jurisdiction. It includes intelligence gathering, community engagement, and tactical deployment (Shittu et al., 2023). In Nigeria, effective crime management is increasingly linked to the integration of flexible policing skills and technology-driven approaches (Robinson et al., 2025). For Operation Okwok, crime management effectiveness hinges on how well training and capacity-building translate into coordinated action and community trust. The Nigerian Police's crime prevention framework highlights the importance of proactive engagement and continuous skill development to reduce crime rates (Professions.ng, 2025).

Conceptual Model for the Study



Training Interventions → strengthen → Capacity Building → enhances
 Operational Efficiency → leads to → Improved Crime Management Outcomes

The conceptual model illustrates that training interventions establish the basis for cultivating individual competencies, including tactical proficiency, ethical discipline, and technical expertise among operatives involved in Operation Okwok. The reinforcement of these competencies through sustainable capacity-building frameworks that promote inter-agency collaboration, organisational learning, and adaptive leadership results in improved operational efficiency. Enhanced coordination, discipline, and responsiveness among personnel result in more effective crime management, evidenced by decreased criminal activity, increased public trust, and sustained security throughout Cross River State.

The framework suggests that crime management outcomes are influenced by the interaction between the effectiveness of training interventions and the durability of capacity-building systems. Training provides immediate operational competence, whereas capacity building fosters institutional resilience and adaptability to changing security dynamics. This interaction within Operation Okwok illustrates the effectiveness of joint operatives in integrating their capabilities and collaborating to tackle the complex security challenges faced by Cross River State.

3. Theoretical Framework

This study is based on two complementary theories: Human Capital Theory and Systems Theory. Both theories offer valuable analytical frameworks for

examining the relationship between training, capacity building, and crime management in joint security operations, such as Operation Okwok.

The Human Capital Theory, initially proposed by Schultz in 1961 and subsequently elaborated by Becker in 1964, offers a fundamental framework for understanding the impact of investments in education, training, and skill development on individual productivity and organisational efficiency. This theory highlights the strategic necessity of providing personnel with technical skills, tactical abilities, and ethical foundations essential for effective performance in security operations (Ogunleye & Adebayo, 2022). Training initiatives, including simulations, workshops, and ongoing refresher programs, serve as intentional interventions aimed at enhancing decision-making, threat response, and community engagement among operatives (Afolabi & Ojo, 2021). Human Capital Theory offers a framework for assessing whether the ongoing training and capacity-building initiatives associated with Operation Okwok constitute sustainable investments in professionalism and operational capacity. Empirical evidence indicates that security operatives receiving structured and consistent training are more likely to demonstrate discipline, responsiveness, and adherence to ethical standards, thereby enhancing public trust and decreasing incidents of misconduct (Ezeani & Nwachukwu, 2023). This indicates that training is not merely a technical requirement but a strategic necessity for attaining sustainable and effective crime control results.

Systems Theory, as articulated by Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1968), conceptualises organisations as interconnected and dynamic systems composed of interdependent components that must function harmoniously to achieve collective objectives. This theoretical perspective is especially pertinent to multi-agency security operations, wherein coordination, communication, and feedback mechanisms are critical for operational success (Nnamani & Okeke, 2022). In Nigeria's joint operations, which include the military, police, civil defence, and community security formations, each agency operates as a subsystem characterised by distinct mandates, command structures, and operational cultures. The effectiveness of these operations is contingent upon the integration of subsystems concerning training, intelligence sharing, and joint tactical planning (Ibrahim & Salihu, 2022). Operation Okwok exemplifies this complexity, as systemic weaknesses like inconsistent training standards, overlapping command structures, and inadequate communication channels frequently impede operational efficiency. Systems Theory offers a valuable framework for diagnosing institutional deficiencies and identifying avenues for enhanced inter-agency collaboration. The effectiveness of crime management is contingent upon individual skill and discipline, as well as the level of institutional synergy and structural coherence (Uche & Bello, 2023).

