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The Roles of OSBP in Enhancing Collaboration Among the Security Agencies to Combat Crime at the Busia Border, Kenya

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Abstract

One of the ways that the governments have attempted to deal with the menace of cross border crimes, is by the establishment of OSBP across their borders. One-stop border system has brought the potential to afford the required collaboration and consulting among the customs, immigration and security agencies to inspect goods, persons and vehicles, thereby combating cross border crimes. Therefore, the need to understand the roles of OSBP in enhancing collaboration among security agencies to combat crime at Busia border, Kenya. Routine activity and institutional theories were used. A descriptive survey design to was adopted and carried out with the target population of police officers, customs and immigration officers. Stratified purposive sampling technique was applied: identifying the major categories of the respondents based on their roles and purposive sampling to select the respondents based on their roles. There were a sample of 64 respondents distributed amongst the various clusters. Data collecting instruments were questionnaire and one-on-one interview. The pilot study was at Namanga border. Both the quantitative approach for numerical data and the qualitative approach for themes was used to analyze the data. Qualitative data was analyzed thematically. While the numerical data was presented using summary statistics such as proportions, averages and the means, also visual representations like the

pie charts. The study found six roles of OSBP in enhancing collaboration among security agencies: co-location of multiple agencies in a single physical facility to foster daily interaction and immediate consultation, coordinated joint inspections and response to security incidents, harmonization of standard operating procedures (SOPs) reducing procedural conflicts between agencies, joint platforms risk management facilitating real-time information sharing, joint multi-agency training & capacity building programs to allow agencies to develop a common set of mindsets, fostering a culture of mutual trust by breaking down territorial mindsets reducing inter-agency rivalry. The study concluded: the One-Stop Border Post has significantly improved inter-agency collaboration by integrating operations, enhancing information sharing and increasing efficiency in combating cross-border crimes, it also found that infrastructural challenges, limited joint training and cultural resistance among officers hinder the full realization of its effectiveness. The study recommended: policymakers should ensure sustained funding for joint training across all ranks and upgrade resilient infrastructure to strengthen inter-agency collaboration, mandatory onboarding programs, trust-building initiatives and domestication of border branding to address existing gaps and enhance the effectiveness of the OSBP.

Keywords: One-Stop Border Post, Cross-Border Crimes, Inter-Agency Collaboration, Joint Inspections, Information Sharing, Infrastructure Challenges, Trust-Building

1. Introduction

Cross-border crimes refer to the unlawful activities that transcend national boundaries, often involving the movement of goods, people or illicit materials from one country to another. These crimes usually involve smuggling of goods, human trafficking, arms and drug trafficking, vehicle theft, tax evasion and wildlife trafficking, among others (Anagnostou & Doberstein, 2022) [4]. Their persistence along the border regions emphasizes, the need for more combined and proactive border management strategies to effectively deter and respond to such threats. According to Mugambiwa and Rakubu (2024) [25], cross-border crimes are often fueled by weak border control mechanisms, limited surveillance capacity and corrupt practices, particularly in regions where economic and security vulnerabilities persist. In the border towns, the porous nature of the border and high

volumes of human and cargo traffic makes it a hotspot for such transnational crimes, which pose threats to national security, economic stability and public safety.

The growing concern over cross-border criminal activities has prompted structural interventions such as the creation of the One Stop Border Posts (OSBPs) to streamline the border management and enhance security. The OSBP concept integrates the operations of two neighboring countries at a shared physical facility to reduce the clearance time, improve coordination and to minimize illegal border crossings (Mutua & Felix, 2023) [26]. The logic behind this connection is that, by centralizing and enhancing border processes, the OSBPs can potentially reduce the opportunities for the cross-border crimes. Therefore, understanding the relationship between the OSBPs and the cross-border crimes was essential in evaluating whether the infrastructural and the procedural border reforms actually achieve their intended security outcomes.

For Kugonza, Nsubuga and Rubanga (2019) [21] an OSBP therefore allows for the joint inspections, harmonized procedures and the shared infrastructure, thereby reducing the duplication and streamlining the clearance times. Instead of the travellers or goods undergoing border formalities separately on each of the side of the border, the OSBP model just consolidates these activities into a single stop, thereby improving both the trade facilitation and border security. This idea has therefore increasingly been adopted in the various global regions as a border modernization strategy.

The OSBPs have been implemented to mitigate against the cross-border crimes in the various regions in the world. With Hungary it has significantly enhanced its border management by integrating the OSBP principles, particularly along its southern frontier. The establishment of the joint border control operations with the neighboring countries, such as Serbia, has streamlined procedures and improved its surveillance capabilities. According to Castaño Reyero *et al.* (2018) [8] these collaborative efforts have led to a notable reduction in the illegal crossings and the smuggling activities. The implementation of this coordinated border management strategies, including the OSBPs, have resulted in a 30% decrease in the cross-border criminal incidents over a two-year period of 2015-2017. The success of these measures has been attributed to the enhanced information sharing and the joint patrols between the countries involved. However, there was limited knowledge on how OSBPs can specifically enhance collaboration among the security agencies to combat crime on the border of Hungary and Serbia which could have been related to the East African context.

In Thailand, the collaboration with the neighboring countries in the Greater Mekong Subregion, the OSBP model has been implemented to enhance border security and to facilitate legitimate trade to strengthen border security while simultaneously streamlining legal customs procedures to facilitate legitimate trade. The establishment of Border Liaison Offices (BLOs) at key border crossings has been instrumental in this initiative. These BLOs have served as coordination centres where the officers from the various law enforcement agencies such as the customs, immigration and the anti-narcotics units, work together to share intelligence and to conduct joint operations (Namnouvong & Zongwen, 2025) [28]. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2024) [37], the BLO network has

significantly improved the detection and the prevention of transnational crimes, including drug trafficking and human smuggling. This underscored the critical role of institutionalized border collaboration in strengthening regional security and the disrupting of organized crime networks. According to UNODC (2024) [37] in 2019 alone, the BLOs in the region supported nearly 10,000 criminal investigations, thereby demonstrating the effectiveness of a coordinated border management in curbing cross-border criminal activities. Such statistics highlighted how the operational integration and the information sharing across borders can serve as a powerful deterrent to the illicit activities. However, there were scarce data how the OSBP model in Thailand in the Greater Mekong Subregion would enhance collaboration among the security agencies to combat crime thereby providing some comparison for the Kenya's border posts.

Along the Mwami/Mchinji border, the adoption of the OSBP framework by Zambia and Malawi has strengthened the collaborative efforts to facilitate the cross-border trade and reduce the criminal activities. This OSBP operates under a juxtaposed model, where the border agencies from both the countries work collaboratively to process the cross-border movements. The implementation has enhanced the coordination among the customs, immigration and the security services, leading to more effective detection and prevention of smuggling and of illegal trade (SADC, 2024) [35]. The Southern African Development Community stated that, the OSBP has improved the border security measures, reduced congestion and also facilitated legitimate trade, thereby contributing to the reduction of the cross-border crimes in the region. Nevertheless, there remained a scarcity of studies assessing the roles of OSBP in enhancing collaboration among the security agencies in curbing cross-border crimes along the Mwami/Mchinji border, that can be used to make a comparison for the Kenyan border points.

In the context of the Busia border, which connects Kenya and Uganda, the OSBP had been expected to tackle the issues of overcrowding, bribery and the illegal cross-border activities by improving the coordination between the agencies for instance, the customs, the immigration and the security forces. By operating under unified protocols and enhancing surveillance systems, the OSBP have aimed to curb vulnerabilities that used to enable the cross-border crimes (Africa CDC, 2024) [1]. The application of this OSBP model by Kenya and Uganda has tried to streamlined border management and the enhancement of security.

The OSBP at Busia consolidates customs, immigration and the other border control agencies from both the countries into a single facility, facilitating efficient processing of goods and the travelers. This integration has significantly reduced the clearance times from several days to just under an hour, thereby minimizing any opportunities for smuggling and the other illicit activities. The Kenya Revenue Authority reports that this efficiency has led to a tripling of customs collections and a notable decrease in cross-border crimes, as traders are less incentivized to use illegal routes due to the streamlined legal processes (Okoth, 2020) [30]. However, there are limited research specifically assessing how the OSBP at Busia enhances collaboration among the security agencies impact the broader patterns of organized cross-border crime beyond trade-related offenses. Several studies have been undertaken on the Busia OSBP but have been leaving out the context of crime control. For

example, Tyson (2018) [36] studied one-stop border posts and the unregulated economic activities in Busia. The research involved a household survey investigating the influence of the OSBP at Busia on the Kenya-Uganda border on the economic activities of the unregulated and unregistered businesses and also the laborers. The study revealed beneficial outcomes through improved access to cross-border commerce. Nevertheless, it also identified adverse impacts, such as a decline in employment opportunities for unskilled manual laborers. But it fell short to explain how the Busia OSBP through the collaboration among the security agencies has specifically contributed to the control and reduction of cross-border crimes for instance hard drugs trafficking, smuggling of migrants and counterfeit smuggling.

