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THE EFFECTIVENESS OF BORDER MANAGEMENT BY NIGERIAN IMMIGRATION SERVICE IN ADDRESSING IRREGULAR MIGRATION IN KANO STATE, 2015-2025

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Abstract

Irregular migration has emerged as a significant security and governance challenge in Nigeria, particularly in border regions where weak surveillance systems, porous borders, and transnational criminal networks facilitate unauthorized cross-border movements. This study examines the effectiveness of border management by the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) in addressing irregular migration in Kano State between 2015 and 2025. The study is anchored on the Migration Theory, which explains how migration-related issues are framed as security concerns requiring state intervention. Both quantitative and qualitative research design was adopted, relying on primary data sources where questionnaire were administered to sampled population using stratified random sampling technique and secondary data sourced from government reports, policy documents, journal articles, official publications of the NIS, and reports from international organizations. Findings reveal that the NIS has implemented several border management measures, including enhanced border patrol operations, biometric data systems, inter-agency collaboration, and the adoption of technology-driven surveillance mechanisms. Despite these efforts, the effectiveness of border management remains constrained by porous borders, inadequate manpower, insufficient technological infrastructure, corruption, poor funding, and weak regional cooperation. The study further finds that Kano State's strategic location as a commercial hub and transit corridor increases its vulnerability to irregular migration and related transnational crimes. While the NIS has recorded some successes in migrant documentation, border monitoring, and migration control, these achievements have not substantially eliminated irregular migration within the study period. The paper concludes that strengthening border governance requires improved technological capacity, enhanced personnel training, increased funding, and stronger collaboration with neighboring countries. The study recommends the adoption of integrated border management strategies to improve migration control and national security outcomes in Nigeria.

Keywords: Border, Immigration, Irregular Migration, Management

Introduction

Irregular migration remains a significant challenge in Nigeria, particularly in transit and origin states like Kano, where the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) is at the forefront of migration management and border control (Ajibade, 2023). The phenomenon is driven by a combination of poverty, insecurity, lack of economic opportunities, and porous borders,

exposing migrants to risks such as trafficking, exploitation, and abuse (International Organisation for Migration IOM, 2019; Obi, Bartolini, & D'Haese, 2019). The NIS, as Nigeria's lead agency on migration, has undergone structural reforms to enhance its capacity to address the complexities of irregular migration, including the creation of specialized directorates and units focused on border management, investigation, compliance, and migration (Nigeria Immigration Service, 2021).

Kano State's strategic location as a commercial and migration hub in northern Nigeria makes it a critical point for both outbound and inbound irregular migration (NAPTIP, 2024; Obi et al., 2019). The state's proximity to international borders with Niger and Chad, coupled with extensive road and rail infrastructure, facilitates the movement of people, goods, and services but also presents challenges for migration control (NAPTIP, 2024; Ajibade, 2023). Irregular migration from Kano is often linked to transnational crimes, including human trafficking and smuggling, with many victims ending up in exploitative situations in North Africa, the Middle East, and Europe (NAPTIP, 2024; IOM, 2022).

Border security and surveillance capacity are fundamental to the NIS's effectiveness in Kano. The agency faces the daunting task of monitoring vast and often unmanned borders, which are exploited by traffickers and smugglers (IOM, 2022; Sokoto - IOM Nigeria, 2019). Recent interventions, such as the deployment of mobile Border Management Information System (BMIS) devices and the Migration Information Data Analysis System (MIDAS), have enhanced the ability of NIS officers to register and track cross- border movements (IOM, 2022; IOM, 2024). However, limited resources, outdated equipment, and insufficient manpower remain persistent obstacles to comprehensive border management (Ajibade, 2023; Sokoto - IOM Nigeria, 2019). Enforcement of immigration laws constitutes another critical dimension of the NIS's mandate. The Immigration Act of 2015 empowers the Service to regulate entry and exit, issue travel documents, and apprehend offenders (Nigeria Immigration Service, 2021). Periodic crackdowns on irregular migrants, such as the planned clampdown and amnesty programme announced for 2025, demonstrate the government's commitment to strict enforcement (ICA, 2025). Nevertheless, enforcement efforts are often undermined by corruption, fraudulent documentation, and inadequate legal frameworks, which can compromise the integrity of migration management (Ajibade, 2023; Post-Colonial Nigerian State, 2019).

Despite these efforts, the effectiveness of the NIS is frequently undermined by systemic issues such as corruption, weak legal frameworks, and poor coordination among agencies (Ajibade, 2023; Post-Colonial Nigerian State, 2019). Addressing these challenges requires not only technical and financial investment but also political will and sustained engagement with local communities, civil society, and international partners (NAPTIP, 2024; IOM, 2022). Kano State's high prevalence of trafficking and irregular migration underscores the need for targeted interventions and sustained collaboration between government, international organizations, and local stakeholders (NAPTIP, 2024; IOM, 2024). The establishment of the Kano State Task Force on Human Trafficking and the rescue and rehabilitation of victims highlight the importance of multi-sectoral approaches (NAPTIP, 2024).