The integration of Human Capital Theory and Systems Theory creates a comprehensive framework for analysing the significance of training and capacity building in joint security operations. Training serves as the individual-level mechanism that improves tactical readiness and ethical behaviour, whereas capacity building reflects the organisational process that fosters systemic adaptability, resilience, and coordination (Adebisi & Olanrewaju, 2021). These theories facilitate a thorough examination of the interplay between personal competence and institutional cohesion in shaping the effectiveness of security responses. This integrative perspective informs the current study's assessment of Operation Okwok, emphasising the strategic alignment of its interventions to develop a skilled, professional, and coordinated security apparatus capable of addressing the evolving security threats in Cross River State.

4. Methodology

This study employed a qualitative exploratory case study design to investigate the impact of training interventions

implemented under Operation Okwok on crime management in Cross River State, drawing on the methodological guidance of Creswell and Creswell (2018) and Yin (2014). This design enabled an in-depth exploration of the experiences, perceptions, and operational realities of security personnel engaged in the multi-agency operation. The research population comprised members of the military, police, civil defence, and other law enforcement and civilian components involved in Operation Okwok. Using purposive sampling, nine (9) key informants were selected based on their expertise, operational experience, and direct participation in the planning and execution of training and capacity-building programs. Primary data were obtained through Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), which examined the nature, adequacy, and perceived effectiveness of training interventions and their influence on inter-agency coordination and crime control outcomes. To enrich the analysis, secondary data from policy documents, operational reports, and previous studies were reviewed to provide contextual and comparative insights.

The collected data were analyzed thematically, allowing patterns, relationships, and recurring themes to emerge from participants' narratives. Credibility and dependability were ensured through triangulation with secondary data and cross-validation among responses (Yin, 2014; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Ethical protocols, including informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation, were strictly adhered to throughout the research process. The study was delimited to Cross River State, with a specific focus on key operational zones of Operation Okwok where training programs had been implemented. This methodological approach provided a comprehensive understanding of how joint training interventions enhanced operational effectiveness, inter-agency coordination, and overall crime management performance within the region.

5. Results

Background and Context of Operation Okwok

Participants consistently described Operation Okwok as a coordinated inter-agency initiative established to tackle the persistent and evolving security challenges in Cross River State; particularly kidnapping, cult-related violence, substance abuse, armed robbery, illegal logging, and cross-border banditry.

The Officer in Charge (OIC) – Army explained that “the

operation was designed to stabilize conflict-prone areas and close operational gaps among the military, police, and paramilitary agencies through unified deployment and command structures.”

The OiC – Navy emphasized the operation’s maritime security relevance, noting that “smuggling, piracy, and illegal transportation of arms through the waterways were escalating insecurity, and Operation Okwok now provides a synchronized platform for rapid joint response along riverine corridors.” He added that “6 boats were acquired to assist the navy with operations in the waterways”

Similarly, the OiC – Air Force described the operation as “a coordinated intelligence-sharing and reconnaissance mechanism that integrates aerial surveillance with ground and maritime operations for early threat detection and preemptive action.”

From the law enforcement side, the OiC -Police reflected on the communication improvements achieved since the operation’s launch, noting that “before Okwok, inter-agency collaboration was fragmented, but now intelligence is shared more fluidly, and response strategies are better synchronized.”

The OiC -NSCDC acknowledged that “the joint structure under Okwok has created a more disciplined and unified chain of command, reducing operational overlaps.”

The OiC -NDLEA added that “drug-related networks, often linked to violent crime, are now addressed within the broader security framework, ensuring no aspect of criminality is treated in isolation.”

The OiC -DSS emphasised the intelligence coordination role, explaining that “the service acts as the primary fusion center for intelligence collation and dissemination, ensuring that all tactical units operate based on validated information.”

Generally, they highlighted that their principal responsibility is ensuring field-level coordination, discipline, and adherence to unified operational directives. These insights depict Operation Okwok as an evolving joint security framework striving to overcome structural and coordination challenges through integrated command, shared intelligence, and adaptive operational strategies aimed at restoring and sustaining security in Cross River State.