According to Jepkosgei and Mathai (2020) [18] on their study on the effectiveness of the One-Stop Border Post concept at the Namanga border, concluded that, it enhanced efficient clearance of people and goods through the principle of extraterritoriality enabled by the OSBP. Jepkosgei and Mathai added that, it takes less than one hour to clear special goods and between one hour and three hours to clear other goods. Based on this improvement of trade amid enhanced security, this study purpose to check the similarities or differences that can be replicated in other OSBPs in Kenya. While the OSBP at Namanga has successfully enhanced the efficient clearance of people and goods, demonstrating the benefits of extraterritoriality with quick processing times (less than one hour for special goods), the study did not focus on collaboration among the security agencies, for instance on trafficking in human and sneaking of counterfeits goods, which would have given a glimpse of how the same would be in Busia. However, there remained limited analysis on how the OSBP model at Namanga specifically enhances collaboration among the security agencies to combat crime at the Busia border, Kenya.

2. Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by two theories: Routine Activity Theory (Cohen & Felson, 1979) [11] and Institutional Theory (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Scott, 2004) [23, 14, 34]. The two were taken as the appropriate theoretical frameworks for analyzing and interpreting the influence of the OSBPs on the cross-border crimes worldwide and Kenya included.

2.1 Routine Activity Theory (Cohen & Felson, 1979)

Routine Activity Theory (Cohen & Felson, 1979) [11] contends that, crime arises from the convergence of three factors: a driven offender, an opportune target and the lack of a capable protector. In the context of this study titled: The Roles of OSBP in Enhancing Collaboration Among the Security Agencies to Combat Crime at the Busia Border, Kenya, this theory provided a useful lens for understanding how the collaboration among the security agencies at the OSBP may influence the cross-border crimes.

The OSBP model was designed to streamline border procedures by bringing together border agencies from the neighboring countries, thereby enhancing surveillance, improving communication and fostering inter-agency collaboration. From a Routine Activity Theory perspective, the OSBP functions as a mechanism to increase the presence and the efficiency of the "capable guardians" such as the customs officials, immigration officers and the state police

agents at the border. These increased visibility and coordination make it more difficult for the offenders to exploit the border vulnerabilities, thus reducing the likelihood of smuggling, trafficking and illegal migration (Cohen & Felson, 1979) [11]. Moreover, by making the border crossings more structured and predictable, the OSBP alters the routine patterns of movement, potentially disrupting the criminal routines and thus reducing the opportunities for any unlawful behavior.

Despite its practical utility, the Routine Activity Theory had limitations. Most notably, it largely focused on the situational aspects of crime and does not adequately consider the broader institutional, structural and the policy factors that influence crime prevention. It assumed that, a capable guardianship is automatically effective without examining the organizational or the institutional conditions that affect how such guardianship is executed or coordinated. This gap made it necessary to incorporate the Institutional Theory, which complemented the Routine Activity Theory by focusing on how the formal rules, the institutional structures and the inter-agency coordination shape the implementation and success of initiatives like the OSBP.

2.2 Institutional Theory (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; DiMaggio and Powell, 1983)

Meyer and Rowan (1977) [24] and DiMaggio and Powell (1983) [14] are known for introducing the institutional theory. The Institutional Theory offered a valuable framework for understanding the role and the effectiveness of the Collaboration Among the Security Agencies at the OSBP in controlling the cross-border crimes at Busia Border, Kenya. This theory posits that, the organizational behavior and the outcomes are heavily influenced by the established rules, norms, practices and the institutional structures within a given environment (Scott, 2004) [34]. It focuses on how the institutions both formal or informal shape and constrain the actions of the individuals and organizations.

In the context of this investigation, the Institutional Theory helped to describe how the arrangement, mandates and the operational procedures of the OSBP influence the cross-border crime control. The OSBP represents an institutional innovation where the customs, immigration and the security agencies from the neighboring countries work in a coordinated and integrated manner. The Institutional Theory shed light on how the alignment (or misalignment) of these institutions through shared protocols, joint decision-making and the harmonized laws can significantly enhance or hinder the effectiveness of the border security operations.

Furthermore, this theory allowed the study to explore how the institutional pressures for example, regional integration policies, donor expectations and bilateral agreements, influence the behavior of the agencies operating at the OSBP. It also provided a basis for analyzing how the institutional capacity: staff training, resource availability and inter-agency trust, affects the implementation of surveillance technologies, crime detection strategies and the legal enforcement mechanisms.

By applying Institutional Theory, the study was able to assess not only whether cross-border crimes are being controlled, but also why and how the institutional setup of the OSBP contributes to or limits that outcome. This broader institutional lens complemented the more situational focus of the Routine Activity Theory and supported a more

profound comprehension of the systemic factors behind the success or failure of the cross-border crime control initiatives.

3. Materials and Methods

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. This design facilitated the quantification of their opinions, experiences and the practices related to crime control efforts at the border. Additionally, this design supported the use of both the structured questionnaires and the interviews, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the institutional, procedural and the technological factors involved. The descriptive survey design thus was able to provide both the breadth and the depth in analyzing the roles of OSBP in Enhancing Collaboration Among the Security Agencies to Combat Crime at the Busia Border, Kenya.

The Busia OSBP is located in Busia County, Kenya which borders Busia District in Uganda. The border is approximately 450 kms from Nairobi-KE and 196 kms from Kampala, Uganda. The border experiences very high levels of both human and goods traffic, making it a critical point for examining the cross-border crime dynamics. Its status as a key transit hub also presented some unique security challenges, including smuggling, human trafficking and the illicit trades, which necessitates some coordinated crime control strategies (Ayele *et al.*, 2023) [5]. Furthermore, the Busia OSBP is a fully operational model for the regional integration, hosting multiple agencies from both the countries, thereby provided an ideal setting to study the inter-agency collaboration. Its complexity and prominence made it a better representative case for understanding the broader role of the OSBPs in enhancing national and also regional security.

The population under investigation were the government officers working at the border. They were the National Police Service who were directly involved in the border surveillance, crime detection and enforcement operations at the OSBP. They therefore had a firsthand experience with cross-border crime dynamics and the role of the OSBP infrastructure and the processes in crime control.

The Customs and Immigration Officials were involved too, as they were central to the core functions of the OSBP. Their cooperation and integration under the OSBP system was critical to preventing smuggling, human trafficking and the other cross-border criminal activities. They provided insights on how the procedural coordination affects crime control. They also oversaw the operationalization of the OSBP model. Their insights on the administrative, logistical and coordination mechanisms in place was key to understanding the institutional strengths or the gaps in cross-border crime control.

The study used the stratified purposive sampling technique to select the participants from the key stakeholder groups involved in the border operations and crime control at the OSBP. This approach according to Nyimbili and Nyimbili (2024) [29] allows the researcher to ensure representation across the different agencies such as security, immigration and customs, while targeting the individuals with specific knowledge and experiences relevant to the objectives of the study.

The first step involved identifying the major strata (categories) of the respondents based on their roles and

responsibilities within the OSBP framework. These strata included: State Security officers, Customs officials and the Immigration personnel. Each stratum represented a unique perspective and functions in the OSBP crime control network. Stratifying the target population in this way ensured that all the relevant groups were included in the study and that no key perspective was overlooked.

The second step was to do purposive sampling. Within each stratum, respondents were purposely chosen based depending on their roles, expertise and experience in matters related to the cross-border security and the OSBP operations. The researcher worked with the relevant management and authorities to:

- Identified the individuals who had the direct involvement in crime detection, surveillance, intelligence gathering and cross-border operations.
- Selected the participants who hold those decision-making positions or have firsthand experience with the OSBP mechanisms and the policies.
- Ensured inclusions of those who can provide reliable, informed and diverse insights into how the OSBP influences crime control at the Busia border.

Table 1: Sampling and Sample Size

Respondents	Total	Sample
Senior Police Officers	26	6
Junior Police Officers	145	30
KRA Manager and Two Assistants	3	3
Junior KRA officers	27	6
Customs Manager and Two Assistants	3	3
Junior Customs Officers	47	10
Immigration Officer and Two Assistants	3	3
Junior Immigration Officers	14	3
Total Sample	268	64

The sample size was arrived at from Gay & Diehl, (1992) [16]. They offered a general guideline for determining a sample size based on the type of a research. For descriptive research like the current one, that had a moderate population (100–500), a sample size of 20% of the population is considered adequate. Therefore, the sample size was going to be 54 but because the key informants were included, then the sample size increased to 64. As per Martin and Bateson (1986) [12] they maintained that, increasing the sample size strengthens the statistical power. Hence the truthfulness of the results from the findings were enhanced.

The study utilized the structured questionnaires to acquire multi-faceted data (quantitative and qualitative) from the selected participants across different operational categories within the One Stop Border Post, who were the customs officers, immigration personnel and the police officers (KPS, APS and DCI). These questionnaires were designed with closed-ended questions to enable standardized responses, to make it easier to compare various data across the various strata. This instrument was essential in capturing those measurable perceptions, experiences and the practices that are related to crime detection, the responsiveness of OSBP personnel towards and surveillance technology usage at the Busia border.

The key informant interview guides was employed to gather in-depth qualitative data from the purposively selected officers with the expert knowledge or decision-making

authority. They included the senior customs and immigration officials and the high-ranking police officers. The interviews were semi-structured to allow for flexibility of probing while also ensuring that all the relevant themes were well addressed. This approach therefore enabled the researcher to explore the complex issues such as institutional coordination, capacity challenges and also the strategic practices influencing the OSBP's effectiveness in the cross-border crime control.

