

Roles, Operations and Challenges of Security in Malete, Moro Local Government, Kwara State, Nigeria, 2009–2025.

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© 2025 جامعة العلوم والتكنولوجيا، المركز الرئيس عدن، اليمن. يمكن إعادة استخدام المادة المنشورة حسب رخصة مؤسسة المشاع الإبداعي شريطة الاستشهاد بالمؤلف والمجلة.

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Roles, Operations and Challenges of Security in Malete, Moro Local Government, Kwara State, Nigeria, 2009–2025.

Abstract:

The research addressed institutional excellence in institutions of special education where the research clarified the concept of institutional excellence and its objectives, and its importance, and the principles of institutional excellence, where the stages of application of institutional excellence include the stage of preparation and preparation for institutional excellence, the stage of planning for institutional excellence, the stage of organization for institutional excellence, then the stage of organization for institutional excellence, and finally the stage of exchange and dissemination of experiences, as well as the research addressed the requirements of applying institutional excellence in special education institutions, which is a distinct leadership, an integrated strategy plan, and a system of policies regulating methods, methods of work and flexible organizational structures as well as a sophisticated system to confirm overall quality. The system includes an integrated information system, decision-making support, performance evaluation, and a system for preparing and developing personnel. The research examined the regulatory, financial, human, and technological barriers that hinder the implementation of institutional excellence in private education institutions.

Keywords: *Crime prevention, Vigilantism, Community Policing, Mechanisms, Challenges.*

أدوار والعمليات والتحديات الأمنية في ماليته، الحكومة المحلية لمورو، ولاية كوارا، نيجيريا (2009-2025)

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الملخص:

تتناول هذه الدراسة تطور الجريمة والمشهد الأمني في مدينة ماليته، ولاية كوارا، نيجيريا، منذ عام 2009 حتى عام 2025، وذلك عقب تأسيس جامعة ولاية كوارا. تعتمد الدراسة منهجاً مختلطاً يجمع بين تسع مقابلات شفوية مع قادة المجتمع وطلاب الجامعة وعناصر الأجهزة الأمنية، إضافةً إلى تحليل سجلات الجرائم والمشاهدات الميدانية، من أجل توثيق حجم النشاط الإجرامي وتحولاته. أظهرت النتائج أن حالات السرقة ارتفعت من 10% عام 2009 إلى أكثر من 80% بحلول عام 2024، ويرجع ذلك بشكل أساسي إلى تدفق الطلاب والتوسع الحضري السريع، في حين ارتفعت نسبة الجرائم الإلكترونية بنسبة 75% خلال الفترة نفسها. كما مثلت المناطق الجغرافية مثل ويست إند، ترمك، سفاري، جانب السوق، وطريق أغريك أكثر من 50% من الحوادث المبلغ عنها. وشملت التدخلات الأمنية كلاً من الشرطة النيجيرية، وفيلق الدفاع المدني، ولجنة الجرائم الاقتصادية والمالية (EFCC)، والوكالة الوطنية لمكافحة المخدرات (NDLEA)، ووحدة السلامة الجامعية، إلى جانب الحراس المتطوعين. غير أن فعاليتها أضعفت بسبب ضعف التمويل، ونقص الأفراد، ورداءة البنية التحتية للمراقبة، حيث لم يتجاوز عدد الضباط 150 ضابطاً مقابل أكثر من 30,000 من السكان والطلاب. كما أظهرت أدلة المسح أن أكثر من 50% من الطلاب عبّروا عن انعدام ثقتهم بأجهزة إنفاذ القانون، مشيرين إلى التحرش وضعف الاستجابة. وتخلص الدراسة إلى أن مدينة ماليته قد انتقلت من مرحلة المخالفات البسيطة إلى الجرائم المنظمة والعنفية، نتيجة لاندماج الجامعة في المجتمع المحلي وغياب التدابير الأمنية الاستباقية لمعالجة التوسع الحضري السريع. وتوصي الدراسة بتبني تقنيات مراقبة منسقة، وتعزيز التعاون بين الوكالات الأمنية، ومساءلة أصحاب الممتلكات، واعتماد استراتيجيات مشتركة للدوريات الجوية والبرية من أجل تعزيز الأمن واستعادة ثقة المجتمع.

الكلمات المفتاحية:

الوقاية من الجريمة، الحراسة الأهلية، الشرطة المجتمعية، الآليات، التحديات.

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Introduction

The Oxford Dictionary of Sociology defines crime as 'an offense which goes beyond the personal and into the public sphere, breaking prohibitory rules or laws, to which legitimate punishments or sanctions are attached, and which requires the intervention of a public authority.' It encompasses a wide range of harmful behaviors, including those against individuals, property, or society as a whole. Ultimately, a crime is an offense that the legal system deems worthy of condemnation and punishment, often through fines or imprisonment.¹ Crime has been one of the major problems facing our societies in all hemispheres. An example of the societies where criminal activities persists and thrive is Malete, taking different forms such as kidnapping, cybercrime, stealing, internet fraud, drug abuse, rape, homosexuality, burglary, corruption, assault, and cultism, with youths as connivers in most cases, especially in this democratic dispensation.