Nature and Structure of Training Interventions under Operation Okwok

Respondents across agencies agreed that Operation Okwok’s training framework combines tactical readiness with inter-agency collaboration.

The Officer in Charge (OiC) – Army explained that “training is conducted periodically to strengthen combat readiness and operational synergy, particularly in areas vulnerable to insurgency, banditry, and communal conflict.”

Similarly, the OiC – Navy stated that “joint riverine patrol training is prioritized due to smuggling and cross-border infiltration along the waterways.”

The OiC – Air Force highlighted the integration of aerial reconnaissance into field training, explaining that “air surveillance and drone mapping have become vital tools for early threat detection and support for ground forces.” He added that training on Rules of Engagement (ROE) and use of force should be facilitated by the Office of the State Security Adviser, in order to improved operational discipline, especially during internal security operations.

Law enforcement officers corroborated this. The OiC - Police noted that “joint training platforms have improved communication among agencies and reduced operational misunderstanding.”

He also added that “we now have harmonized patrol protocols that allow us to act seamlessly with the army and civil defence.”

The OiC -NSCDC revealed that “disaster response and public protection drills have been introduced to strengthen our community interface.”

Likewise, the OiC - DSS described intelligence coordination training that “enhances analytical precision and improves the speed of data validation.”

The OiC -NDLEA explained that “narcotics enforcement modules were recently added to address drug-linked crimes, especially substance abuse which are fast rising amongst the Youths.”

One of the State Security Advisers (SSO’s Office) cautioned that “training remains largely dependent on commanders’ initiative and available funding rather than institutional policy.”

Thus, participants agreed that Operation Okwok’s training structure is essential but constrained by irregular schedules and inadequate funding.

Adequacy and Effectiveness of Training

Interventions

Across all agencies, participants affirmed that training interventions have improved professionalism, responsiveness, and field discipline.

The OiC – Navy observed that “combined land-sea patrols have curtailed smuggling routes and improved maritime safety.”

The OiC – Air Force emphasized that “training has improved personnel awareness and inter-agency trust. Officers now understand complementary roles during surveillance and ground support.”

However, he pointed out that “the frequent rotation of operatives disrupts training continuity, making it difficult to institutionalize skills across deployments.”

The OiC -Police stated that “training on ethics and community engagement has reduced reports of excessive force and improved public perception; operatives now apply restraint and better judgment in high-tension scenarios.”

The OiC -NSCDC described the training as “instrumental in improving coordination during disaster management and crowd control” but added that “after training, there’s no formal follow-up to measure operational improvements.”

Yet, the OiC -DSS cautioned that “training programs remain reactive; there is still a need for long-term planning and continuous evaluation mechanisms.”

The OiC - NDLEA also noted that “joint participation has increased our ability to detect and intercept drug-related syndicates,” but added that “training assessments are rarely conducted to evaluate behavioral outcomes.”

In contrast, the OiC-Army reported that “visible progress has been made as joint patrols are faster, more coordinated, and less prone to friction.”

Despite acknowledged weaknesses in continuity and evaluation, the consensus among respondents was that Operation Okwok’s training initiatives have improved field performance, discipline, and trust across agencies, leading to more efficient responses to security incidents.

Inter-Agency Coordination and Institutional Capacity Building

Participants widely agreed that coordination among the

military, police, civil defence, and other agencies has improved significantly under Operation Okwok.

Another State Security Adviser (SSO’s Office) remarked that “the operation transformed previously disjointed security responses into a cohesive framework.”

The OiC – Army added that “we now operate under a shared command system, with synchronized reporting lines that facilitate faster decision-making.”

The OiC – Navy highlighted the growing collaboration between marine and land units, noting that “regular debriefings between the navy and army have improved real-time intelligence exchange.”

Likewise, the OiC – Air Force confirmed that “joint briefings now integrate aerial intelligence into ground strategies, minimizing duplication of efforts.”

The OiC-DSS emphasized that “institutionalized information-sharing platforms have reduced inter-agency suspicion, though bureaucratic bottlenecks still delay intelligence processing.”