In essence, the role of the Nigeria Immigration Service in addressing irregular migration in Kano State is multifaceted, encompassing border management, law enforcement, collaboration, public sensitization, resource mobilization, and support for returnees (Ajibade, 2023; NAPTIP, 2024; IOM, 2022). These different aspects are deeply interconnected and essential for a comprehensive and effective response to irregular migration. However, despite the recognition of these responsibilities and the implementation of various interventions, there remains a significant gap in empirical research that specifically examines how these

functions are carried out at the sub- national level, particularly within the unique operational context of the Kano State Command. Existing studies tend to focus on national policies or general challenges, often overlooking the nuanced, context-specific factors that influence the effectiveness of the Nigeria Immigration Service in Kano (Obi et al., 2019; ICA, 2025; Harmonize Survey Report, 2021). This study aims to bridge this gap by systematically analyzing the interplay of these functions within the Kano State Command, identifying context- specific challenges and best practices, and offering evidence-based recommendations to enhance the capacity of the Nigeria Immigration Service to address irregular migration while safeguarding both national security and the rights of migrants (IOM, 2024; Post- Colonial Nigerian State, 2019; Expression of Interest - IOM Nigeria, 2023; Nigerian Immigration Service, 2021).

Statement of the Problem

Irregular migration has emerged as a major security, social, and economic challenge in Nigeria, particularly in border and transit states such as Kano State. Owing to its strategic geographical location as a commercial hub connecting Nigeria with neighboring countries in the West African sub-region, Kano State experiences significant cross-border movements of persons and goods. While regional integration frameworks, especially the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement, facilitate legal migration, they have also created opportunities for irregular migration through unauthorized routes and inadequate documentation procedures. Reports of undocumented migrants, human trafficking, smuggling networks, cybercrime activities involving foreign nationals, and other transnational crimes in Kano State have raised concerns about the effectiveness of border management mechanisms.

The Nigeria Immigration Service is the principal agency responsible for border control, migration management, and the enforcement of immigration laws in Nigeria. Despite various reforms, deployment of personnel, surveillance efforts, and collaborative security operations, irregular migration continues to persist across Nigeria's porous borders. Studies have identified challenges such as inadequate manpower, poor surveillance technology, corruption, insufficient funding, weak inter-agency coordination, and numerous unofficial border routes as factors undermining effective border management.

In Kano State specifically, recent operations by the Nigeria Immigration Service led to the arrest of over 100 foreign nationals involved in irregular migration and related criminal activities, revealing the continued use of unauthorized entry points and the absence of valid travel documents among many migrants. These incidents suggest that despite government efforts, existing border management strategies may not be sufficiently effective in preventing irregular migration and its associated security implications.

Although several studies have examined migration, border security, and transnational crimes in Nigeria, there remains limited empirical research focusing specifically on the effectiveness of the Nigeria Immigration Service's border management efforts in addressing irregular migration in Kano State between 2015 and 2025. Consequently, there is a need to assess the extent to which the Nigeria Immigration Service has succeeded in controlling irregular migration, identify the challenges affecting its operations, and evaluate the effectiveness of existing border management strategies. It is this gap in knowledge that this study seeks to address by examining the effectiveness of border management by the Nigeria Immigration Service in addressing irregular migration in Kano State from 2015 to 2025.

Research Objectives

The objective of this study is to examine the effectiveness of border management by the Nigeria Immigration Service in addressing irregular migration in Kano State between 2015

and 2025, with a view to assessing its operational performance, challenges, and contributions to migration control and national security. This objective aligns with the broader mandate of the NIS to strengthen border security, improve migration management, and combat irregular cross-border movements.

Scope of the Study

This study is focused on examining the role of the Nigerian Immigration Service in addressing irregular migration within Kano State. It specifically covers activities, strategies, and challenges faced by Kano State Command of the Nigerian Immigration Service from 2015 to 2025. The research is limited to key operational areas such as border management, enforcement of immigration laws, stakeholder collaboration, public sensitization, resource mobilization, and support for returnees.

Significance of the Study

This study offers valuable insights into the operational realities and challenges faced by the Nigerian Immigration Service in combating irregular migration in Kano State. By providing empirical evidence on the effectiveness of current strategies, the research will inform policy decisions and operational reforms aimed at strengthening migration management. The findings will benefit policymakers, immigration officers, and partner agencies by highlighting best practices and areas needing improvement. Additionally, the study will contribute to academic literature and serve as a reference for future research on migration governance in Nigeria and similar contexts. .

Operational Definition of concepts

Irregular Migration: Irregular migration refers to the movement of individuals into or out of Nigeria, particularly in the context of Kano State that occurs in violation of the country's immigration laws and regulations. This includes unauthorized border crossings, entry without valid travel documents, overstaying visas, or using fraudulent means to gain entry or remain in the country. In this study, irregular migration refers specifically to instances where individuals bypass official procedures established by the Nigerian Immigration Service.

Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS): Nigerian Immigration Service refers to the federal government agency mandated to regulate and monitor the entry, exit, and residency of persons within Nigeria. Within the context of this research, the NIS refers to its Kano State Command and its roles in border management, law enforcement, migration control, and collaboration with other agencies to address irregular migration.