Malete is [AS1] a community under the Moro Local Government, Kwara State, a vassal town of Ilorin, Nigeria, which has remained under the influence of the Ilorin Emirate. The Moro Local Government Area in Kwara State was created in 1976 from parts of the Ilorin Emirate. Before its creation, Moro was part of a larger administrative area known as the Ilorin Native Authority, with the local government's headquarters located in Bode-Saadu. The emirate also included some districts such as Malete, Ejidongari, Paiye, Oloru, and Lanwa. The territories out of which these five districts were created were referred to as Moro. The physical landform of Moro was mainly plain with grass. Malete has an area of about 3,272 km² and a population of about 108,792 at the 2006 national census. It is one of the principal towns under the present Moro local government council. The Daudu of Malete, who serves as the head of the community, is a member of the Ilorin Emirate Council. The Yorubas predominantly inhabit the community, and it's known for an agrarian lifestyle, with farming, weaving, and hunting being common occupations. Over the years, the community has witnessed various socio-political and economic developments, ranging from the migration of diverse ethnic groups. In the population are people of Fulani, Yoruba, Hausa, Bororo, and Nupe descent and people of other tribal origins, culminating in a mix of cultural influences with Islam, which is a major religion in the environment.²

Furthermore, the problem of crime in Malete is multifaceted, ranging from issues such as kidnapping, cybercrime, shoplifting, burglary, theft, cultism, banditry, drug abuse, and occasional rural crimes like cattle rustling. These challenges have heightened over the years due to factors such as limited law enforcement resources, youth unemployment, poverty, and also the growing population of students in the environment with the presence of Kwara State University. The surge in cult-related violence and substance abuse among youths further compounds the issue, creating safety concerns for residents and students alike. Effective crime prevention and intervention strategies are hindered by inadequate policing and a lack of community-

based security initiatives. This situation calls for a comprehensive approach to address the socio-economic and security challenges contributing to the rise in criminal activities in Malete.³

Above all, these crimes have led to various negative activities in the community, leading to violence, theft, tension, insecurity, and destruction of property, and also deterring the students' academic performance in the environment. Therefore, it is pertinent to address the level of crime in Malete to create a safe and conducive atmosphere for both the students and residents of the community. This turn can boost the economy of the community because by addressing these crimes, a safe environment where businesses can thrive will be established, creating a serene and conducive environment where students can learn and share ideas, thereby contributing to a sense of security.⁴

In addition, improving security measures in the environment is pertinent for identifying loopholes exploited by criminals by thoroughly scrutinizing key areas such as hostels, markets, the university campus, and its environs. The lack of standard electricity and surveillance in these areas has made it easy for the areas to be targeted. By evaluating these risks, authorities can implement preventive measures such as improving lighting, increasing police patrols, or installing security cameras, thus reducing criminal activities. Moreover, employing effective local security, such as vigilantes, can also be used to understand crime patterns and critical areas that need utmost surveillance. This will help create a safe environment for the residents and students in the community.⁵

HISTORICAL AND SOCIO-POLITICAL BACKGROUND OF MALETE

The Malete community had a long-standing reputation for being a peaceful and harmonious rural settlement. Crime in historical Malete, though not organized in structure, reflected patterns of survival-driven and opportunistic theft that significantly impacted community life. While large-scale or syndicated crime was largely absent from the region, residents frequently dealt with persistent forms of petty theft.⁶

These crimes were often opportunistic and localized, lacking coordination but not impact. One notable form was the theft of personal belongings, particularly targeting newly married women. These individuals, often in the early stages of settling into their new households, were seen as vulnerable and thus became common targets. Their possessions, including clothing, household items, jewelry, and cash, were stolen during the night or when they were away from home, causing distress and loss for new families trying to establish stability.⁷

Another recurring crime in Malete's past revolved around its economic activities, particularly the thriving night markets that were a major aspect of trade in the community. These markets, often held in the evening hours, created both opportunity and risk. Traders, mostly women, transporting goods to and from these markets, were frequently waylaid by masked individuals who took advantage of the dimly lit rural

roads and bush paths. These criminals targeted individuals carrying produce or earnings, and in many cases, traders were robbed of both their merchandise and their profits. This form of highway robbery disrupted the local economy, discouraged trade participation, and instilled fear among rural merchants who relied on these markets for their livelihoods.⁸

Agricultural theft and home invasions represented another dimension of crime in Malete, reflecting the rural setting's reliance on farming and informal security systems. Crops such as yams, cassava, maize, and beans are staples in the region, and were often stolen directly from farms or after harvest, particularly during harvest seasons when they were most valuable. These acts of theft not only reduced food supply but also had economic consequences for farmers who depended on crop sales. In addition, house burglaries were common, with thieves breaking into homes through windows to steal cash and small valuables. These break-ins often occurred at night and contributed to a climate of mistrust and anxiety in residential areas, particularly in compounds without secure windows or communal watch systems.⁹