The OiC-NSCDC pointed out that while collaboration has deepened, “resource disparity among agencies still affects equal contribution to field operations.”

Despite these gains, respondents emphasized ongoing needs for better equipment, logistics, and communication infrastructure.

As summarized by the OiC – Air Force, “the operation’s strength lies in synergy, but sustainability depends on institutionalizing logistics support and continuous professional development.”

Impact on Crime Management and Operational Outcomes

All respondents confirmed measurable improvements in security outcomes since the inception of Operation Okwok.

The OiC – Army stated that “crime incidents, particularly armed robbery and communal clashes, have declined in our areas of deployment.”

The OiC – Navy added that “waterway patrols have disrupted smuggling and gun-running activities significantly.”

The OiC – Air Force emphasized the operational link between training and success, explaining that “enhanced aerial coordination and intelligence-sharing have enabled

preemptive strikes against kidnapers and bandits before escalation.”

Similarly, OiC -Police noted that “public trust has increased as communities now see operatives working in unison.”

The OiC-NSCDC affirmed that “protection of public facilities has improved, with fewer vandalism and illegal mining incidents.”

The OiC- NDLEA reported that “collaborative arrests have curtailed drug trafficking networks tied to violent crimes.”

The OiC-DSS observed that “timely intelligence dissemination now prevents crises that previously escalated unchecked.”

Respondents however agreed that crime response has become faster and more coordinated, especially in rural communities. Yet, they cautioned that funding constraints and lack of institutionalized retraining could erode current gains.

6. Discussion

The findings of this study indicate a significant change in the organisation and performance of Operation Okwok, which has been established as a coordinated inter-agency framework to address ongoing security challenges in Cross River State. The findings, informed by Human Capital Theory and Systems Theory, indicate that individual competence and institutional coherence are essential for the effectiveness of the operation. Evidence suggests that training and capacity-building initiatives have increasingly enhanced tactical preparedness, ethical conduct, and inter-agency coordination; however, challenges such as irregular scheduling, limited funding, and insufficient systematic evaluation continue to exist. Consistent with Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1964; Schultz, 1961), the operation's organised training investment has improved the professionalism, discipline, and communication of its operatives through inter-agency simulations, tactical drills, and ethical workshops. Participants indicated that these investments have resulted in enhanced coordination of patrols, moderated use of force, and improved operational performance, reflecting quantifiable advancements in collective human capital.

The results align with the studies conducted by Akinola (2023) and Ibrahim and Salihu (2022), which indicate that joint training enhances operational synergy within

multi-agency task forces. In contrast to Ogundele's (2022) characterisation of Nigerian joint operations as fragmented and reactive, respondents portrayed Operation Okwok as increasingly integrated, featuring shared operational platforms and mutual accountability. This progression is consistent with Systems Theory (von Bertalanffy, 1968), which posits that institutional subsystems attain stability and effectiveness when integrated within cohesive structures. The operation's unified command and intelligence-sharing platforms demonstrate systemic coherence, supporting Nnamani and Okeke's (2022) claim that interdependent institutions achieve optimal performance through synchronised processes.

Notwithstanding these advancements, the study emphasises that training interventions are still limited by inconsistent scheduling, inadequate evaluation, and reliance on resources. Participants noted that although training has enhanced field discipline, communication, and ethics, its effectiveness is diminished by the lack of ongoing monitoring and performance evaluations. This observation supports Chukwuma and Adeyemi's (2021) assertion that Nigerian security training programs frequently do not establish evaluation mechanisms. Adetunji and Musa (2023) observed that inconsistent capacity-building hinders sustained competence, a trend also apparent in Operation Okwok. Respondents reported observable behavioural changes, including decreased inter-agency friction, better ethical judgement, and increased trust, indicating a partial realisation of Human Capital Theory's claim that strategic investments in personnel lead to enhanced organisational outcomes.