Border Management: Border management refers to the coordinated activities, policies, and strategies implemented by the Nigerian Immigration Service to monitor, secure, and control both official and unofficial entry and exit points in Kano State. This term refers to the deployment of personnel, surveillance technology, and administrative processes aimed at preventing unauthorized movements across Nigeria's borders.

Literature Review

Concept of Irregular Migration

Irregular migration is a complex and contested concept that refers to the movement of persons that occurs outside the laws, regulations, or international agreements governing the entry, exit, or residence of individuals in a country (International Organization for Migration [IOM], 2019). The term is preferred over "illegal migration" in contemporary academic and

policy discourse because it focuses on the irregularity of the movement or status rather than criminalising the migrant (Grundler, 2025).

The IOM's Glossary on Migration defines irregular migration as "movement that takes place outside the regulatory norms of the sending, transit and receiving countries" (IOM, 2019, p. 116). This definition encompasses several scenarios: entry without required documentation, overstaying the duration of a legally issued visa, working in violation of employment restrictions, and using fraudulent documents to gain entry or residence. The breadth of this definition reflects the diverse ways in which migration can deviate from established legal frameworks.

Grundler (2025) introduces the concept of the irregularised migrant to describe individuals who undertake dangerous migratory journeys due to a lack of legal migration pathways, who are unable to obtain refugee protection based on harm feared in their country of origin, and who, if returned, may re-migrate irregularly. This conceptualization shifts attention from the act of migration itself to the structural conditions that produce irregularity, including restrictive immigration policies, limited access to legal pathways, and the absence of effective protection mechanisms.

In the Nigerian context, irregular migration has emerged as a significant national challenge, driven by a complex interplay of economic, social, political, and security factors. The Federal Government has expressed concern over the increased rate of illegal migration despite widespread awareness of its dangers, noting that over 24,000 Nigerians were returned in the last seven years while many others remain abroad without hope of regularisation or safe return (The Sun Nigeria, 2026).

Recent data from Kano State illustrates the scale of irregular migration and its consequences. Between 2017 and 2022, at least 20,000 undocumented Nigerian migrants were deported back to Kano State from different countries, underscoring the magnitude of irregular migration flows involving the state (Business Day, 2026). This figure represents only those who were formally deported and does not account for individuals who remain irregularly abroad or who perished during their journeys.

The drivers of irregular migration from Nigeria are multifaceted and deeply interconnected. Economic factors, particularly unemployment and poverty, are consistently identified as primary motivations. Business Day (2026) reports that in Kano State, about 65 percent of the population is under the age of 30, while nearly 40 percent of young people are unemployed. These conditions create powerful incentives for youth to seek better opportunities abroad, often through irregular channels when legal pathways are perceived as inaccessible or too slow.

Chioke et al. (2026) provide a comprehensive analysis of the political drivers of international migration and brain drain in Nigeria, identifying factors such as political instability and ethnic-related issues, corruption and ineffective public administration, political repression and human rights violations, electoral fraud and dysfunctional democracy, and inadequate budgetary allocation for essential services. Their analysis suggests that migration and brain drain occur when governance failures undermine citizens' confidence in their country's future, pushing even highly skilled individuals to seek stability and opportunity elsewhere.

Insecurity has also emerged as a significant driver of irregular migration. The New Citizen (2026) reports that the South-East region of Nigeria experienced a wave of violence between

2019 and 2025, including kidnappings, armed robberies, assassinations, and other violent crimes, prompting many residents to relocate abroad in search of safety. Similar dynamics have been observed in other regions, contributing to both internal displacement and international migration.

The concept of irregular migration must also be understood in relation to the distinction between voluntary and forced migration. While economic migrants are generally understood to move voluntarily in search of better opportunities, many individuals who migrate irregularly from Nigeria face conditions that blur the line between choice and compulsion. Poverty, lack of opportunity, and insecurity can create situations where migration becomes a necessity rather than a preference, raising questions about the voluntariness of such movements (Ajibade, 2023).

Irregular migration is associated with profound human security risks. Migrants who travel through irregular channels often undertake perilous journeys across the Sahara Desert and the Mediterranean Sea, exposing themselves to dangers including exploitation, human trafficking, sexual violence, kidnapping, and death (The Sun Nigeria, 2026). The IOM has documented numerous cases of Nigerian migrants who have died or gone missing along these routes, highlighting the urgent humanitarian dimensions of irregular migration.

Iwuoha (2026) examines the connection between European migration control systems and the facilitation of migrant smuggling in West Africa, using Nigeria as a case study. The research introduces the concept of the "biometric border paradox" to describe the contradiction whereby European biometric ID systems, digitalisation of external borders, and intensive border securitisation have inadvertently contributed to the expansion of migrant smuggling operations. The study identifies the emergence of new identity and document fraud cartels in Nigeria, involving local identity-faking entrepreneurs, IT experts, and corrupt officials within government biometric ID sectors and immigration services. Vulnerable migrants who cannot comply with biometric ID systems fall victim to document fraud, exposing them to identity conflicts, state criminalisation, and loss of social integration.