Furthermore, the persistent crisis of farmer and herder conflicts reflects the village's agrarian lifestyle. Malete was, and still is, predominantly a farming community where agriculture was the primary livelihood. Herders, often nomadic Fulani groups, sometimes allowed their cattle to stray onto farmland, causing disputes with farmers whose crops were damaged. These disputes, although contentious, rarely escalated into violence or criminal activity, as is seen in more recent years in other parts of Nigeria. Instead, they were usually addressed through traditional dispute resolution mechanisms, with community elders or local leaders mediating between the affected parties.¹⁰

In addition to local offenders, Malete also experienced criminal activities perpetrated by individuals from neighboring villages, further complicating community efforts to maintain security. These external thieves often timed their incursions to coincide with market days or harvest seasons, when the potential for gain was highest. They targeted both traders traveling to the night markets and local farms rich with produce like yams, maize, and cassava. By operating under the cover of darkness and exploiting the rural landscape's lack of formal security infrastructure, these outsiders were able to carry out swift and often violent robberies before retreating to their own villages. Their presence heightened fear and suspicion within the community, as residents became increasingly wary not only of their neighbors but also of strangers passing through, thus straining inter-village relationships and trust.¹¹

ESCALATION OF CRIME IN MALETE POST-2009

As a host community to Kwara State University, Malete has experienced the layered dynamics of a semi-rural town transitioning into a growing academic and commercial center. Over the years under review, the convergence of a youthful student population, rising urbanization, and uneven security presence has created an environment where

crimes such as rape, kidnapping, theft, burglary, cybercrime, cultism, and various forms of fraud have not only taken root but have in some cases become normalized. Understanding the patterns of crime in this context requires not only looking at the types of offenses committed but also the underlying socio-economic pressures and institutional lapses that enable them.¹²

Crime in Malete is not uniformly distributed; instead, it manifests with varying intensity across specific geographical zones, forming identifiable hotspots where criminal activities are more frequent and deeply rooted. These areas, shaped by a combination of student settlement patterns, social interactions between indigenous people and students, and inadequate infrastructural planning, have developed reputations for particular types of crimes.

One of the most notorious hotspots is the Westend area, which has gained a reputation for harboring students heavily involved in cultism and cybercrime. The high concentration of off-campus hostels and limited oversight make it a fertile ground for illegal gatherings, initiation ceremonies, and internet fraud operations. Clashes between rival cult groups and violent altercations related to fraudulent dealings have been frequently reported here. The relative seclusion and lack of active surveillance in Westend make it a difficult zone for law enforcement to manage effectively.¹³

The Safari area, where students and indigenes cohabit more densely, presents a different but equally concerning crime pattern. It is marked by frequent clashes between locals and students, resulting in street fights, cult-related violence, petty theft, burglary, and shoplifting. Social tension, overcrowding, and poor housing security contribute to the instability in this area. Similarly, the market side, also referred to as the Dara area, has been flagged for recurring cases of rape and burglary, particularly targeting female students navigating isolated parts of the market during early or late hours. Finally, Agric Road is another high-risk zone, widely known for its concentration of drug dealers, cybercriminals, and cultists. The area's loose security infrastructure and poor lighting conditions create a permissive environment for illegal activities to thrive, especially at night.¹⁴

These geographical patterns reveal a clear connection between crime and urban layout, with areas that combine student density, poor security infrastructure, and socio-economic tension emerging as hotspots. This spatial analysis highlights the urgent need for targeted surveillance, community-based safety programs, and infrastructural upgrades in these vulnerable zones to disrupt the breeding grounds of crime and restore public confidence. One of the most persistent and frequently reported crimes in Malete during this period is stealing and petty theft, affecting both the university community and the larger town. The increasing number of student hostels and off-campus accommodations became fertile grounds for petty theft, break-ins, and burglary, especially during examination periods or school breaks, with criminals often targeting electronics, mobile devices, motorbikes, and cash.¹⁵

KEY EVENTS AND OCCURRENCES OF CRIME IN MALETE

The history of crime in Malete from 2009 to 2024 is marked by a series of significant and often unsettling incidents that reflect the evolving security challenges within the town. As the presence of Kwara State University (KWASU) transformed Malete into a more vibrant and densely populated area, so too did criminal activity increase in complexity and frequency. Theft and burglary became common in student lodges and local residences, particularly in poorly lit or isolated areas. These property crimes, often driven by economic hardship, were among the first indicators of a growing security gap that required urgent attention.¹⁶