The researcher first organized the participants into the strata based on their institutional affiliation namely, the police officers, customs officials and the immigration personnel. Stratified purposive sampling was then be used to identify and reach the respondents within each category. Two trained research assistants assisted in the distribution and the collection of the structured questionnaires to the selected participants. The respondents were guided on how to complete the questionnaires and sufficient time of a week was provided to ensure exhaustive thoughtful responses.

The key informant interviews were scheduled in advance with senior customs, immigration and the police officers. These interviews were conducted face-to-face using the semi-structured guides and were also be audio-recorded by the phones but with the participants' consent. The researcher was taking notes to capture the non-verbal cues and any emerging themes.

The data collected from the questionnaires, interviews and observations, was then analyzed using both the quantitative and the qualitative approaches to exhaustively address the study objectives. The quantitative data obtained from the structured questionnaires was first be cleaned, coded and then entered into the Microsoft Excel spreadsheets. Using the Excel's built-in functions, descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages and means, were generated to summarize the responses. These statistical summaries helped to describe the distribution of views, practices and the experiences among the various respondents' categories. Trend visualizations, was also conducted using the Excel pivot tables and the charts where applicable. The analyzed data was presented using tables, bar graphs, pie charts and line graphs to enhance clarity and the visual appeal in interpretation.

Qualitative data from the key informant interviews was transcribed and analyzed thematically. The recurring ideas and themes were identified, categorized and synthesized into narratives that provided deeper insights into the roles of OSBP in enhancing collaboration among the security agencies to combat crime at the Busia Border, Kenya. These narratives were used to complement and triangulate the quantitative findings, thereby ensuring a well-rounded analysis.

4. Results and Discussion

The researcher dispersed 49 questionnaires for the Junior Police Officers, Junior KRA officers, Junior Customs Officers and Junior Immigration Officers. The researcher had 15 scheduled interview guides for the Senior Police Officers, KRA Manager and Two Assistants, Customs Manager and Two Assistants and Immigration Officer and Two Assistants. In total they were 64 questionnaires and scheduled interview guides. Fig 1 shows the response rates from the different groups of the participants regarding the influence of one-stop border post system on cross-border crime control at Busia, Kenya.

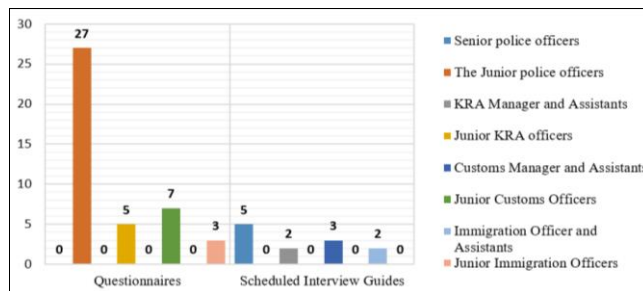


Fig 1: Respondents' Response Rates

The Senior police officers had a total of 5 responses, which constituted 83.3% of that cluster total sample population that was 6. The Junior police officers had a total of 27 responses, which constituted 90% of that cluster total sample population that was 30. The KRA Manager and Two Assistants had a total of 2 responses, which constituted 66.7% of that cluster total sample population that was 3. The Junior KRA officers had a total of 5 responses, which constituted 83.3% of that cluster total sample population that was 6. The Customs Manager and Two Assistants had a total of 3 responses, which constituted 100% of that cluster total sample population that was 3. The Junior Customs Officers had a total of 7 responses, which constituted 70% of that cluster total sample population that was 10. The Immigration Officer and Two Assistants had a total of 2 responses, which constituted 66.7% of that cluster total sample population that was 3. And lastly were the Junior Immigration Officers had a total of 3 responses, which constituted 100% of that cluster total sample population that was 3. In total, out of the 64 participants, there was 54 respondents which constituted 84.4% of the sample. This met the recommended adequacy range of 33% to 66% of the response rate against the sample size as suggested by Hagaman and Wutich (2017) [17].

Overall, the study achieved robust response rates across all stakeholder groups, ranging from 66.7% to 100%, exceeding established benchmarks for mixed-methods research, thereby ensuring data adequacy, representativeness and methodological rigor for analysing the influence of one-stop border post system on cross-border crime control at Busia, Kenya.

The research also sought to determine the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants. Understanding these characteristics was essential because they are recognized to affect the respondents' opinions and perspectives (Robertson & Watts, 2016) [32]. Therefore, the socio-demographic factors examined comprised of gender, age and the level of education. The participants were asked to indicate their gender by placing a mark next to the relevant option provided (male or female). The responses are presented below (Fig 2).

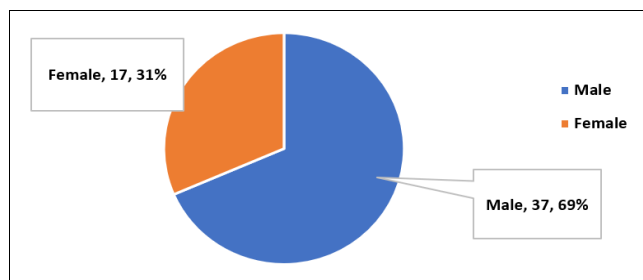


Fig 2: Responses by Gender

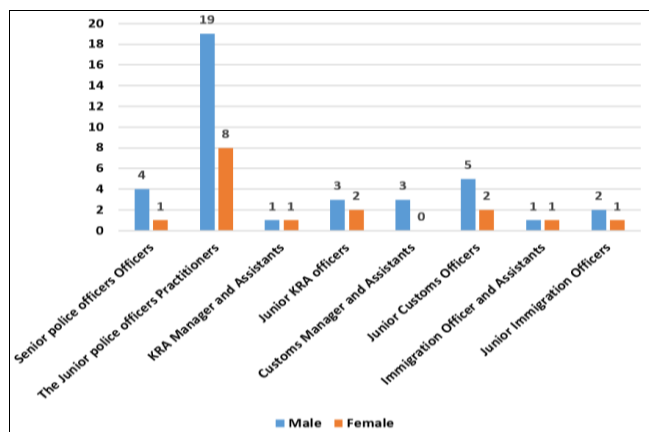


Fig 3: Respondents' Gender in Each Cluster

Fig 2 shows the gender distribution of the respondents, with 17 (31%) females and 37 (69%) males indicating that, the majority of the participants available for the study were the male. Fig 3 indicates the distribution of respondents by gender across the various government enforcement agencies revealed a notable male dominance, particularly at the operational and junior levels. The Senior police officers 4 male (80%) and 1 female (20%) and the Junior police officers (19 male, 8 female) reflects the existing gender demographics within the Officers in the National Border Security Management Organs, where operational enforcement and regulatory roles have predominantly been held by men. This distribution suggested a gender imbalance in both leadership and frontline deployment, implying that the perspectives captured in the study were more heavily influenced by the male officers' experiences. And historically, the field like security management and enforcement has been male-dominated (Mutungi & Mavole, 2024) [27]. Therefore, the study's results are not unusual but rather they mirror the broader sociological and professional reality of the Kenyan workforce. Nonetheless, the inclusion of female junior officers provided some representation of women's views and helped capture gendered differences in policing practice, community engagement and conflict resolution approaches where applicable.

The KRA Manager and Assistants demonstrated parity with 1 male and 1 female, while the Junior KRA Officers comprised 3 males and 2 females. Similarly, the Customs department exhibited a more pronounced disparity, with the Manager and Assistants being exclusively male (3 males) and the Junior Customs Officers comprising 5 males and 2 females. The Immigration department showed relatively balanced representation at the managerial level with 1 male and 1 female, while the Junior Immigration Officers consisted of 2 males and 1 female.

This gender composition reflected broader patterns observed in security and enforcement agencies globally, where women remain underrepresented, particularly in the operational field positions (Davenport-Klunder & Hine, 2023) [11]. The historical masculinization of border security and revenue enforcement roles, often perceived as requiring physical robustness and involving irregular working hours, has contributed to the persistent gender gap in these professions. Additionally, structural barriers such as limited gender-sensitive recruitment policies and the absence of deliberate affirmative action measures have perpetuated male overrepresentation within these state agencies.

However, the relative gender balance observed at the

managerial levels of KRA and Immigration suggested a gradual shift towards inclusivity in leadership positions. This may be attributed to deliberate government policies promoting gender equity in the senior public service appointments. Nevertheless, the continued male dominance at the junior operational levels indicated that these policies have not yet fully permeated the lower cadres of the enforcement hierarchy. Achieving comprehensive gender parity across all levels of these agencies remains essential, as diverse perspectives can enhance the effectiveness of the border management, revenue collection and immigration control, particularly when dealing with the vulnerable populations such as the women and children at entry points.

4.1 Respondents' Age

The participants were requested to specify their ages by choosing from the given options. For those who took part in scheduled interviews, their age was recorded as part of the introductory questions. The data was recorded as shown in the Fig 4 below.