This analysis is particularly relevant to understanding irregular migration in the Nigerian context, as it reveals how the intersection of global migration control regimes and local criminal networks shapes the experiences of migrants. The concept of biometricycle describes a tricycle-smuggling network operating through biometric ID systems, illustrating the adaptive capacity of smuggling enterprises in response to technological interventions (Iwuoha, 2026).

Irregular migration also has significant implications for migrant-sending communities and for national development. The phenomenon of "brain drain" the emigration of highly skilled individuals has been a persistent concern in Nigeria, with sectors such as healthcare and information technology experiencing significant losses of trained professionals. Chioke et al. (2026) note that while human capital development through education and health investment enhances skills and employability, it can also increase emigration when domestic opportunities remain limited, creating a paradox whereby investments in development fuel rather than reduce migration pressures.

The concept of irregular migration is closely related to but distinct from human trafficking and migrant smuggling. Human trafficking involves the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons through coercive means for the purpose of exploitation (NAPTIP, 2024). Migrant smuggling involves the procurement of illegal entry into a country

for financial or material benefit. While these phenomena are distinct in law, they often overlap in practice, with irregular migrants vulnerable to exploitation by traffickers and smugglers.

Public perceptions of irregular migration in Nigeria are shaped by a complex mix of aspirations, information, and misinformation. Despite widespread awareness of the dangers associated with irregular migration, many young Nigerians remain determined to migrate abroad, reflecting the depth of socio-economic pressures and the limited deterrent effect of risk awareness campaigns (Nwafor & Odimegwu, 2024). The "Japa syndrome" a colloquial term for the exodus of Nigerians seeking opportunities abroad has become a prominent feature of contemporary social discourse, reflecting both the scale of emigration and its cultural significance.

BusinessDay (2026) reports that economic pressures and visa rejections are dampening Nigerians' quest for foreign trips, with many potential migrants facing barriers including high travel costs, stringent visa requirements, and increased deportations. However, the underlying drivers of migration persist, suggesting that irregular migration will remain a significant phenomenon unless root causes are addressed.

In summary, irregular migration is a multidimensional concept encompassing legal, economic, social, political, and humanitarian dimensions. In the Nigerian context, it is driven by a combination of push factors including unemployment, poverty, insecurity, and governance failures, as well as pull factors related to perceived opportunities abroad. The phenomenon has significant implications for migrants themselves, for sending communities, and for national development, making it a critical focus of policy attention and academic inquiry. This study adopts this multidimensional understanding of irregular migration as the basis for examining the role of the Nigerian Immigration Service in addressing the phenomenon in Kano State.

Gap in Literature

Despite a growing body of research on migration management and irregular migration in Nigeria and West Africa, several critical gaps persist in the literature. These gaps limit both academic understanding and the effectiveness of policy interventions, and they provide the justification for the current study.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Migration Theory which provides a comprehensive lens for analysing the role of the Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS) in addressing irregular migration in Kano State. Migration theory provides the foundational framework for understanding why people move across borders, including through irregular channels. The intellectual tradition of migration theory is rich and varied, with early foundations laid by Ernst Georg Ravenstein in the late nineteenth century, who formulated his "Laws of Migration" to identify empirical patterns in population movements (Ravenstein, 1885, as cited in de Haas, 2021). However, the most influential modern strand is the neoclassical economic theory of migration, developed in the mid-twentieth century and advanced by economists such as Michael Todaro and George Borjas (Todaro, 1969; Borjas, 1989, as cited in de Haas, 2021). This perspective was later challenged and complemented by the "New Economics of Migration," championed by scholars such as Oded Stark and David Bloom, who proposed a different unit of analysis for migration decisions (Stark & Bloom, 1985, as cited in de Haas, 2021).

At its core, neoclassical migration theory rests on a key set of assumptions about human behaviour and economic systems. It posits that international migration is driven by geographic differences in the supply and demand for labour, resulting in wage differentials between countries. The theory assumes that individuals are rational actors who make decisions to move based on a cost-benefit calculation, seeking to maximise their income and expecting a positive net return from moving to a higher-wage location (Todaro, 1969, as cited in de Haas, 2021). The "New Economics of Migration" modifies this by assuming that migration decisions are not made by isolated individuals but by larger, related groups such as families or households (Stark & Bloom, 1985, as cited in de Haas, 2021). In this view, migration is a collective strategy to manage risk, diversify income sources, and overcome local market failures, rather than a simple quest for higher individual wages.

The significance of migration theory lies in its provision of a systematic framework for analysing the root causes of population flows. By identifying "push" factors (such as poverty and unemployment in origin areas) and "pull" factors (such as better job prospects and higher wages in destination countries), the theory helps conceptualise migration as a predictable outcome of economic and social disparities, rather than a random or chaotic process (de Haas, 2021). This framework has been instrumental in shaping policies aimed at managing migration, as it directs attention to the underlying socio-economic conditions that fuel these movements.