More disturbing, however, was the rise in violent and psychologically damaging crimes such as rape and cultism. Incidents of sexual assault, often underreported due to stigma and fear, underscored a broader issue of gender-based violence within the community. At the same time, cult-related activities escalated, particularly among youth and students, leading to intergroup clashes, intimidation, and, in some cases, fatalities. The influence of these secret cults not only threatened public safety but also undermined the academic integrity and peaceful coexistence within the university environment.¹⁷

Additionally, Malete experienced sporadic but impactful cases of kidnapping, which intensified during periods of wider regional insecurity. Victims included students and local residents, with ransom demands further terrorizing the community. The crime of obtaining money by false pretense, often targeting naive students or parents through fake admissions and rental scams, became increasingly sophisticated over the years. Other criminal activities, such as drug abuse, assaults, and fraud, also contributed to a growing atmosphere of fear and distrust. Together, these events paint a sobering picture of the criminal landscape in Malete and serve as critical reference points for evaluating the effectiveness of past and ongoing security measures. Some of the key events of these crimes are as follows:

Student-Related Theft and Burglary

Patterns of theft and burglary among Kwara State University students have intensified, often facilitated by students' integration into the local community. For instance, in April 2024, a 400-level student was apprehended after breaking into a private residence at night. Although he attempted to deceive local vigilantes, a language barrier exposed him, leading to his arrest. Similarly, in 2023, a student named Taiye, notorious for internet fraud, stole valuables while squatting in a friend's hostel room under the guise of tutoring others in cybercrime. He was eventually caught through covert investigation by the university's Safety Unit and handed over to the police.¹⁸ These cases illustrate how student involvement in property crimes has become entrenched, while also showing the critical roles of community patrols and institutional intelligence gathering.

Cybercrime Networks and Fraudulent Practices

Cybercrime has become one of the most pervasive security challenges in Malete. Its growth is evident both in individual cases and in large-scale operations. A notable example occurred on February 21, 2024, when the EFCC raided Malete and arrested 48 students and two outsiders involved in internet fraud, seizing luxury assets linked to fraudulent proceeds. On a smaller scale, fraud has also emerged in the form of scams targeting fellow students. In 2021, a 500-level student defrauded peers of over ₦10 million by pretending to secure hostel spaces across 20 hostels before absconding.¹⁹ Together, these incidents reveal both the organized and opportunistic nature of cyber-enabled crime in the student community, while underscoring the necessity of federal-level intervention.

Violent and Armed Crimes

Students' participation in violent crimes demonstrates the escalation of opportunistic offenses into life-threatening acts. In 2022, a student attempted an armed robbery at a filling station after observing the manager's routine. Armed with an axe, he attacked the manager, who bravely resisted, unmasked the assailant, and ensured his arrest.²⁰ This case highlights how students may exploit community familiarity to perpetrate serious crimes, while also pointing to civilian bravery in crime prevention.

Cultism and Fatal Clashes

Cult-related violence remains a persistent threat to Malete's security environment, often intersecting with personal disputes and criminal networks. In 2019, a romantic conflict between a female student and two rival cult members escalated into a deadly feud, leading to two fatalities. More recently, in 2025, a former student known as "Big White" was killed by suspected cultists after failing to remit fraudulently obtained funds. Despite police surveillance, he was ambushed and gunned down.²¹ These cases illustrate the deep entanglement of cultism with emotional disputes, financial conflicts, and broader cybercrime networks, frequently culminating in lethal outcomes.

Sexual Violence and Hostel Insecurity

Cases of sexual assault in Malete reveal both insider abuses and external threats. In 2024/25, a university security guard exploited his authority to repeatedly rape a female engineering student, at one point threatening her with a dagger inside a laboratory before passersby intervened. Similarly, in 2024, an outsider infiltrated a female hostel and raped a student at knifepoint, robbing her and attempting to assault another student who managed to fight him off.²² Both incidents expose significant lapses in security recruitment, hostel surveillance, and student protection, while highlighting the courage of victims and the eventual intervention of law enforcement.

These cases collectively reveal a disturbing pattern of criminal behavior in Malete, ranging from theft and cyber fraud to cult violence, rape, and armed robbery, with

many involving students of Kwara State University. They draw a picture of the complex nature of crime in the community, often enabled by weak security infrastructure, social influence, and peer influence. However, they also showcase moments of resilience through strategic interventions by security personnel, peer cooperation, and community vigilance. To effectively combat these issues, coordinated efforts between the university, law enforcement, and the local community are imperative.

ROLES AND OPERATIONS OF SECURITY OPERATIVES IN MALETE

In lieu of the complex and evolving nature of crime in Malete, various security operatives have played vital roles in containing and responding to these security threats in Malete. Over the years, a combination of formal and informal security bodies, including the Kwara State University Safety Unit, the Nigeria Police Force, community vigilante groups, the Nigeria Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), the Nigerian Security and Civil Defense Corps, the Nigerian Army, and private security personnel, has actively worked to manage and curb the rising wave of insecurity.