Inter-agency coordination was a notable achievement of Operation Okwok. Participants reported enhancements in communication, collaborative planning, and the integration of intelligence among military, police, civil defence, and other involved agencies. Respondents consistently indicated that the shared command structure of the operation reduced redundancy and expedited decision-making, resulting in more unified field operations. This finding supports the principle of Systems Theory, which posits that collective efficiency is derived from structural alignment and effective information exchange. This finding corroborates the earlier conclusions of Ibrahim and Salihu (2022) and Adetunji and Musa (2023), who highlighted that institutionalised coordination improves the quality and efficiency of joint security responses. Respondents highlighted ongoing disparities in logistics and

bureaucratic constraints, reflecting Ekanem's (2023) assertion that uneven institutional capacity remains a barrier to joint security operations in Nigeria.

The findings of the study demonstrate measurable improvements in crime management outcomes since the initiation of Operation Okwok. All agencies reported a decrease in incidents of kidnapping, armed robbery, smuggling, and violence associated with cults. The outcomes resulted from improved tactical readiness, intelligence-driven operations, and enhanced inter-agency collaboration. The Officers in Charge of the Army and Navy specifically underscored the need for improved patrol coordination, whereas the Air Force and DSS focused on the importance of expedited intelligence validation and proactive responses. The findings support Human Capital Theory's assertion that investment in personnel development leads to measurable improvements in organisational efficiency and social outcomes. They align with Systems Theory by demonstrating that collective learning, structured feedback, and integrated decision-making processes improve systemic adaptability and responsiveness.

Despite progress, sustainability challenges remain, as indicated by respondents who highlighted funding shortages, inconsistent retraining, and restricted access to logistics. The identified limitations illustrate the broader institutional fragility noted by Ogundele (2022) and Ekanem (2023), who contend that advancements in capacity-building in Nigeria are frequently hindered by insufficient institutional continuity. Operation Okwok illustrates that significant advancements can occur in resource-limited settings via strategic coordination, leadership dedication, and adaptive learning. The incorporation of forensic analysis, ethics retraining, and intelligence-based coordination exemplifies a progressive transition towards institutionalised professionalism.

The study demonstrates that the effectiveness of Operation Okwok in crime control is influenced by the combined reinforcement of human and systemic capital. The Human Capital Theory perspective elucidates the enhancement of ethical behaviour, responsiveness, and technical competence among operatives, whereas Systems Theory emphasises the structural synergy that magnifies these individual improvements through coordinated performance. These frameworks collectively offer a comprehensive explanation for the noted enhancements in operational cohesion, community trust, and crime reduction, establishing Operation Okwok as a

developing model of collaborative security governance in Nigeria.

7. Recommendations and Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that the effectiveness and sustainability of Operation Okwok are primarily contingent upon structured, ongoing, and collaborative training, alongside institutionalised capacity-building that enhances inter-agency coordination and professional conduct. To consolidate and expand existing gains, several actionable recommendations are proposed.

It is essential to establish a standardised and continuous training framework that integrates all participating agencies under a unified operational doctrine. Training modules must be organised to encompass intelligence analysis, conflict de-escalation, inter-agency communication, forensic investigation, and adherence to human rights standards. The results indicated that irregular and ad-hoc training negatively impacts skill retention and operational consistency. A mandatory quarterly joint training and re-certification program should be established under the oversight of the State Security Office (SSO), in partnership with the International Institute of Professional Security (IIPS) and City University for Security Studies. These institutions have the necessary technical expertise, accreditation capabilities, and international collaborations to create and provide advanced professional courses, including those focused on simulation and ethics. This partnership will align local training practices with global standards in intelligence-led policing and inter-agency collaboration.

Secondly, training must shift from event-based activities to systems focused on outcomes. Every training cycle must incorporate pre-assessment, post-evaluation, and performance tracking to evaluate knowledge retention, behavioural change, and tactical enhancement among operatives. This is consistent with Human Capital Theory, which highlights the necessity for quantifiable returns on training investments. The establishment of a Joint Security Training and Evaluation Centre in Cross River State is proposed to function as a central hub for these activities. The centre will coordinate ongoing professional education, conduct applied research, and facilitate inter-agency workshops to enhance shared learning and knowledge dissemination. This could function as a liaison for external training collaborations with academic institutions, such as City University for Security Studies, to enable certification and professional

accreditation for operatives.