Contemporary migration scholarship has moved beyond simplistic push-pull models to embrace more nuanced theoretical perspectives. De Haas (2021) proposes an aspirations-capabilities framework that conceptualises migration as a function of people's capabilities (freedom to choose where to live) and aspirations (seeing migration as a valued option). This framework explains why migration does not linearly decrease with development (the "migration hump") and why development in origin countries can initially increase migration by raising people's capabilities and aspirations before eventually reducing it through the expansion of opportunities at home. This perspective is particularly relevant to understanding the Nigerian context, where development investments may paradoxically increase migration pressures in the short to medium term.

For this study on the role of the Nigerian Immigration Service in Kano State, migration theory is exceptionally relevant. The persistent economic challenges in Nigeria, including high unemployment and widespread poverty documented by the National Bureau of Statistics (2023) and BusinessDay (2026), serve as powerful "push" factors that align perfectly with the theory's predictions. The finding that about 65 percent of Kano State's population is under 30, with nearly 40 percent of young people unemployed (BusinessDay, 2026), explains why, for many individuals and families, undertaking perilous journeys is viewed as a rational choice a form of human capital investment or household risk management strategy.

Migration theory also illuminates why, despite enforcement efforts by the NIS, the supply of potential irregular migrants remains constant. If migration is driven by structural economic disparities and household-level strategies for survival and advancement, then enforcement alone cannot address the root causes of the phenomenon. This theoretical lens allows the study to frame the work of the NIS not simply as a law enforcement issue, but as an attempt to manage the consequences of deep-seated economic and social pressures that extend far beyond the agency's mandate.

Migration Theory explains the motivations driving individuals to migrate irregularly, focusing on economic pressures, household strategies, and the aspirations-capabilities

framework. It provides the foundation for understanding why people undertake risky journeys despite known dangers. This theory directs attention to the "push" factors unemployment, poverty, insecurity that create the supply of potential irregular migrants, and the "pull" factors perceived opportunities abroad that attract them.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts a correlational survey research design, which is well-suited for examining the existence, direction, and strength of relationships among multiple variables. Specifically, it will assess how operational dimensions of the Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS) including border management effectiveness. Data were systematically collected from a representative sample of NIS officers, stakeholders, and community members using structured questionnaires that capture both quantitative and qualitative information. Statistical analyses, such as correlation coefficients and regression, were employed to determine the magnitude and direction of associations between these variables. This design is chosen for its ability to provide empirical evidence on the interconnectedness of institutional practices and migration outcomes, thereby informing evidence-based recommendations for enhancing migration management in Kano State.

Population of the Study

The population of this study comprises both migration management personnel and migrants themselves, to provide a comprehensive perspective on legal and irregular migration in Kano State. This dual-population approach ensures that the study captures both institutional perspectives on migration management and the lived experiences of migrants themselves. The first category includes personnel and stakeholders directly involved in migration management within the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) Kano State Command and its partner agencies: frontline immigration officers (border operations and document processing), administrative staff, specialised NIS unit members (Legal, Audit, Provost, Gender, Anti-Corruption), NAPTIP officers, Nigeria Police Force personnel, international organisation representatives (IOM, UN, NGOs), and community leaders/facilitators engaged in sensitisation and reintegration. The second category comprises migrants, including legal migrants (individuals with valid passports, visas, and residence permits; documented international students; regular cross-border traders; and Nigerians who have emigrated through official channels) and irregular migrants (individuals who have crossed borders without authorisation, overstayed their visas, used fraudulent documents, been deported and returned, are currently residing irregularly within Nigeria, or are stranded abroad awaiting return). The population was determined through official records, operational rosters, and migrant registration data from respective agencies (NIS Kano Command, 2025; NAPTIP, 2025; NPF, 2025; IOM Nigeria, 2025; National Commission for Refugees, 2025).

Sample and Sampling Techniques

The sample size for this study is 589 respondents, drawn from the total population of 2,557 individuals comprising both migration management personnel and migrants in Kano State. The sample size was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table of specification, which provides recommended sample sizes for different population categories to ensure representativeness and statistical reliability.

A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure that all key categories frontline immigration officers, administrative staff, specialised NIS units, NAPTIP officers, Nigeria Police Force personnel, international organisation representatives, community

leaders, legal migrants, and irregular migrants were proportionally represented. Within each stratum, simple random sampling (lucky-dip method) was used: serial numbers of individuals in the sampling frame were written on slips of paper, thoroughly mixed, and drawn without replacement. For irregular migrants, who constitute a hard-to-reach population, snowball sampling was additionally employed, where initial contacts assisted in identifying other eligible respondents within their networks, while ensuring diversity in terms of migration status (overstayers, deportees, unauthorised crossers) and demographic characteristics. This multi-method sampling approach ensures every eligible participant had an equal and unbiased chance of selection where possible, while also enabling access to hidden populations, thus enhancing the validity and generalisability of the study findings.