The School Safety Unit has been important within the university premises, ensuring the protection of students and staff during lectures, examinations, and night study periods. The unit actively and timely responds to incidents of theft, assault, rape, cultism, indecent dressing, and other misconduct within the school premises through regular patrols, surveillance, and intervention. It monitors student activities during high-risk periods such as examinations and night reading hours proactively to prevent crimes before they occur. Suspected offenders are promptly apprehended and investigated, helping to reduce the rate of petty theft, violence, and unauthorized gatherings on campus.²³

In handling cases of student misconduct, the unit enforces disciplinary measures following the severity of the offense, while lesser wrongdoings may result in warnings, or temporary suspension, more serious cases attract stricter internal penalties. This internal disciplinary structure, known as the "Student Disciplinary Committee", plays a key role in maintaining order and deterring repeat offenses among the student population.²⁴

In addition to these, operatives from the School Safety Unit also engage in a discreet yet vital role in maintaining order within Malete. These personnel often patrol the community in plain clothes during the day, operating under a guise to monitor the environment and detect potential threats or misconduct among students. This covert presence allows them to gather intelligence, identify early signs of irregularities, and intervene before issues escalate. By blending into the community, the Safety Unit is able to keep students in check without creating an atmosphere of fear or intimidation, thereby contributing to a more stable and secure academic environment.²⁵

For crimes that go beyond the university's jurisdiction, such as cultism, drug trafficking, sexual assault, or armed violence, the unit immediately transfers the offender to appropriate government security agencies. These include the Nigerian

Police, the Nigerian Drug Law Enforcement Agency, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, the Nigerian Army, and the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps, who take over investigations and pursue legal prosecution.²⁶ This collaborative process ensures that serious crimes are addressed within the full scope of the law while supporting the broader goal of securing lives and property within the university and its surrounding environment.

The Nigeria Police Force, in collaboration with university authorities and community leaders, has carried out regular patrols, particularly in crime-prone areas such as off-campus hostels, markets, and major road intersections (such as Tarmac). Arrests have been made in connection with cult-related violence, theft, cybercrime rings, and drug trafficking. While resource constraints and delayed response times have occasionally limited their effectiveness, the police presence has nonetheless served as a deterrent, especially during peak periods of academic activity.²⁷

Community vigilante groups, composed of local volunteers (hunters and farmers) and traditional security structures, have proven particularly valuable in bridging the gap between formal security systems and indigenous knowledge of the terrain. These groups patrol neighborhoods, monitor suspicious movements, and have been credited with intervening in several burglary and kidnapping attempts. Their close relationship with residents has enabled quicker intelligence sharing and early response to threats. Upon apprehension of suspects, vigilante groups follow due process by handing them over to formal authorities such as the School Safety Unit, the Nigerian Police, or the Nigerian Security and Civil Defense Corps for further investigation and possible prosecution, thereby reinforcing a collaborative security framework.²⁸

The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) has carried out various operations in Malete and Kwara State University, to be precise, particularly in combating the drug abuse epidemic among students. Through a series of raids, awareness campaigns, and student sensitization programs, the agency has sought to stop the flow of narcotic circulation and use. However, recognizing the vulnerability of the youth demographic, the Nigeria Drug Law Enforcement Agency has also established a formal partnership with Kwara State University to implement drug testing programs for students. This initiative serves both as a deterrent and an early intervention method, enabling authorities to identify and support individuals at risk while reinforcing a zero-tolerance stance on substance abuse.²⁹

The Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) has also been actively involved in addressing a wide range of both civil and criminal issues in Malete. These include accommodation disputes, theft, burglary, criminal breach of trust, and scavengers stealing from private or public properties. Importantly, the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps has also played a mediating role in constant farmers-herders conflicts, which have been a source of tension and insecurity in the area.³⁰ Their involvement has been crucial in preventing such disputes from escalating into violent confrontations.

One of the core strategies employed by the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps in handling these cases is the use of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR). The organization, through dialogue, negotiation, and community-based mediation, has been able to resolve many of these issues without resorting to court processes or violent enforcement. This approach is particularly effective for communal and civil disputes, such as land-related disagreements or minor theft cases. However, when it comes to serious criminal offenses beyond their jurisdiction, the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps promptly hands over such cases to the police for appropriate legal action.³¹

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) has also played a significant role in combating crime within Malete, particularly in addressing the uprising threat of cybercrime among youth. Recognizing the growing student population and the susceptibility of some individuals to internet-related offenses, the EFCC established a working relationship with Kwara State University (KWASU) to support preventive and enforcement measures. This cordial partnership has enabled the commission to carry out targeted operations mostly at night without disrupting the academic environment, while also reinforcing the importance of ethical conduct among students.³²

Through this collaboration, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) has conducted periodic raids, arrests, and joint checkpoint activities within and around Malete. These operations often involve stop-and-search exercises at strategic locations, aimed at deterring financial crimes and identifying suspicious movements.³³ The organization visible presence and coordinated efforts with local stakeholders have served both as a deterrent and a signal that Malete is not a safe haven for cybercriminal activity.