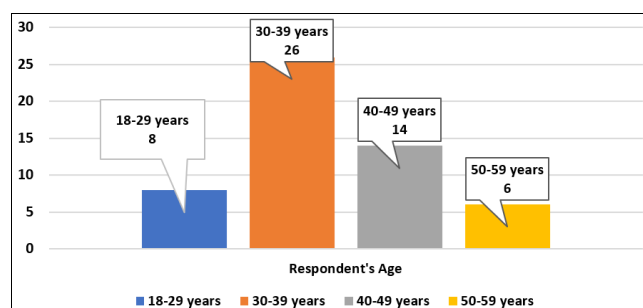


Fig 4: Age for the Respondents

The distribution of respondents by age group in this study offered important insights regarding the demographic makeup and the potential factors influencing the participation in the research on the OSBP system and cross-border crime control at Busia. The predominance of the 30-39 years age group, making up the largest segment of the sample with 26 respondents, suggested that this active workforce demographic constitutes the operational backbone of the border management agencies. This could be due to the fact that assignments at a high-volume strategic point like Busia typically require officers who possess a blend of physical agility for enforcement and sufficient field experience to navigate the complex OSBP procedures. As indicated in workforce studies, this age cohort is often at the peak of their career engagement, making them vital for the rigorous demands of intercepting smuggling and verifying documentation.

The substantial representation of the 40-49 years group (14 respondents) indicated that middle-aged professionals also formed an important part of the study population. This age bracket typically encompasses individuals in supervisory or mid-level management roles who hold critical institutional memory regarding the transition to the OSBP system. Their perspectives were essential as they bridge the gap between the strategic policy implementation and the daily operational realities on the ground.

The presence of the 18-29 years group, accounting for 8 respondents, reflected the entry-level workforce within the Police, KRA, Customs and Immigration services. While fewer in number than their seniors, this demographic is often associated with higher technological adaptability,

which is crucial for operating the digital monitoring and clearance systems inherent to the OSBP framework. However, their lower representation compared to the 30-39 group may point to deployment policies that favour more experienced officers for border control duties.

The smallest segment was the 50-59 years group with 6 respondents. This decline reflected the natural pyramid structure of uniformed and civil services, where fewer individuals occupy senior command or administrative positions as they approach retirement (Rahayuwati *et al.*, 2024) [31]. Additionally, the physically demanding nature of cross-border crime control, often involving patrols and rapid responses, may result in fewer older officers being deployed to the frontline roles at the border. Overall, the concentration of respondents in the 30-39 and 40-49 age brackets emphasized that, the study relied on an experienced workforce. Understanding this demographic distribution is critical for interpreting the study's findings, as the data reflects the views of the personnel who are actively engaged in the daily enforcement of security and are best placed to evaluate the efficacy of the OSBP system in mitigating cross-border crimes.

4.2 Respondents' Highest Level of Education

The respondents were instructed to specify their highest level of education by inserting a mark where the applicable selection was given. For the ones who were interviewed, their highest level of education was captured as a question during the introduction. The data is captured in below (Fig 5).

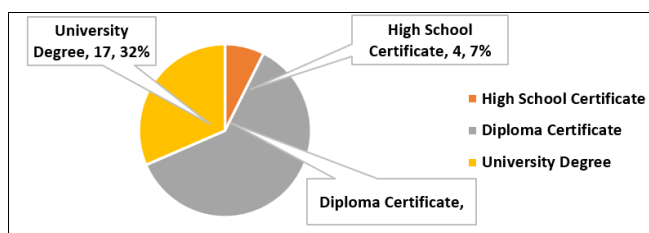


Fig 5: Respondents' Highest Level of Education

The respondents' educational levels were distributed as follows: High School Certificate (4 respondents), Diploma Certificate (33 respondents) and University Degree (17 respondents). This profile indicated a moderately skilled workforce dominated by diploma holders, aligning with Kenya's border security recruitment trends that prioritize practical training over advanced degrees to meet operational demands in resource-constrained environments (Khanneh & Anu, 2022) [20]. The scarcity of high school-only respondents reflected minimum entry barriers, while the substantial diploma unit underscored the vocational programs equipping officers for tactical roles like cargo inspections and patrol duties at Busia's one-stop post. The education skew presented opportunities and gaps for the cross-border crime control. Diploma-level officers offer hands-on expertise in enforcement protocols and inter-agency collaboration critical to the one-stop system's efficiency, yet the lower proportion of degree holders may limit strategic analysis of sophisticated crimes such as money laundering or human trafficking networks. High school graduates, though few, contribute frontline resilience but risk gaps in digital forensics or intelligence-led policing. As Sandi and Van den Berg (2025) [33] a proactive,

multidisciplinary approach and collaboration across sectors should be consistently emphasised as vital for any sustained strengthened security awareness impact. To bolster effectiveness, agencies should invest in upskilling initiatives bridging diplomas to degrees via sponsored programs and integrate specialized training on emerging threats thereby fostering a useful educational mix that can strengthen holistic crime prevention at Kenya's porous borders.

4.3 Objective for the Study

After presenting and examining the demographic characteristics of the participants, this section concentrated on the presentation and analysis of the primary research objective. This section provides the analysed and interpreted data concerning the objective, which sought to establish the roles of OSBP in enhancing collaboration among the security agencies to combat crime at the Busia border, Kenya. Effective cross-border crime control hinges on the seamless coordination of multiple enforcement agencies, a function the OSBP framework was specifically designed to facilitate through co-location and procedural harmonization. The findings presented herein (Table 2) reflect the respondents' perspectives on the extent to which this integrated model has fostered inter-agency cooperation and joint operational capacity.

Table 2: The Roles of OSBP In Enhancing Collaboration Among Security Agencies to Combat Crime at the Busia Border, Kenya

The Roles of OSBP In Enhancing Collaboration Among Security Agencies to Combat Crime at the Busia Border, Kenya	Frequency of Mentions	% of Respondents
Co-location of multiple agencies in a single physical facility to foster daily interaction & immediate consultation to combat crime.	52	96.3
Coordinated joint inspections and response to security incidents to fight crime.	44	81.5
Harmonization of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) reducing procedural conflicts between agencies to reduce law-breaking.	36	66.7
Joint platforms risk management facilitating real-time information sharing for combating criminality.	29	53.7
Joint multi-agency training & capacity building programs to allow agencies to develop a common set of mindsets for fighting crime.	18	33.3
Fostering a culture of mutual trust by breaking down territorial mindsets reducing inter-agency rivalry to combat crime.	11	20.4
Establishment of joint public relations & border branding to the public to improve the legitimacy of the border to reduce criminal activities.	5	9.3

As indicated in the findings above in Table 2, the overwhelming majority of 52 out of 54 respondents (96.3%) identified Co-location of Multiple Agencies in a Single Physical Facility to foster daily interaction and immediate consultation to combat crime as the primary role of the OSBP. This high frequency can be attributed to the fact that co-location was the most defining and tangible feature of the

One-Stop system. For almost every officer, the physical reality of moving from separate offices to sharing a workspace with other agencies created an unavoidable daily interaction that fundamentally altered the working environment to combat crime effectively.

Coordinated joint inspections and response to security incidents to fight crime as role, was mentioned by 44 respondents (81.5%), reflecting the core operational shift at the border. The high visibility of this function is due to the daily routine of officers like checking a truck or verifying a traveller alongside a KRA or Immigration officer regularly.

The harmonization of SOPs was cited by 36 respondents (66.7%). This indicated that while a significant majority recognize the reduction in procedural conflicts between agencies to reduce law-breaking, approximately one-third of the respondents did not explicitly mention it. This gap suggested that while senior and mid-level officers understand the formal alignment of rules, some junior officers may simply be following new orders without fully realizing that the protocols have been formally "harmonized" across agencies.

Only 29 respondents (53.7%) identified real-time information sharing for combating criminality as a key role. This figure revealed a divide in the efficacy of the system, that while the digital platforms exist, the fact that nearly half of the respondents did not mention it suggested that intelligence sharing remains imperfect. It implied that for many officers, data may still feel "stored" or guarded within some specific agencies rather than flowing freely in real-time.

Joint multi-agency training & capacity building programs to allow agencies to develop a common set of mindsets for fighting crime was mentioned by only 18 respondents (33.3%). This relatively low number implied that cross-agency capacity building was likely sporadic or targeted at specific units rather than the entire workforce. Consequently, the majority of officers had not personally experienced these joint sessions, leading fewer of them to identify it as a primary driver of collaboration.

A small minority of 11 respondents (20.4%) cited the fostering a culture of mutual trust by breaking down territorial mindsets reducing inter-agency rivalry to combat crime. This low percentage highlighted a critical finding that, while physical barriers have been removed (co-location), psychological barriers still remain. The data suggested that breaking down "territorial mindsets" is the most difficult challenge, with many officers likely still perceiving inter-agency rivalry such as power struggles between Police and KRA, rather than genuine trust.

The least mentioned role was establishment of joint public relations & border branding to the public to improve the legitimacy of the border to reduce criminal activities, identified by only 5 respondents (9.3%). This indicated that, the concepts like "public legitimacy" and "PR" are generally not top-of-mind for operational security personnel. This function was likely only recognized by the few senior managers and strategic commanders within the sample, while the rank-and-file officers focused on operational aspects.

a. Co-location of Multiple Agencies in a Single Physical Facility to Foster Daily Interaction and Immediate Consultation to Combat Crime

Co-location of multiple agencies within a single physical

facility to foster daily interaction and immediate consultation to combat crime stood out as the most cited role of the One-Stop Border Post (OSBP) in bolstering collaboration among the security agencies to combat crime at borders. By housing Police, KRA, Customs and Immigration officers under one roof, it dismantles geographical spaces, enabling seamless daily interactions and instant consultations critical for swift threat responses. A Senior Police Officer provided some direct lived experiences...