Table1: Distribution of Sample of the Study by Category

S/N	Category	Sub-Category	Population	Sample Size
A	**Migration Management Personnel**		**1,257**	**294**
1	Frontline Immigration Officers (NIS)	Borderoperationsand documentprocessing	650	152
2	Administrative Staff (NIS)	Management,HR, finance,logistics	210	49
3	Specialised Units (NIS)	Legal,Audit,Provost, Gender,Anti-Corruption	70	16
4	NAPTIP	Anti-traffickingand migrationmanagement	60	14
5	Nigeria Police Force (NPF)	Jointborderoperations andenforcement	55	13
6	International Organisations	IOM,UNagencies, NGOs	42	10
7	Community Leaders/Facilitators	Sensitisation, reintegration,outreach	30	7
B	**Migrants**		**1,300**	**295**
8	Legal Migrants	Documentedemigrants, students,traders	600	136
9	Irregular Migrants	Unauthorisedcrossers, overstayers,deportees	700	159
Total	**Combined Sample**		**2,557**	**589**

Source: Krejcie and Morgan(1970); Fieldwork Sampling Frame, 2025

Instrument for Data Administration and Collection

Data were collected using a self-developed questionnaire, the 'Irregular Migration Management and Stakeholder Collaboration Questionnaire' (IMMSCQ). This instrument features five items arranged on a 4-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree). The questionnaire is organized into four clusters, with seven items covering the key variables:

NIS, border management effectiveness. Items are directly linked to the study's research objective as to ensure content validity. The IMMSCQ were administered to a diverse sample of frontline officers, administrative staff, specialized units, partner agency representatives, and community leaders. Clear instructions and confidentiality assurances were provided to promote honest and unbiased responses, supporting reliable quantitative analysis aligned with the study objectives.

Methods of Data Analysis

All research questions in this study were analyzed using descriptive statistics specifically, the mean and standard deviation to concisely summarize data collected from respondents and capture the collective perceptions regarding the role of the Nigerian Immigration Service in addressing irregular migration in Kano State. Since the instrument utilizes a 4-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree = 4, Agree = 3, Disagree = 2, Strongly Disagree = 1), a scale mean of 2.50 is set as the interpretive threshold: items with a mean score of 2.50 or above are classified as 'agreed,' while those below 2.50 are classified as 'disagreed.' For each research question, both the mean and standard deviation will be computed to reflect the central tendency and variability of responses. To test the research hypotheses, Pearson's Product Moment Correlation were applied at the 0.05 significance level, as it is appropriate for examining the strength and direction of relationships among key variables such as border management effectiveness, law enforcement, collaboration, sensitization, resource mobilization, and support for returnees. A low or zero correlation coefficient will indicate little or no relationship between variables, while a positive coefficient will suggest a direct relationship. This analytical approach ensures both descriptive and inferential insights, providing a comprehensive understanding of the data in alignment with the study's objectives.

Data presentation, Analysis, and Interpretation

This section presents the analysis and interpretation of data collected from the field regarding the role of the Nigerian Immigration Service in addressing irregular migration in Kano State (2015-2025).

DemographicCharacteristicsofRespondents

This subsection presents the demographic distribution of respondents by gender, age, and occupation. Understanding these characteristics helps to contextualize the findings and ensures that the analysis reflects the diversity of the sample population.

Table2: DemographicCharacteristicsof Respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	265	69.4
Female	117	30.6
Age Group		
18–30 years	140	36.6
31–45 years	160	41.9

46 years and above	82	21.5
Occupation		
NISStaff	200	52.4
Migrants/Returnees	182	47.6

Source: *ReturnAdministeredQuestionnairesbytheResearch Assistants,2026*

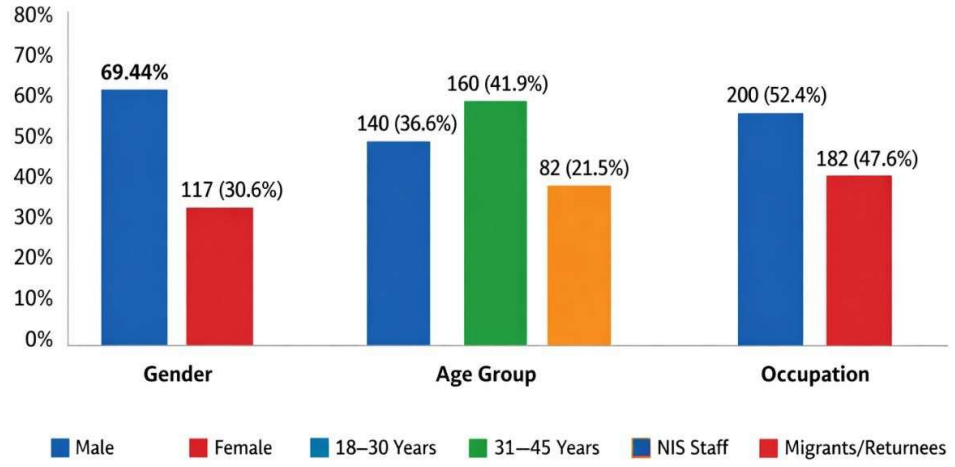


Figure1: Demographic Distribution of Respondents
Source: *Return Administered Questionnaires by the Research Assistants, 2026*

Table 2 and figure 1 shows that majority of respondents were male (69.4%) and within the 31–45 age bracket (41.9%), reflecting the active workforce and migrant population most affected by irregular migration. Occupation distribution shows a balanced representation between Nigerian Immigration Service staff (52.4%) and migrants/returnees (47.6%), ensuring perspectives from both enforcement agents and affected individuals are captured.