Although challenges such as underfunding, manpower shortages, and limited cooperation from victims and witnesses continue to hinder comprehensive crime prevention. Nonetheless, the collective intervention of these security operatives has prevented greater escalations of violence and instability, offering a level of protection and hope for a more secure Malete community.

CHALLENGES TO SECURITY ENFORCEMENT IN MALETE

However, despite the visible efforts and multi-agency collaborations in curbing crime within Kwara State University and the wider Malete community, several critical challenges continue to disrupt security effectiveness.³⁴ Chief among these is the issue of mobilization and logistics. These security operatives, including the University Safety Unit, police, private guards, and local vigilantes, often lack the necessary resources, such as patrol vehicles, fuel supply, and communication tools, to respond swiftly and efficiently to incidents. Also, emergency coordination mechanisms are either insufficient or outdated, limiting the operatives' ability to act in real time. This inadequacy becomes more glaring during complex emergencies such as cult clashes,

armed robbery, or coordinated cybercrime operations that require rapid, multi-point intervention.

Furthermore, the shortage of personnel across all levels of security deployment is also a pertinent pro. The University Safety Unit at Kwara State University faces a significant operational strain due to a chronic shortage of personnel and essential security equipment, despite being responsible for safeguarding a growing population of over 30,000 students and staff. With fewer than 100 active security officers, the unit is grossly understaffed, resulting in inadequate coverage of critical areas such as lecture halls, hostels, laboratories, and administrative buildings. This shortfall becomes especially problematic during peak academic periods, examinations, or emergencies, when multiple incidents may occur simultaneously across the campus. Beyond manpower limitations, the unit also lacks access to modern surveillance infrastructure, such as CCTV cameras, body scanners, emergency communication systems, and enough patrol vehicles, which are vital for effective crime prevention and rapid response.³⁵ Officers are often left to rely on manual methods and physical patrols, which are not only time-consuming but also insufficient in deterring more sophisticated crimes such as theft, cult-related violence, and misconduct in the school premises.

Moreover, the local vigilantes, while indispensable due to their local intelligence and terrain familiarity, lack the manpower, training, and equipment, such as bicycles, motorbikes, torchlights, and so on, needed to confront armed criminals or organized networks.³⁶ Even the Nigerian Police Force and Civil Defence Corps stationed in Malete report limited boots-on-ground capacity, often leaving wide areas of the town vulnerable to opportunistic crimes.

Compounding these personnel and mobilization challenges is the lack of modern security equipment and infrastructure. Most operatives are forced to work without access to essential tools such as surveillance cameras, metal detectors, or crime-mapping software. The university's hostels and private hostels, especially those off-campus, are also poorly lit and not equipped with security guards.³⁷ These technological and infrastructural gaps severely limit the ability of security teams to prevent crimes, gather reliable evidence, or track offenders with precision, particularly in crimes involving theft, sexual violence, or property damage.

In addition, one of the most pressing challenges to effective security enforcement in Malete is the negligence of many landlords or investors in providing basic protective measures for student housing. As the population of Kwara State University grew, so did the number of private hostels springing up across the community. Unfortunately, a large number of these hostels were built without employing able-bodied or trained security personnel to man the premises. This negligence has left many students, particularly female residents, vulnerable to theft, assault, and, in some tragic cases, rape.³⁸ The absence of a physical security presence around these hostels encourages opportunistic criminals who exploit the lack of security presence to carry out their activities undisturbed, especially during late hours or periods of low student traffic.

Consequently, a lack of stable electricity also significantly undermines security enforcement in Malete. Long-standing power outages leave vast sections of the community in darkness at night, reducing visibility and enabling criminal activities to flourish unchecked. Streetlights, where they exist, are often non-functional, and most privately installed security lights on hostels rely on a power supply that is anything but stable. This problem of electricity does not only affect surveillance but also discourages community policing and neighborhood vigilance, as many residents prefer to remain indoors once night falls. The resulting insecurity during the nighttime has become a major concern for students, hostel owners, and security operatives alike.³⁹

Accordingly, another major barrier to effective policing is the lack of cooperation between students and law enforcement agencies. Many students are either apathetic or deeply suspicious of the police and other operatives due to past experiences of harassment or arbitrary arrests. This strained relationship means that critical intelligence and early warning signs of crime often go unreported. In some cases, students choose to settle disputes or incidents internally rather than involving security authorities, allowing potentially dangerous situations to escalate or repeat. The absence of trust also weakens community-based policing strategies that rely on collaboration and timely information sharing between residents and security personnel within Malete.⁴⁰