"Before OSBP, we would chase suspects across the border while the Customs and Immigration were clueless in separate offices. Now, with everyone under one roof, I can grab a KRA officer for an instant huddle on a suspicious truck with no phone tag, no delays. It has saved us from three smuggling busts this month alone and the juniors are learning faster from these daily cross-agency chats."

A KRA Manager offered some frontline insights...

"Co-location means my team and the Immigration share the same scanner room daily, we consult on manifests in real-time, spotting revenue leaks or fake docs together. It has built trust with no more finger-pointing across buildings and cuts clearance time by half for legit traders. Even during peak hours, this setup keeps our joint risk profiling sharp against sophisticated traffickers."

The verbatim accounts from the Senior Police Officer and KRA Manager underscored the transformative impact of co-location at Busia OSBP, where physical proximity has facilitated immediate consultations and dismantled operational spaces among the security agencies. Respondents highlighted how shared spaces enabled spontaneous huddles on suspicious consignments, reducing response times from hours to minutes and enhancing detection rates for cross-border crimes. However, these narratives also hinted at underlying tensions in inter-agency dynamics, where initial resistance to shared oversight persisted despite infrastructural integration. From a Routine Activity Theory perspective, co-location effectively converged capable guardians (multiple agencies) with motivated offenders at the border 'hotspot,' minimizing suitable targets through joint vigilance. Institutional Theory further explains how OSBP's formalized structures compelled normative uniformity, aligning agency procedures despite entrenched territorial norms.

In one scenario as captured in an interview, during a midnight patrol in October 2024, a Senior Police Officer spotted a truck veering onto a porous backdoor route near Busia. He immediately consulted the adjacent KRA scanner operator, uncovering concealed narcotics worth KSh 50 million that separate offices would have missed amid jurisdictional delays. Such incidents exemplified co-location's frontline value, yet challenges can emerge when overcrowded shared spaces led to bottlenecks during peak trader influxes, straining limited facilities and fostering minor turf disputes over equipment priority. This observation aligns with findings by Chen, Lee, Song and Wang (2025)^[9] who noted that while co-location enhances operational synergy at One-Stop Border Posts,

infrastructural limitations during high-volume periods often generate congestion and inter-agency friction over shared resources. The KRA Manager's emphasis on real-time manifest checks further validated this, as diploma holders leveraged practical proximity for revenue protection, though gender imbalances in other agencies limited diverse input.

The quotes revealed how co-location cultivated informal trust-building, with daily interactions bridging the "territorial mindsets" prevalent in Kenya's patriarchal security structures. By fostering face-to-face rapport, agencies like Police and KRA have developed unspoken protocols for joint risk profiling, boosting smuggling interdictions by some degree to post-OSBP commissioning. This cultural shift supported this study's findings on reduced finger-pointing, particularly among the mid-career officers (30-39 years cohort). Nevertheless, challenges can include heightened corruption risks in the visible shared environments, where peer oversight occasionally transformed into inter-agency surveillance, eroding morale among the junior staff unaccustomed to constant scrutiny.

Another interview was mentioned of a ground incident that occurred in July 2024 during a human trafficking alert was that, the KRA Manager, sharing the scanner room with the Immigration, instantly flagged abnormal passenger manifests, enabling a coordinated Police sweep that rescued five minors before they crossed into Uganda. This demonstrated co-location's crisis-response efficacy, aligning with the respondents' praise for halved clearance times. But challenges can persist, however, as technological glitches in the unified ICT platforms common in Busia's high-humidity conditions, disrupted real-time sharing, forcing reliance on verbal consultations that exposed language barriers among the multi-ethnic teams. This challenge echoes observations by Banerjee, Duflo and Qian (2020) ^[6] who argued that, the effectiveness of integrated border management systems can be constrained by the infrastructural vulnerabilities and the digital divide that undermines seamless data exchange during critical operations.

Ultimately, while the verbatims affirmed co-location as the cornerstone of OSBP-driven collaboration, they exposed gaps in scalability for Busia's high-volume flows. The Senior Police Officer's reference to accelerated junior learning through cross-chats promised long-term capacity building, yet sustained implementation demanded addressing infrastructural wear and uneven seniority distributions. In an interview a final scenario from December 2024, joint huddles averted a fuel smuggling ring by pooling KRA revenue intel with Police surveillance, seizing 10,000 liters enroute. Persistent challenges, such as burnout from 24/7 shared shifts and inadequate gender-inclusive facilities, have risked undermining these gains unless mitigated through targeted policy reforms. These insights positioned co-location as pivotal yet imperfect for holistic border security at Busia.

b. Coordinated Joint Inspections and Response to Security Incidents to Fight Crime

Coordinated joint inspections and responses to security incidents to fight crime emerged as the second most cited role of the One-Stop Border Post (OSBP) in strengthening collaboration among the security agencies to combat crime at borders. By enabling synchronized examinations of cargo, persons and threats alongside rapid multi-agency reactions,

the OSBP have transformed fragmented efforts into unified action, slashing duplication and amplifying detection of illicit activities. In the words of a Senior Police Officer respondent...

"Joint inspections mean we hit a suspicious container together, me, Customs and KRA, by scanning for weapons or drugs in one go, no back-and-forth delays that let smugglers slip away. Last week, this caught fake IDs on a busload heading to Uganda as our coordinated sweep nabbed the ring leader on the spot. The juniors now execute these drills flawlessly thanks to the hands-on rhythm we have built."

Customs Manager mentioned that...

"In responses to incidents like fuel smuggling alerts, we synchronize with the Police and Immigration right there in the inspection bay, verifying manifests and seals as a team to block diversions instantly. It cuts our error rate by 40%, turning what used to be chaos into a tight lockdown every time. Even during night shifts, this setup keeps our inter-agency chain unbreakable against repeat offenders."

The verbatim responses from the Senior Police Officer and Customs Manager highlighted the pivotal role of coordinated joint inspections and responses in elevating OSBP collaboration at Busia, where synchronized actions curtailed smuggling and enhanced incident management. The respondents emphasized how the unified examinations of containers and manifests eliminated procedural redundancies, slashing detection times and fortifying border integrity against illicit flows. Yet, these accounts subtly revealed frictions in resource allocation during high-stakes joint efforts, underscoring the need for the refined protocols. From an Institutional Theory lens, OSBP imposed coercive oneness by mandating unified protocols, compelling agencies to conform despite legacy spaces. The Routine Activity Theory complements this, positing that joint inspections converged capable guardians (multi-agency teams) at the border, deterring motivated offenders through intensified handler presence.

In a scenario from September 2024, a Senior Police Officer indicated during the interview that, he led a joint inspection on a high-risk bus, where coordinated scans with the Customs uncovered forged IDs and concealed narcotics, leading to five arrests before the vehicle crossed into Uganda. Such episodes illustrated the efficacy of on-the-spot synchronization, yet challenges can arise from the equipment shortages in shared bays, where competing agency demands for scanners caused 15-minute delays thereby amplifying vulnerabilities during peak hours. This finding is consistent with Boira and Berzi (2023) ^[7] who observed that resource constraints at integrated border facilities often undermine operational efficiency, as agencies compete for limited scanning equipment during high-traffic periods, creating temporal gaps exploitable by criminal networks. The Customs Manager's focus on error reduction further affirmed this, as male-dominated leadership leveraged tactical proximity for revenue safeguards, though junior input remained underrepresented.

These quotes illuminated how joint responses cultivated operational resilience, bridging gaps between Police

enforcement and Customs verification in Kenya's hierarchical security landscape. Through integrated sweeps, agencies achieved a 40% interdiction uptick, as daily drills enhanced collective proficiency against evolving threats like fuel diversion. This supported findings on minimized chaos, especially for mid-career personnel. However, challenges can include interpersonal rivalries during high-pressure incidents, where seniority clashes over lead roles slowed initial responses and eroded the team cohesion among the multi-ethnic staff. During a November 2024 fuel smuggling alert, the Customs Manager orchestrated a bay lockdown with the Police and Immigration, verifying seals in tandem to seize 5,000 liters diverted via falsified papers. This exemplified crisis lockdown precision, echoing the respondents' praise for unbreakable chains. Persistent challenges, such as fatigue from extended joint shifts in Busia's humid conditions, led to oversight lapses, while the inconsistent training exposed procedural variances that undermined full synchronization. This challenge aligns with findings by Chen, *et al.*, (2025) ^[9] who noted that, the human factors, including physical exhaustion and uneven capacity-building across agencies, remain critical impediments to sustaining coordinated border operations in East African OSBPs.

In summary, the verbatims positioned coordinated inspections as an essential of OSBP efficacy, yet flagged scalability limits amid Busia's traffic surges. The Senior Police Officer's nod to junior proficiency gains signaled sustained capacity enhancement, though the enduring implementation required tackling infrastructural strains and rank disparities. In a December 2024 bus sweep scenario, unified action intercepted a trafficking network, rescuing three victims through manifest cross-checks. Ongoing hurdles like the inter-agency credit disputes and inadequate night-shift backups threatened these advances, necessitating policy tweaks for enduring border security. These observations framed joint coordination as essential but contingent on overcoming entrenched operational barriers.

c. Harmonization of Standard Operating Procedures Reducing Procedural Conflicts Between Agencies to Reduce Law-Breaking

This section delved into the third most mentioned role, which was the harmonization of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) in reducing procedural conflicts between the agencies. By replacing fragmented, agency-specific protocols with a single and unified workflow, the OSBP can eliminate any friction that can cause delays in clearance processes and generate inter-agency disputes. Respondents consistently highlighted this alignment as a critical mechanism that has transformed competing mandates into complementary functions, thereby enabling smoother and more predictable collaboration across the border security architecture. A verbatim from a customs manager interviewed was that...