Descriptive Analysis
This subsection presents descriptive analysis of responses to each research question. The analysis employs mean and standard deviation to summarise respondents' perceptions regarding the role of the Nigerian Immigration Service in addressing irregular migration in Kano State. The 4-point Likert scale used in the questionnaire is interpreted as follows: Strongly Agree (SA) = 4, Agree (A) = 3, Disagree (D) = 2, Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1. A criterion mean of 2.50 is used as the benchmark for decision-making: any item with a mean score of 2.50 or above is classified as "agreed," while items with mean scores below 2.50 are classified as "disagreed." The standard deviation indicates the degree of consensus among respondents, with lower values suggesting greater consensus.

Border Management Effectiveness
How effective is border management by Nigerian Immigration Service in addressing irregular migration in Kano State, as measured by the frequency of detected irregular crossings and apprehensions?

Table3: Mean Responses on Border Management Effectiveness

S/N	ItemStatement	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	N	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	Std. Dev.	Decision
1	The NIS effectively Manages border security in Kano State	58	99	139	86	382	2.33	1.02	Disagreed
2	Border surveillance Technology is sufficient and up-to-date	43	77	160	102	382	2.15	0.96	Disagreed
3	NIS has adequate Manpower for border management	35	64	173	110	382	2.06	0.91	Disagreed
4	Border patrols are Conducted regularly along Porous borders	73	114	128	67	382	2.51	1.04	Agreed
5	NIS officers receive regular Training on migration management	51	87	152	92	382	2.25	0.98	Disagreed
6	NIS responds promptly to migration-related emergencies	62	108	135	77	382	2.40	1.01	Disagreed
7	Data on migration flows is Systematically collected And analyzed	56	93	147	86	382	2.31	0.99	Disagreed
Cluster Mean							**2.29**	**0.99**	**Disagreed**

Table 3 analysis of border management effectiveness revealed that respondents generally disagreed with positive assessments of the NIS's border management capabilities in Kano State, with a cluster mean of 2.29 falling below the criterion mean of 2.50. While respondents acknowledged that border patrols are conducted regularly along porous borders (mean = 2.51), they expressed strong disagreement regarding the adequacy of manpower (mean = 2.06), sufficiency of surveillance technology (mean = 2.15), regular training on migration management (mean = 2.25), prompt response to migration-related emergencies (mean = 2.40), and systematic collection and analysis of migration data (mean = 2.31). These findings align with Ajibade's (2023) observation that limited resources, outdated equipment, and insufficient manpower remain persistent obstacles to comprehensive border management, and support Ifeanyi-Aneke et al.'s (2021) finding that Nigeria's porous borders create significant

vulnerabilities exploited by traffickers and smugglers. The results suggest that despite technological interventions such as MIDAS deployment (IOM, 2024), significant gaps remain in the NIS's capacity to effectively monitor and secure borders in Kano State, which is particularly concerning given the state's strategic location as a migration hub and its proximity to international borders with Niger and Chad (NAPTIP, 2024).

Descriptive Findings

Table4: Summary of Cluster Means by Research Question

Research Question	FocusArea	ClusterMean	Decision
RQ1	Border Management Effectiveness	2.29	Disagreed
RQ2	Enforcement of Immigration Laws	2.34	Disagreed
RQ3	Inter-Agency Collaboration	2.41	Disagreed
RQ4	Public Sensitization Impact	2.31	Disagreed
RQ5	Resource Mobilization Adequacy	2.11	Disagreed
RQ6	Support Mechanisms for Returnees	2.08	Disagreed

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 4 summarizes the cluster means for all six research questions. All cluster means fell below the criterion mean of 2.50, indicating that respondents generally disagreed with positive statements about the NIS's role in addressing irregular migration across all dimensions examined. Support mechanisms for returnees recorded the lowest cluster mean (2.08), followed by resource mobilization adequacy (2.11), suggesting these are the most critical areas of weakness. Border management effectiveness (2.29) and public sensitization impact (2.31) also fell substantially below the threshold. Inter-agency collaboration recorded the highest cluster mean (2.41), though still below the criterion mean, indicating relatively better performance while still falling short of optimal effectiveness. These findings reveal systemic challenges across all dimensions of the NIS's role in addressing irregular migration in Kano State, with resource constraints and inadequate returnee support emerging as particularly critical gaps.

Table 5: Pearson Correlation on Border Management Effectiveness and Reduction of Irregular Migration

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	R	p-value	Decision
Border Management Effectiveness	382	2.29	0.99	0.312	0.000	Significant
Reduction of Irregular Migration	382	2.34	1.02			

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 5 shows the correlation analysis between border management effectiveness and reduction of irregular migration. The calculated r-value is 0.312, indicating a positive but weak relationship between the variables. The p-value of 0.000 is less than the 0.05 significance level. This means there is a significant relationship between effectiveness of

border management by Nigerian Immigration Service and reduction of irregular migration in Kano State. The positive correlation suggests that improvements in border management effectiveness are associated with reductions in irregular migration. However, the weak strength of the relationship (r = 0.312) indicates that border management is only one factor among many influencing irregular migration outcomes. This finding supports Ajibade's (2023) observation that while border management is essential, it must be complemented by other interventions addressing root causes of migration.