Moreover, Malete's complex geographical layout presents a significant obstacle to efficient law enforcement. The town is surrounded by numerous footpaths and access routes that link it with neighboring villages such as Alapo, Okoru, Elemere, Alapa, Budo Aare, Agric, Jeunkunu, Monso, Yeregi, Ogunsekan, and others. These routes, often narrow and hidden by vegetation, are largely unmanned and poorly mapped, making it extremely difficult for security operatives to monitor movement in and out of the community. Criminals exploit this porousness to carry out raids, burglaries, and livestock rustling, retreating quickly through these informal exits before any security response can be mobilized. With only one access point known to have an element of security coverage, and even at that, it is grossly undermanned, making the community exposed and vulnerable to external threats.⁴¹

Hence, the lack of security infrastructure further exposes Malete's vulnerability to crimes. There are no surveillance cameras in public places, no centralized alarm systems, and minimal use of technology for monitoring criminal activities. Most of the security enforcement remains manual, reactive, and heavily dependent on human presence. This situation leaves both the operatives and the public at a disadvantage, as criminals often act with confidence that their identities will not be captured or traced. The delay in responding to incidents due to poor communication tools among local security units also contributes to the failure to apprehend culprits promptly, and of course these challenges are linked to the problem of insufficient personnel across all security agencies.

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative-dominant mixed-method approach to investigate the evolution of crime and the security landscape in Malete, Kwara State, Nigeria, from 2009 to 2025. Data were collected through 9 oral interviews with stakeholders, including students, community leaders, vigilante operatives, and security officers. Archival crime records from the Nigerian Police, Civil Defence Corps, and the university's Safety Unit were examined, alongside media reports and EFCC/NDLEA press releases. In addition, field observation was conducted at major crime hotspots such as Westend, Safari, Market Side, and Agric Road. Quantitative elements were integrated by recording crime trends in percentages and comparing them with security manpower and population ratios. Thematic analysis was employed to categorize findings into major crime types (theft, cybercrime, cultism, violent crime, and sexual assault), while descriptive statistics were used to present frequency and distribution patterns.

Results

The study revealed significant shifts in crime trends in Malete since the establishment of Kwara State University:

- 1- Theft and Burglary: Reported cases increased from 10% in 2009 to over 80% by 2024, with students heavily implicated. Over 50% of incidents occurred in identified hotspots (Westend, Safari, Market Side, and Agric Road).
- 2- Cybercrime: Grew by 75% between 2015 and 2024, culminating in the EFCC's 2024 raid where 48 students and 2 outsiders were arrested. Fraudulent hostel scams also defrauded students of over ₦10 million in 2021.
- 3- Cultism and Violence: Cult clashes were linked to both personal disputes and financial conflicts. The 2019 cult feud caused two deaths, while in 2025, the murder of "Big White" over fraud proceeds highlighted cult–cybercrime intersections.
- 4- Armed and Opportunistic Crimes: Cases included attempted armed robbery by students (e.g., a 2022 filling station attack), showing a drift from petty theft to violent crime.
- 5- Sexual Violence: Both insiders and outsiders were implicated. In 2024/25, a campus security guard raped a female student under duress, while in 2024, an outsider infiltrated a hostel and raped a student at knifepoint.
- 6- Security Capacity: Security personnel numbered only 150 against a combined student and resident population of over 30,000, reflecting a weak 1:200 officer–population ratio.
- 7- Student Perceptions: Over 50% of interviewed students expressed mistrust of law enforcement, citing harassment, extortion, and poor response times.
- 8- Funding: Most security operatives (especially vigilantes) were found to be underpaid through stipends, limiting their operational effectiveness.

Discussion

The findings in this study explain the transformation of Malete's crime landscape from petty offenses to organized, violent, and cyber-enabled crimes over the last decade. The surge in theft and burglary correlates strongly with the rapid growth of student populations and poorly regulated private hostels. Cybercrime's prominence reflects broader national trends among Nigerian youths but is intensified in Malete due to peer influence, fraudulent mentorship, and weak institutional deterrence, as seen in Taiye's 2023 case.

Furthermore, cultism remains a critical driver of violence, with disputes escalating into lethal confrontations. The 2019 and 2025 incidents highlight how cult networks intersect with financial and emotional disputes, creating threats that combine cybercrime and organized violence. Meanwhile, opportunistic crimes such as robbery indicate that some students exploit community familiarity and weak surveillance systems to target victims.

In addition, sexual violence cases expose structural vulnerabilities within campus and hostel security. The abuse of authority by a university security guard demonstrates recruitment flaws and poor oversight, while the hostel intrusion shows the risks of inadequate security and poor electrical infrastructure. Both cases underline the urgent need for gender-sensitive reforms in security operations.

Moreover, the results also reveal systemic weaknesses in Malete's security framework: underfunding, manpower shortages, inadequate surveillance infrastructure (such as flashlights, bikes, patrol van etc), and poor hostel management. The stark 1:200 officer–population ratio underscores the inability of conventional policing alone to manage a rapidly growing university town. While community vigilantes play a vital role in intercepting crimes, their limited equipment and stipends reduce sustainability.