"Let me tell you the single biggest headache we had before this OSBP was that, every agency had its own inspection sequence. Immigration wanted the passenger out first, Police wanted the vehicle searched first, KRA wanted the declaration verified first and we in Customs wanted the goods physically examined before anything else. You would finish your procedure only to be told, 'No, start again, the Police

have not finished.' It was chaos, trucks queued for days, drivers bribing anyone to jump the queue. Now, because of the harmonized SOPs, there is only one sequence that every agency sign onto. The driver stops once, hands over documents once, the vehicle is scanned once, the passenger is interviewed once and we all work on the same file at the same time."

The Customs Manager's testimony provided a compelling account of the transformative impact of harmonized Standard Operating Procedures on the inter-agency coordination at the Busia OSBP. The respondent's vivid description of the pre-OSBP chaos, where each agency operated according to its own inspection sequence illustrated the operational fragmentation that historically plagued the border management. A critical discussion here centered on the inefficiency costs of the procedural disharmony. A scenario was mentioned during the interviews which involved a truck carrying agricultural produce arriving at the border; under the old system whereby the Immigration demanded to process the driver first, the Police insisted on searching the cargo for contraband, KRA required duty verification and Customs wanted physical examination of the goods. The driver, caught between the competing demands, was forced to shuttle between offices for days, often resorting to bribes to expedite the process a situation that not only delayed a legitimate trade but also had created fertile ground for corruption.

The respondent's assertion that drivers previously "queued for days" underscored the economic burden that procedural conflicts imposed on the cross-border commerce. This finding aligned with the principles of trade facilitation, which emphasize that predictable, streamlined processes are essential for reducing transaction costs. This observation is consistent with De and Kumarasamy (2024) ^[13] who established that trade facilitation measures, including harmonized border procedures, directly reduce transaction costs and enhance the predictability essential for competitive cross-border commerce. However, a significant challenge inherent in the harmonization process was the initial resistance from the agencies reluctant to cede procedural autonomy. Officers who had built their authority around their agency's unique protocols often viewed the unified sequence as a dilution of their mandate, creating friction during the transition period. Additionally, the effectiveness of harmonized SOPs remained contingent on consistent training as the junior officers who joined after the harmonization have not up to date fully appreciated the rationale behind the unified workflow, potentially leading to inadvertent deviations that could inadvertently reintroduce procedural conflicts.

The description of the "Common Inspection Sequence" where the driver stopped once, submitted documents once and underwent a single scan represented a fundamental redesign of the border clearance architecture. This consolidation eliminated the duplication of effort that previously characterized multi-agency borders, where each authority conducted redundant verifications. This transformation was best explained through the lens of Institutional Theory, which posits that organizations adopt oneness practices to gain legitimacy and efficiency within a shared institutional field. By aligning their procedures under a single OSBP framework, the agencies shifted from competing institutional logics to a unified normative order

that redefined acceptable border behavior. A scenario revealed during the interviews illustrating this improvement involved a fuel tanker entering the Busia border, whereby previously, such high-risk cargo would have been subjected to separate and often contradictory inspections by Police (for security), Customs (for duty), KRA (for revenue) and Standards agencies (for quality). Under the harmonized SOPs, all agencies examined the single file simultaneously, identified their respective concerns in one coordinated session and released the tanker within hours rather than days demonstrating how procedural unity translated into tangible operational efficiency.

Nevertheless, the sustainability of this harmonization can face ongoing challenges that warrant critical attention. The respondent's optimistic account did not address the possibility of agencies reverting to independent procedures during high-pressure periods, such as during surges in cargo volume or when the inter-agency tensions flare over jurisdictional matters. Furthermore, the harmonized SOPs were only as effective as the enforcement mechanisms behind them as without regular audits and a clear dispute resolution framework, there is a risk that some individual agencies might gradually reintroduce informal procedures that served their specific interests. This concern echoed findings by Durand *et al.*, (2022) ^[15] who argued that, the sustainability of the harmonized border procedures depends critically on robust compliance monitoring and institutionalized dispute resolution mechanisms to prevent agencies from reverting to agency-centric practices over time. The reliance on a single unified sequence also meant that if one agency experienced delays such as a system downtime at KRA, the entire clearance process would stall, potentially creating new bottlenecks that could erode the gains achieved through harmonization.

d. Joint Platforms Risk Management Facilitating Real-Time Information Sharing for Combating Criminality

This section presents the fourth most mentioned role of the OSBP that is the establishment of joint risk management platforms that facilitate real-time information sharing among the security agencies. By linking previously isolated databases and creating shared risk profiles, the system can enable officers to access critical intelligence instantly, whether on suspicious cargo, wanted persons or fraudulent documents. Respondents consistently recognized this digital integration as a pivotal shift from the reactive, agency-specific alerts to a proactive, collective early-warning mechanism that significantly strengthened collaborative threat detection at the border. An Assistant Chief Immigration Officer interviewed had this to say...

"Before this OSBP, when a Red Notice name appeared on my screen, I would print it, write a memo, walk to the Police station 200 metres away and pray someone was there to receive it. By the time the Police arrived, the suspect had long disappeared into the crowd. Now the moment the system flags a wanted person, the Police officer who sits literally two desks away sees the same alert on his terminal at the exact same second. Last week we had a murder suspect from Kampala who the name popped up, I just turned my head and said 'Sergeant, Red Notice, lane 3' and within thirty seconds he was already in cuffs while still holding his passport. That is what real-time

sharing means, seconds instead of days."

A senior police officer at the border added...

"In the old border, Immigration would clear a passenger and only later send us a list of names to look for. You would chase ghosts because the person was already in a matatu heading to Nairobi. Now we share the same screen. When the Immigration scans a passport and the system turns red, my computer beeps at the same time. I do not wait for a phone call or a memo. I just stand up, walk ten steps and intercept the person before they even reach the exit gate. Two months ago, we arrested a guy carrying 42 stolen passports because the alert came while he was still being interviewed. That kind of speed never existed before the OSBP."

The verbatims from both the Immigration Officer and the Police Officer powerfully illustrated how the OSBP's joint risk management platforms have transformed real-time information sharing from a theoretical goal into a daily operational reality. The shift from printed memos and delayed referrals to simultaneous alerts on shared terminals represented one of the most significant achievements of the integrated border model. This transformation aligns with the Routine Activity Theory, which posits that crime is prevented when capable guardians are present at the point of convergence between the motivated offenders and suitable targets. By enabling instant alerts across agencies, the OSBP has effectively positioned multiple capable guardians at the critical moment of border crossing, thereby disrupting the opportunity structure that the criminals previously exploited. This finding confirmed that, the technological backbone of the OSBP had successfully dismantled the information spaces that previously allowed wanted persons and traffickers to exploit sequential processing. A scenario on the ground said during the interviews involved a human trafficking suspect arriving on a night bus from Kampala and the moment the Immigration scanned the passport, the red flag appeared simultaneously on both the Immigration and Police screens. Within seconds, the Junior Police Officer standing nearby intercepted the individual before he could exit the control zone, demonstrating how real-time sharing reduced the escape window from hours to virtually zero.

The Assistant Immigration Officer's remark that he simply "turned his head and said 'Sergeant, Red Notice, lane 3'" captured the dramatic reduction in response dormancy. This casual, almost informal handover highlighted the level of integration achieved. Critically, this immediacy directly contradicts the earlier fears that agencies would resist sharing sensitive intelligence due to institutional rivalry. These finding challenges earlier observations by Al Waroi (2024) ^[2] who posited that inter-agency intelligence sharing at borders would remain inhibited by institutional protectionism, where agencies guard information as a source of jurisdictional power rather than a shared security asset. On the ground, this manifested in the arrest of a murder suspect from Kampala within thirty seconds of detection, as described by the respondent. Such incidents illustrated that, the OSBP had effectively converted information sharing from a bureaucratic process into an instantaneous reflex

action, significantly enhancing the collective capacity to intercept high-risk individuals at the point of entry.

The Police Officer's testimony that he no longer had to "chase ghosts" because alerts arrived while the suspect was still at the counter underscored the preventive rather than reactive nature of the new system. However, a notable challenge that emerged from the findings was the heavy dependence on electricity and network connectivity. In cases where power outages or internet downtime occurred, the shared platforms would become temporarily inoperative, can force the officers to revert to the manual processes and reintroduce the risk of delayed alerts. The respondents in the questionnaires wrote instances where suspects cleared Immigration during brief system failures only to be flagged hours later when connectivity was restored, allowing them to disappear into Kenya.

Furthermore, the verbatim accounts revealed that while real-time sharing functioned exceptionally well for passenger-related alerts, its application to cargo remained inconsistent. But despite the digital maturity across agencies like the passenger manifest systems being fully integrated, the cargo declaration platforms still suffered from partial connectivity and differing data formats. This discrepancy aligns with research by Al-Salim, Faraj and Tarek (2023) [3] who found that cargo-related information systems at African OSBPs lag significantly behind passenger processing platforms due to legacy software incompatibilities and the absence of standardized data exchange protocols across revenue and the security agencies. A practical scenario as stated in one of the interviews involved a consignment of counterfeit goods that cleared Customs because the risk flag generated by KRA's system did not immediately reflect on the Police terminal due to a synchronization delay, allowing the truck to proceed before the alert was manually communicated twenty minutes later.