Additionally, capacity-building initiatives should encompass not only technical training but also the development of institutions. The findings indicate that inadequate logistics, insufficient communication systems, and bureaucratic obstacles persistently hinder efficiency. Enhancing command, logistics, and communication infrastructure will facilitate real-time coordination and operational synergy. The State Government, via the Office of the Security Adviser, ought to prioritise budget allocations for inter-agency equipment pooling, maintenance, and logistics support. The IIPS and City University can offer technical guidance in leadership development and institutional management training, enabling middle and senior-level officers to acquire the necessary administrative and strategic competencies for effective management of joint operations.

Integrating forensic science and digital intelligence into operational practices is crucial for achieving sustained long-term impact. The interviews underscored the increasing significance of forensics and technology in crime prevention and investigation. The integration of forensic analysis, cyber intelligence, and digital data interpretation into training curricula will improve evidence-based operations and accountability. The implementation of a data-sharing framework between field units and the command centre will facilitate continuous learning via real-time feedback loops, an operational principle rooted in Systems Theory. The Security Adviser on Forensics and the DSS should engage with academic partners to establish digital intelligence training and forensic certification programs via the IIPS and City University.

Fifthly, fostering inter-agency trust and community engagement is essential for solidifying the achievements of Operation Okwok. Respondents noted an enhancement in community perception due to the collaborative efforts of agencies. To enhance intelligence sharing between operatives and local communities, it is essential to institutionalise periodic community dialogues, town hall debriefings, and liaison programs. Regular inter-agency retreats, leadership exchanges, and performance recognition initiatives would enhance team cohesion and maintain the collaborative culture that is currently developing within the operation.

In conclusion, the success of Operation Okwok illustrates that multi-agency security initiatives in Nigeria can yield significant advancements in crime control when human capacity and systemic coordination are enhanced concurrently. The research indicates that operational effectiveness is not solely dependent on tactical strength; it also requires continuous learning, institutional coherence, and adaptive leadership. Partnering with professional organisations enables Operation Okwok to institutionalise professional standards, promote global best practices, and enhance its capacity for sustainable security management. Effective implementation of these recommendations will convert Operation Okwok into a replicable model of integrated security governance, grounded in professional competence, inter-agency collaboration, and community trust, thereby providing guidance for similar initiatives throughout Nigeria's security landscape.

References

1. Adebisi, T., & Olanrewaju, M. (2021). Human capital development and security sector performance in Nigeria. *Journal of Public Administration and Policy Research*, 13(2), 45–58.
2. Adetunji, B., & Musa, K. (2023). Organizational culture and inter-agency conflict in Nigerian security operations. *Journal of African Governance*, 9(2), 55–70.
3. African Union. (2023). Operational Guidance Note on Training on Security Sector Reforms. <https://www.peaceau.org/uploads/7-ogn-training-on-ssr.pdf>
4. Afolabi, M., & Ojo, T. (2021). Training and professional development in Nigeria's security sector: A human capital approach. *African Journal of Security Studies*, 9(1), 33–47.
5. Akinola, T. (2023). Inter-agency collaboration and crime control in Nigeria: Challenges and prospects. *Journal of Security Studies*, 15(2), 45–60.
6. Ayaya, I. (2025, March 16). Enhancing security in Cross River State: Lessons from Operation Okwok. Nairaland. <https://www.nairaland.com/8370673/enhancing-security-cross-river-state>
7. Bayley, D. H., & Graycar, A. (2020). Capacity-building in law enforcement. *Australian Institute of Criminology*. <https://www.aic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-05/tandi123.pdf>
8. Becker, G. S. (1964). Human capital: A theoretical