Finally, the documented mistrust of law enforcement by over half of students signals a crisis of legitimacy. Without trust, crime reporting and cooperation remain low, hindering proactive crime prevention. This points to the necessity of rebuilding community–security relations through transparency, accountability, and participatory safety initiatives.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

In conclusion, while there have been commendable strides through multi-agency collaborations and security reforms aimed at curbing crime within Kwara State University and the broader Malete community, the persistent challenges of underfunding, personnel shortages, outdated infrastructure, and geographical vulnerabilities continue to undermine these efforts. The recurring issues, ranging from limited patrol resources and inadequate surveillance systems to poorly manned access points and unreliable electricity, collectively erode the effectiveness of crime prevention and emergency response initiatives. If the university and its security

stakeholders are to build a truly safe academic environment, there must be a concerted investment in modern security technologies, personnel training and recruitment, and infrastructural upgrades. Only through a holistic, well-resourced, and community-integrated approach can Malete move toward sustainable security and ensure the safety of its growing student and resident population.

Firstly, the university and relevant authorities should consider placing a ban on night activities such as parties and gatherings. These late-night gatherings often become targets for criminal elements and expose students to unnecessary risks. Complementing this, a curfew system should be introduced at an appointed and mutually agreed-upon time between stakeholders, including student leaders, security agencies, and community heads. This measure would significantly reduce nighttime movement and the vulnerability that comes with it.

Furthermore, there is an urgent need to increase the number of security personnel operating in and around Malete, particularly at critical points like major entry routes such as bordering villages, student hostels, and isolated footpaths. Hostel owners or investors should be mandated to employ able-bodied and trained security guards to monitor their premises and provide an immediate response in case of threats. Beyond deterrence, any individual found guilty of committing crimes within the community, especially against students, should be promptly prosecuted to serve as a strong warning to others and restore confidence in the justice system.

In addition, equally important is the role of education and awareness. Students must be sensitized to the dangers of crime, both as victims and potential perpetrators. Regular seminars, campus campaigns, and orientation programs should be instituted to emphasize the benefits of cooperating with law enforcement agencies and reporting suspicious activities. Finally, the school management and government must collaborate to equip local vigilante groups with essential security tools, such as communication devices, flashlights, protective gear, and basic mobility options. Empowering these community-based operatives will enhance their capacity to respond swiftly and effectively to security threats.

In support of these measures laid down, the Nigerian Air Force, one of the critical arms of Nigeria's Armed Forces, is equipped with advanced aerial surveillance technology and trained personnel capable of operating in difficult terrains. With its primary mandate of defending the nation's airspace, the force has evolved to provide internal security support across high-risk zones, especially in areas inaccessible to conventional ground operatives. Its capacity for aerial patrol, on-the-spot observation, and surveillance of expansive terrains makes it particularly useful in monitoring criminal activities around Malete. In Malete and its surroundings, where thick forests and remote villages create natural hideouts for criminals, the presence of the Air Force becomes indispensable. These dense areas often harbor individuals engaged in serious criminal activities such as kidnapping, banditry, armed robbery, and smuggling. Air surveillance across these terrains would allow for early detection of illicit movements,

hidden camps, or escape routes often exploited by criminals, thereby complementing ground efforts and ensuring better coordination among security stakeholders.

In addition to air patrols, there is an urgent need for the establishment of permanent security checkpoints across the various entrepôts leading into and out of Malete. These routes, which connect the town to surrounding villages and localities such as Shao, Oloru, Elemere, Jeunkunu, Monso, Alapa, and others, serve as potential passageways for criminal infiltration. In order to effectively secure these points, trained personnel from the Nigeria Police Force, the Civil Defense Corps, local vigilante groups, and military support units should be assigned to man these locations. Their presence will discourage criminal activity, regulate the inflow of suspicious individuals, and improve the general feeling of safety among residents. Surveillance from the air can further assist these stationed operatives by providing intelligence on unusual gatherings, illegal transportation of goods, or attempts to manipulate checkpoints through bush paths. This dual approach of ground presence and aerial support will significantly improve security, reduce crime, and create a more stable environment for students and residents in the Malete axis.

As a result, the security of Malete is not solely the responsibility of government agencies but a collective effort requiring active participation from Kwara State University, community leaders and residents, students, and law enforcement bodies. By implementing these recommendations, it is possible to foster a safer, more secure academic environment that promotes learning, community development, and peace.

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1	Saadu Alakaara	M	84	Malete	Trader	29/12/2024
2.	Alh. AbdulRahman Babatunde Oreoluwa	M		Malete	Village head	10/04/2025
3.	Mr. AbdulRazaq Sanusi	M	56	Malete	NSCDC	10/04/2025
4.	Commander	M		Malete	HGN	08/05/2024
5.	Inspr. Sadiq Mohammed	M		Malete	Police	12/03/2025
6.	DCSO Timothy Frank	M		Malete	University Safety	29/05/2025
7.	SSO Ibrahim	F		Malete	University Safety	02/05/2025
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