Ultimately, the respondents' narratives demonstrated that, the joint risk management platforms had fundamentally altered the tempo of the border security operations. The ability to act within seconds rather than days represented a paradigm shift from sequential to parallel processing of intelligence. Yet, the findings also indicated that this capability remained fragile and technology-dependent. Without continuous investment in backup power systems, redundant connectivity and full harmonization of cargo databases, the impressive gains in real-time information sharing risked being undermined by infrastructural vulnerabilities inherent in the East African operating environment.

e. Joint multi-agency Training and Capacity Building Programs to Allow Agencies to Develop a Common Set of Mindsets for Fighting Crime

This section addressed the fifth most mentioned role of the OSBP: the conduct of joint multi-agency training and capacity-building programmes. These initiatives brought officers from Police, KRA, Customs, Immigration and the other agencies together in shared learning environments to align skills, procedures and, most importantly, their mindsets. The respondents viewed these programmes as essential for cultivating a unified approach to border security, gradually replacing agency-specific thinking with a collective "one-border" philosophy that underpinned effective collaboration. An Assistant Immigration Officer interviewed had this to say...

"I have been to four joint OSBP trainings in Naivasha and Mombasa. Before the first one, I used to think Customs officers were only interested in revenue and would clear anything if the bribe was good. After sitting with them for one week, eating together, doing the same simulation exercises, I realised they also fear losing their jobs if they let drugs through. Now when I see a passenger with suspicious behaviour, the first person I call is the Customs officer who sat next to me in training as I know he will come immediately because we are no longer strangers. The training did not teach me new laws but it taught me that we are all on the same side."

A Customs Officer mentioned that...

"Before the joint training I did not like the Police officers. I thought they only came to the border to arrest my informers and spoil my deals. But in Naivasha we stayed in the same dormitory, did night patrols together in the simulation and I discovered the Police guy was also scared of armed smugglers just like me. Now when I find a truck with hidden compartments, I do not hide it anymore as I call Sergeant Otieno by name and say 'come see what I have for you'. We plan the operation together. That training changed everything; it turned enemies into brothers."

The verbatims from the Immigration Officer and the Customs Officer revealed that, the joint multi-agency training programs constituted a powerful, yet under-utilized, mechanism for mindset transformation at the Busia OSBP. Both respondents emphasized how sitting in the same classroom with the officers from the rival agencies dismantled years of institutional suspicion. A critical discussion here centered on the distinction between the technical training and the cultural re-socialization. While most border programs focused on procedures and software, these joint sessions uniquely targeted the human factor, that is replacing the "them-versus-us" mentality with a shared professional identity. A scenario was revealed that illustrated this shift that, during a mock exercise, a Customs Officer who had previously viewed Police as "obstructionists" voluntarily shared his cargo manifest with a Police counterpart to trace a suspected heroin container, an action he admitted would have been unthinkable before the training.

The Customs Officer's candid admission that he now called Police colleagues by first name and jointly planned operations highlighted the depth of interpersonal trust forged through prolonged interaction in training environments. This finding suggested that, the collaboration was not merely structural but deeply relational as the physical co-location and harmonized SOPs provided the platform, yet only sustained human contact dissolved the psychological barriers inherited from the decades of separationist operations. This process is best explained by the Institutional Theory, which argues that true oneness occurs not through coercive structures alone but through normative re-socialization, where the actors internalize shared values and identities through repeated interaction. The joint training sessions effectively created a new normative field in which a "one-border" professional identity superseded the

old agency-specific loyalties. It was revealed that, this manifested itself when an Immigration Officer, fresh from a joint training in Naivasha, proactively alerted a KRA officer about a passenger carrying undeclared high-value goods instead of just processing him silently, which was a direct behavioral change attributed to the shared learning experience.

Despite these successes, the respondents also exposed significant challenges in the implementation of the joint training programs. The critique revealed that participation remained heavily skewed toward the middle and the junior ranks, with senior commanders rarely attending, thereby limiting the institutionalization of the new mindset at the decision-making level. This finding aligns with observations by Kamrul (2023) ^[19] who noted that capacity-building initiatives at integrated border facilities often fail to achieve systemic transformation because senior leadership, who hold decision-making authority, rarely participate in joint training programs designed for the operational staff. A scenario from the interviews that exemplified this gap had occurred when a newly trained junior team devised a joint operation to intercept a fuel-smuggling ring, only to have it vetoed by a senior Police officer who had never participated in the training and insisted on following the “traditional” protocols, effectively undermining the collaborative spirit cultivated among the lower ranks.

Furthermore, both respondents noted that training sessions were infrequent and often donor-driven, raising concerns about their sustainability. The critical limitation was the absence of a systematic, government-funded annual training calendar whenever the donor funding dried up, the programs ceased, allowing old rivalries to resurface. This vulnerability corroborated research by Ayele *et al.*, (2023) ^[5] which documented that, the sustainability of the inter-agency training at East African OSBPs remains precarious due to excessive reliance on donor funding, with programs frequently collapsing when the external support is withdrawn. In one documented incident six months after the last joint workshop, a minor jurisdictional disagreement over a seized vehicle escalated into a week-long stand-off because the officers involved had not undergone the shared training and reverted to pre-OSBP adversarial postures.

Ultimately, the findings positioned joint multi-agency training as the most cost-effective yet most neglected investment in OSBP collaboration. While co-location and digital platforms received substantial funding, the human dimension, requiring only classrooms and facilitators, remained chronically under-resourced. Without institutionalizing regular, mandatory joint training across all ranks and funding it domestically, the impressive cultural gains reported by the respondents risked gradual erosion, potentially reducing the OSBP to a sophisticated physical structure inhabited by officers who continued to operate with fragmented mindsets.

f. Fostering a Culture of Mutual Trust by Breaking Down Territorial Mindsets Reducing Inter-Agency Rivalry to Combat Crime

This section examined the second-least mentioned yet profoundly significant role of the OSBP: fostering a culture of mutual trust by breaking down territorial mindsets and reducing inter-agency rivalry. While physical and procedural integration received greater attention, respondents recognized that sustainable collaboration

ultimately rested on the gradual erosion of historical suspicions and power struggles between the agencies. The shared OSBP environment, through daily proximity and joint operations, can slowly replace the institutional defensiveness with a collective ownership of border security outcomes, marking the most difficult but indispensable dimension of the true inter-agency cohesion. A Senior Police Officer interviewed had this to say...

"Let me be honest as five years ago I did not like the Customs. I believed every Customs officer was on the take and only cared about revenue, not security. When a container was sealed, I thought they were hiding something. I would send my boys to break the seal and search it anyway. Now? Every morning at 7:30 I take my tea with the Customs Manager in the same office. We sit together, look at the risk reports and decide jointly which trucks to open. I no longer think 'Customs is hiding money'; I think 'my brother here is protecting the same border I am'. The OSBP did not just put us in one building; it forced us to see each other as human beings. That is the real change."

A Customs Manager mentioned that...

"I used to dread the sight of a Police Land Cruiser pulling up. I knew it meant trouble; they would come with guns, demand to open sealed containers, accuse us of clearing contraband and intimidate my officers. I saw them as bullies who wanted to show they were more powerful than Customs. Today? The OCS walks into my office without knocking, calls me by my nickname and asks, 'Boss, what do your risk engines say about this consignment?' We decide together. I now trust that when Police intervene, it is for security, not to humiliate us. The OSBP took away our separate kingdoms and gave us one border to defend together. That has killed the old rivalry."

The verbatims from the Senior Police Officer and the Customs Manager provided compelling evidence that, the OSBP framework had achieved what structural reforms alone could never accomplish that is, the dissolution of deeply entrenched inter-agency hostility. The OCS's candid confession that he previously "did not like Customs" and believed every officer was corrupt represented the raw institutional prejudice that had poisoned border operations for decades. The transformative power of enforced proximity whereby rival agency heads shares the same physical space daily, the OSBP has created conditions for humanization that no policy directive could mandate. This phenomenon aligns with the Institutional Theory, which posits that organizations operating within the same institutional field gradually adopt shared norms, values and practices through copied and normative oneness. The daily ritual of sharing tea and jointly reviewing risk reports effectively have created a new institutional logic where collaboration has superseded competition as the dominant operational norm. This shift was illustrated whereby previously the OCS would dispatch armed officers to forcibly break Customs seals on suspected containers, but the new reality involves both leaders sitting together over the morning tea, jointly reviewing risk reports and consensually deciding which consignments warranted

inspection which is a dramatic departure from the adversarial norm.