- and empirical analysis, with special reference to education. University of Chicago Press.
9. Chukwuma, E., & Adeyemi, T. (2021). Evaluating capacity-building in Nigeria's security sector: A policy gap analysis. *Policy and Development Review*, 7(4), 88–105.
 10. Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.
 11. DataCalculus. (2025). Effective security training and drills for security officers. <https://datacalculus.com/en/blog/security-and-investigations/security-officer/effective-security-training-and-drills-for-security-officers>
 12. Ekanem, E. (2023). Security sector reform and localized training in Nigeria. *African Peace and Security Review*, 12(1), 66–81.
 13. Eze, C., & Okonkwo, J. (2022). Training gaps in Nigeria's joint security operations: A case study of Operation Delta Safe. *African Journal of Peace and Security*, 10(1), 78–92.
 14. Ezeani, E., & Nwachukwu, C. (2023). Security personnel training and public trust: Evidence from Nigeria. *Journal of Peace and Conflict Management*, 11(3), 88–102.
 15. Ibrahim, M., & Salihu, A. (2022). Coordination challenges in multi-agency security operations in Nigeria. *Defence and Peace Review*, 14(1), 33–47.
 16. Ismail, L. I. (2025). Intelligence gathering and security operations in Nigeria: A study of selected joint task force operations. Academia.edu. <https://www.academia.edu/129589731>
 17. Mohammed, I., Yusuf, M., & Garba, L. (2020). Inter-agency cooperation: Imperatives for effective joint security operations in Nigeria. ResearchGate. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/343392841>
 18. Nnamani, P., & Okeke, J. (2022). Systems theory and inter-agency collaboration in Nigerian security operations. *Nigerian Journal of Organizational Studies*, 7(2), 55–70.
 19. Nwankwo, O. (2021). Security sector reform and community trust in Nigeria. *Nigerian Journal of Public Policy*, 8(3), 112–130.
 20. Ogundele, R. (2022). Beyond the barracks: Rethinking training for joint security operations in Nigeria. *Security and Development Journal*, 11(3), 101–119.
 21. Ogunleye, A., & Adebayo, K. (2022). Human capital theory and law enforcement effectiveness in Nigeria. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 10(4), 112–125.
 22. Otu, B. E. (2025, February 13). Governor Otu strengthens security with 30 vehicles, renames joint task force Operation Okwok. Cross River State Government News. <https://news.crossriverstate.gov.ng/governor-otustrengthens-security-with-30-vehicles-renames-joint-task-force-operation-okwok>
 23. Professions.ng. (2025). Crime prevention strategies: A Nigerian Police perspective. <https://professions.ng/nigerian-police-crime-prevention-strategies>
 24. Robinson, J. O., Ndashiru, U. I., & Yusuf, A. (2025). Flexible skills for crime management and home security: A study of policing strategies in Nigeria. *ISA Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2(5). <https://isapublisher.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/Flexible-Skills-for-Crime-Management-and-Home-Security-A-Study-of-Policing-Strategies-in-Nigeria.pdf>
 25. Schultz, T. W. (1961). Investment in human capital. *American Economic Review*, 51(1), 1–17.
 26. Shittu, H. B., Adekola, N. O., Zamani, A. E., Adegoboye, L. A., & Uzamere, I. O. (2023). Crime management strategies on crime incidence in Lagos State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Conflict and Security Management*, 1(1). <https://ijsmpcr.com/index.php/ijsmpcr/article/view/23>
 27. TheInvestigator. (2025, February 13). Cross River State Governor launches Operation Okwok to combat crime. The Investigator. <https://theinvestigator.ng/2025/02/cross-river-state-governor-launches-operation-okwok-to-combat-crime>
 28. Uche, I., & Bello, R. (2023). Systems thinking in security sector reform: Lessons from Nigeria. *Journal of African Governance and Development*, 8(1), 77–91.
 30. UN Police Division. (2023). Guidelines on police capacity building and development. <https://police.un.org/en/guidelines-police-capacity-building-and-development>
 31. Von Bertalanffy, L. (1968). *General system theory: Foundations, development, applications*. George Braziller.
 32. Yin, R. K. (2014). *Case study research: Design and*

methods (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.