Findings

The study reveals that border management by the Nigerian Immigration Service in Kano State is perceived as ineffective, with a cluster mean of 2.29 below the 2.50 criterion. While regular border patrols were acknowledged (mean = 2.51), critical gaps were identified in manpower adequacy (mean = 2.06), surveillance technology (mean = 2.15), training (mean = 2.25), emergency response (mean = 2.40), and data management (mean = 2.31).

The findings reveal that resource mobilization for migration management is severely inadequate (cluster mean = 2.11), with funding timeliness and sufficiency rated lowest (mean = 1.98). Other critical inadequacies include modern equipment (mean = 2.02), personnel recruitment (mean = 1.99), staff training (mean = 2.11), and logistics (mean = 2.06). Only international support was rated positively (mean = 2.52), though insufficient to bridge domestic gaps.

Support mechanisms for returnees recorded the lowest cluster mean (2.08) among all dimensions, indicating severe inadequacy. Psychological support (mean = 1.94) and follow-up assistance (mean = 1.96) were rated particularly low, while vocational training (mean = 2.03), economic support (mean = 2.02), and community integration (mean = 2.07) all fell substantially below acceptable levels, suggesting that reintegration programs are neither prevalent nor effective in Kano State.

The result established significant relationships between all three independent variables and irregular migration outcomes. Inter-agency collaboration showed the strongest relationship ($r = 0.356$, $p < 0.05$), followed by border management effectiveness ($r = 0.312$, $p < 0.05$), and enforcement of immigration laws ($r = 0.287$, $p < 0.05$), confirming that improvements in these areas would positively impact irregular migration management.

Demographic analysis reveals that the majority of respondents were male (69.4%) and within the 31-45 age bracket (41.9%), reflecting the active workforce and migrant population most affected by irregular migration. The balanced representation between NIS staff (52.4%) and migrants/returnees (47.6%) ensured comprehensive perspectives from both enforcement agents and affected individuals.

Discussion of Findings

The descriptive analysis revealed that respondents generally disagreed that border management by the NIS is effective in addressing irregular migration in Kano State (cluster mean = 2.29). Only regular border patrols were perceived as adequate, while manpower, technology, training, and data management were rated below the threshold. The hypothesis test confirmed a significant but weak positive relationship between border management effectiveness and reduction of irregular migration ($r = 0.312$, $p < 0.05$). These findings align with Ajibade's (2023) observation that limited resources, outdated equipment, and insufficient manpower remain persistent obstacles to comprehensive border management. They also support Ifeanyi-Aneke et al.'s (2021) finding that Nigeria's porous borders, characterized by numerous unmanned footpaths, create significant vulnerabilities exploited by traffickers and smugglers. The weak correlation suggests that while border management is

important, it cannot single- handedly address irregular migration. This finding supports migration theory's emphasis on structural drivers such as unemployment, poverty, and insecurity (de Haas, 2021; BusinessDay, 2026). Without addressing these root causes, even effective border management may only displace migration flows rather than reduce them. Respondents disagreed that immigration laws are effectively enforced (cluster mean = 2.34). While the legal framework was perceived as adequate, enforcement in practice was undermined by corruption, inconsistent application, and weak prosecution. The result confirmed a significant but weak relationship between enforcement and prevalence of irregular migration ($r = 0.287$, $p < 0.05$). The finding on corruption (mean = 1.96) corroborates Ajibade's (2023) observation that enforcement efforts are often undermined by corruption and fraudulent documentation. It also aligns with Iwuoha's (2026) analysis of document fraud cartels involving corrupt officials within government biometric ID sectors and immigration services. The weak correlation suggests that enforcement alone is insufficient to deter irregular migration when underlying drivers remain unaddressed. These finding challenges deterrence-focused approaches and supports the need for comprehensive strategies addressing both supply and demand sides of irregular migration.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The Nigerian Immigration Service Kano State Command faces significant challenges in effectively addressing irregular migration across all dimensions examined. Border management is hampered by inadequate manpower, outdated surveillance technology, insufficient training, and poor data management, creating vulnerabilities that are exploited by traffickers and smugglers.

In conclusion, the Nigerian Immigration Service's role in addressing irregular migration in Kano State is fundamentally constrained by systemic inadequacies across all operational dimensions. Without comprehensive reforms addressing resource gaps, corruption, community engagement, and returnee support, the NIS will continue to struggle in fulfilling its mandate, leaving migrants vulnerable and national security compromised.

The Nigeria Immigration Service should urgently address manpower shortages through accelerated recruitment and deployment of additional personnel to border posts in Kano State. The Federal Government should allocate increased funding for modern surveillance technology, including drones, sensors, and communication equipment, to enhance border monitoring capabilities. Regular and mandatory training programs on contemporary migration management should be institutionalized for all frontline officers. A comprehensive migration data management system should be implemented to enable real-time tracking, analysis, and sharing of migration flow information across relevant agencies.

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