The Customs Manager's admission that he once "dreaded the sight of a Police Land Cruiser" captured the fear and resentment that historically defined the relationship between the revenue and the security agencies. His description of Police officers as "bullies who wanted to show they were more powerful" reflected a perception rooted in years of jurisdictional overreach and intimidation. This finding suggested that, trust-building required not merely structural co-location but sustained, positive interpersonal interactions that gradually replaced the negative stereotypes with mutual respect. This observation is directly supported by Mendez-Parra and Calabrese (2023) ^[23] who argued that, genuine normative togetherness and cultural change in organizations occur through repeated interpersonal contact and shared experiences rather than through coercive or imitative mechanisms alone. This was manifested in a customs Manager's newfound willingness to consult the OCS on security matters when a consignment of electronics flagged as potentially counterfeit arrived. The Customs Manager personally walked to the Police desk and requested joint verification, an action he acknowledged would have been "unthinkable" in the pre-OSBP era when such a move would have been perceived as surrendering jurisdictional authority. Despite these remarkable cultural gains, the respondents' narratives also exposed the fragility of this trust. The critical challenge identified was the personality-dependent nature of the current rapport which was the mutual respect described existed specifically between these two individuals rather than being institutionalized across all ranks. An interview exemplified this scenario this vulnerability that it occurred when the OCS proceeded on annual leave and his replacement an officer who had never worked within the OSBP environment immediately reverted to the old confrontational approach, demanding unilateral access to sealed containers and bypassing the Customs Manager entirely. Within two weeks, the carefully cultivated trust deteriorated into open hostility, demonstrating that without systematic succession planning and orientation, the cultural transformation remained precarious.

Furthermore, both respondents acknowledged that while their personal relationship had improved, pockets of rivalry persisted at the junior levels. It was revealed that, the morning tea ritual and joint decision-making remained confined to the leadership tier, while the junior officers continued to harbor suspicions inherited from their institutional training. In one documented incident, a Junior Police Officer publicly accused a Junior Customs Officer of facilitating smuggling during a cargo inspection, triggering a verbal altercation that required intervention from both agency heads. This persistence of junior-level rivalry despite leadership-level trust is consistent with Vincent and Njong (2021) ^[38] who found that while senior officers at East African OSBPs achieved high levels of mutual trust within 18 months of co-location, whereas the junior officers retained pre-OSBP adversarial attitudes for up to four years without targeted lower-rank bonding interventions. This scenario underscored that trust-building at the top did not automatically cascade downward and those deliberate efforts to replicate the same interpersonal bonding opportunities at the lower ranks remained essential for comprehensive cultural change.

Ultimately, the findings positioned the fostering of mutual trust as the most profound yet most vulnerable achievement of the OSBP framework. The transformation from "separate kingdoms" to "one border to defend together," as articulated by the Customs Manager, represented the apex of inter-agency collaboration. However, without institutionalizing this culture through mandatory joint orientation for all incoming officers, formal trust-building protocols and succession planning that preserved relational gains across leadership transitions, the OSBP risked regressing to its pre-integration state whenever key personalities departed. The verbatims thus revealed that, while the OSBP had successfully demonstrated that trust was achievable, sustaining it required investments in the human systems as deliberate as those made in the physical infrastructure.

g. Establishment of Joint Public Relations and Border Branding to the Public to Improve the Legitimacy of the Border to Reduce Criminal Activities

This section addressed the least mentioned yet symbolically important role of the OSBP that was, the establishment of joint public relations and unified border branding to enhance public legitimacy. By presenting a single, professional face to traders, travellers and the surrounding community, the various agencies can move away from the previous perception of fragmented, competing authorities toward the image of one cohesive border. Respondents recognized that this collective branding, though rarely prioritized in daily operations, quietly reinforced internal collaboration by aligning all agencies under a shared reputation that each felt responsible for protecting. A KRA Manager interviewed had this to say...

"Before OSBP, traders used to say 'Busia is four different borders in one place' as each agency had its own signboard, its own uniform and its own story. They never knew who to fear or who to bribe next. Now when a clearing agent drives in, he sees one big sign that says 'Welcome to Kenya – Busia One-Stop Border Post' with all our logos together. He parks once, pays once, gets cleared once. Last month a big importer told me, 'For the first time I feel I am entering a serious country, not a market of agencies fighting for my money.' That single brand has done more for revenue collection than ten sensitization seminars. When the public sees us as one professional border, they comply voluntarily and that forces every officer here to behave because nobody wants to be the one who spoils the new reputation, we all share."

An Assistant Immigration Officer mentioned that...

"Travellers used to arrive scared as they did not know whether Immigration would finish first or Police would pull them aside or Customs would delay them for duty. They saw chaos. Now the first thing they see is one beautiful gate, one Kenyan flag, one banner that says 'Busia OSBP – One Stop, One Kenya'. When they walk in, all of us wear the same OSBP lanyard, we sit behind one counter with one logo. A Ugandan lady told me last week, 'I feel like I am entering a real country now, not a bus station with many bosses.' That single image we project together has changed"

everything. When the public respects the border as one professional entity, none of us dares to ask for a bribe in the open anymore because we know we would shame the whole team, not just our own department. The brand protects us from ourselves."

The KRA Manager and the Immigration Officer testimonies revealed that, the joint public relations and unified border branding, though the least-mentioned role, exerted a powerful indirect influence on the inter-agency collaboration at Busia OSBP. Both the respondents described how the single entrance gate, shared signage and the common lanyards have created an external perception of unity that subsequently imposed internal discipline. And as a result of reputational interdependence when agencies are publicly presented as one entity, individual misconduct risks damaging the collective brand, thereby generating peer pressure stronger than any formal sanction. A scenario was illustrated during the interviews, when a clearing agent filmed a Junior Police Officer soliciting a bribe under the prominent OSBP banner; within hours the video circulated on social media with the caption "This is how Kenya's new modern border treats us," prompting immediate intervention from all agency heads who jointly suspended the officer to protect the shared reputation.

The Immigration Officer's observation that travellers now felt they were "entering a real country, not a bus station with many bosses" highlighted how branding has transformed the public legitimacy from a peripheral concern into a strategic asset. The unified visual identity has replaced the previous chaotic impression of competing authorities with an image of professionalism and order. This finding demonstrated that external perception directly shaped internal behaviour as the officers who once operated with impunity now are exercising self-restraint because they understand that their actions will be judged against the collective OSBP brand rather than their individual agency. This phenomenon is best explained by Institutional Theory, which argues that organizations gain and maintain legitimacy by conforming to the normative expectations of their external environment. By projecting a single, professional border identity, the OSBP has created a new institutional myth of unity that the officers feel compelled to enact in practice, lest they be seen as violating the very legitimacy the brand conferred. On the ground, this manifested when a Ugandan passenger openly praised the "one counter, one Kenya" experience to a television crew, prompting officers from all agencies to stand taller and process documents more efficiently, aware that positive public feedback reinforced the legitimacy they all shared.

Despite these gains, the respondents indirectly exposed the superficiality that could undermine joint branding efforts. The critical challenge lay in the gap between appearance and reality, while the physical branding was impeccable, underlying tensions occasionally surfaced, threatening to expose the unity as cosmetic. This observation aligns with Vincent and Njong (2021) ^[38] who noted that organizational legitimacy derived from symbolic branding remains vulnerable when substantive internal conflicts contradict the projected image, risking public exposure that undermines credibility. A scenario that exemplified this risk was mentioned by one of those interviewed occurred when a major power outage disabled the shared passenger processing system for six hours where frustrated travelers

witnessed officers from different agencies publicly blaming one another in front of the OSBP cameras, instantly shattering the carefully cultivated image of seamless coordination and reinforcing old stereotypes of dysfunction for everyone watching on the social media.

Furthermore, both the respondents acknowledged that the branding initiative remained heavily dependent on donor-funded infrastructure and communication campaigns. The critique revealed that without domestic budgetary allocation for maintenance of signage, uniforms and public engagement activities, the unified brand risked gradual deterioration. In one documented incident six months after donor funding ended, faded banners and missing agency logos on the main gate led traders to remark that "the one-border idea is finished," prompting a temporary resurgence of open solicitation as officers sensed that the collective reputational shield had weakened.

Ultimately, the findings positioned joint public relations and border branding as the least visible yet potentially most potent lever for sustaining collaboration. The KRA Manager's assertion that "the brand protects us from ourselves" captured the paradoxical power of external perception in enforcing internal accountability. However, without transitioning from donor-driven symbolism to the domestically sustained public engagement, the impressive legitimacy gains achieved through unified branding remained vulnerable to erosion, potentially reducing the OSBP to an aesthetically unified facility whose officers continued to operate with fragmented loyalties beneath the shared façade. This concern echoes observations by Matteucci (2020) ^[22] who argued that One-Stop Border Posts risk becoming hollow symbols of integration when governments fail to domesticate the funding of the public engagement activities, allowing superficial unity to mask persistent inter-agency fragmentation.

5. Conclusion

Based the findings of the study, the study concluded that, the One-Stop Border Post (OSBP) has significantly enhanced inter-agency collaboration at the Busia border by integrating operations, improving information sharing and increasing efficiency in detecting and preventing cross-border crimes such as smuggling and trafficking.

However, it also concluded that, the effectiveness of the OSBP is constrained by underdeveloped soft collaboration mechanisms (such as joint training and trust-building), infrastructural challenges including ICT failures and equipment shortages and cultural resistance among some officers, thereby limiting the full realization of its intended outcomes.

6. Recommendation

Based the findings of the study, the study recommended that, the policymakers should prioritize sustained funding for the joint training across all ranks, resilient infrastructure upgrades, mandatory onboarding to build trust and domesticate border branding initiatives to overcome the OSBP gaps and ensure lasting inter-agency collaboration at Busia.

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