

Security Agencies' Strategies and Prevention of Electoral Violence: A Case of Isingiro District

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ABSTRACT

Electoral violence remains a major challenge to democratic governance, political stability, and citizen participation in Uganda, particularly in districts experiencing intense political competition. This study examined the relationship between security agencies' strategies and the prevention of electoral violence in Isingiro District, Uganda. Specifically, it examined training and capacity, community engagement, intelligence gathering, and enforcement and response in relation to the prevention of electoral violence. Guided by Routine Activity Theory and Community Policing Theory, the study adopted an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design under the pragmatist paradigm. A sample of 188 respondents was selected from a target population of 351, of whom 167 provided usable quantitative responses, representing an 89% response rate. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson product-moment correlation in SPSS version 30, while qualitative data from 15 key informant interviews were analyzed thematically with support from ATLAS.ti. The findings revealed strong, positive and statistically significant relationships between training and capacity and prevention of electoral violence ($r = 0.624$, $p < 0.01$), community engagement ($r = 0.681$, $p < 0.01$), intelligence gathering ($r = 0.734$, $p < 0.01$), and enforcement and response ($r = 0.658$, $p < 0.01$). Intelligence gathering showed the strongest bivariate association. Qualitative findings reinforced these results by highlighting early warning, community collaboration, visible and timely deployment, and continuous professional preparation as important preventive mechanisms. However, limited operational resources, political tensions, misinformation, logistical constraints, and perceptions of partisan enforcement weakened implementation. The study concluded that electoral violence prevention in Isingiro District requires a coordinated package of proactive intelligence, sustained community engagement, professional capacity building, and timely, impartial enforcement. It recommends strengthening district-level intelligence and early-warning systems, resourcing election security operations, institutionalizing community-security dialogue, and reinforcing politically neutral and rights-respecting enforcement practices.

Keywords: Security agencies' strategies, electoral violence, intelligence gathering, community engagement, enforcement and response, electoral security, Isingiro District, Uganda.

INTRODUCTION

Elections are a cornerstone of democratic governance, providing citizens with the opportunity to select their leaders and influence public policy. However, the electoral process is often accompanied by tensions, disputes, and, in some cases, violence, which can undermine democratic consolidation and socio-political stability (Collier & Vicente, 2012; UNDP, 2015). Electoral violence not only threatens public safety but also erodes citizens' confidence in political institutions, disrupts governance, and hampers socio-economic development (Jackson & Bradford, 2010). In many contexts, security agencies play a critical role in preventing, mitigating, and responding to electoral violence by employing strategic interventions and engaging with communities. In Uganda, and specifically in districts such as Isingiro, electoral periods have historically been characterized by heightened political competition, sometimes leading to incidences of violence, intimidation, and voter unrest. The responsibility of maintaining peace during elections largely rests on security agencies, including the Uganda

Police Force and local administrative structures, which implement strategies such as community policing, intelligence-led operations, visible deployment, and civic education support. Despite these efforts, electoral violence persists, suggesting a need for systematic evaluation of the strategies employed, their effectiveness, and the challenges encountered during implementation (UNDP, 2015; Collier & Vicente, 2012). This study investigated the strategies employed by security agencies to prevent electoral violence in Isingiro District. It examined the perceived effectiveness of these strategies among security personnel and explored the challenges that hindered the successful implementation of preventive measures. By examining these dynamics, the study provided empirical evidence to inform electoral security planning, promote community safety, and strengthen democratic governance.

Contextual Background

Uganda has experienced repeated episodes of electoral violence characterized by political intimidation, clashes between rival supporters, excessive use of force by security agencies, destruction of property, and election-related arrests during successive electoral cycles. Although the country has strengthened its electoral legal framework and expanded the involvement of security agencies in maintaining law and order during elections, concerns persist regarding the effectiveness, impartiality, and coordination of these interventions. The Uganda Police Force, Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF), and other security agencies have increasingly adopted strategies such as intelligence-led policing, community policing, preventive deployment, inter agency coordination, and voter sensitization to minimize election-related violence. Despite these efforts, reports by the Electoral Commission, the Uganda Human Rights Commission, and election observer missions indicate that localized electoral violence and political tensions continue to occur, particularly during party primaries and general elections, highlighting the need to evaluate the effectiveness of existing security strategies in promoting peaceful electoral processes (Electoral Commission Uganda, 2021; Uganda Human Rights Commission, 2023). Isingiro District, located in southwestern Uganda, provided a suitable context for examining the effectiveness of security agencies' strategies in preventing electoral violence. The district has a predominantly rural population, with approximately 90% of households depending on subsistence agriculture and livestock production as their primary source of livelihood (Uganda Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries, 2024). Like many rural districts in Uganda, political competition in Isingiro has periodically been accompanied by localized electoral tensions, including confrontations between rival political supporters, destruction of campaign materials and property, disruption of political meetings, and arrests arising from election-related incidents, particularly during party primary elections. The district's proximity to 8 international borders, diverse ethnic composition, and varying political interests further increase the complexity of maintaining electoral peace. In response, security agencies have implemented strategies such as community policing, intelligence gathering, coordinated security deployment, conflict surveillance, and civic sensitization to prevent electoral violence. However, despite these interventions, limited empirical evidence exists regarding the effectiveness of these strategies in enhancing community safety, reducing electoral violence, and strengthening preparedness during electoral processes within the district, thereby justifying the focus of this study.

Conceptual Background of the Study

The conceptual background of this study was anchored on the relationship between security agencies' strategies and the prevention of electoral violence. Security agencies' strategies constituted the independent variable and were conceptualized through four dimensions: training and capacity, community engagement, intelligence gathering, and enforcement and response. Prevention of electoral violence constituted the dependent variable and was reflected in incident reduction, public perception of safety, and preparedness. Conceptually, training and capacity strengthen the competence and readiness of security personnel; community engagement improves communication, cooperation, and early reporting; intelligence gathering supports identification of hotspots and emerging threats; and enforcement and response provide deterrence and timely control of incidents. These strategies therefore operate as complementary guardianship mechanisms intended to reduce opportunities for electoral violence before, during, and after elections. Their effectiveness depends on institutional preparedness, coordination, adequate resources, professionalism, and perceived impartiality. Where strategies are fragmented, under-resourced, reactive, or viewed as politically biased, preventive effectiveness may be weakened (Frank, 2025; Henry, 2023). Prevention of electoral violence was conceptualized as reducing both the likelihood and severity of election-related conflict while strengthening perceived safety and institutional preparedness. This

framing is consistent with evidence that electoral violence is associated with institutional fragility and that effective prevention requires proactive, coordinated, and context-sensitive security interventions (Fjelde & Höglund, 2021). Accordingly, the study examined the direct bivariate relationships between each of the four security strategy dimensions and prevention of electoral violence; community trust was treated as an important contextual consideration rather than as a formally tested mediating variable.

Statement of the Problem

Electoral violence remains a persistent challenge to democratic governance and political stability, particularly in contexts characterized by intense political competition, weak institutional oversight, and limited public trust in security actors. It manifests in forms such as voter intimidation, physical assaults, property destruction, and disruptions to electoral processes, leading to loss of life, reduced citizen participation, and erosion of electoral credibility. Despite a global shift toward proactive prevention strategies including intelligence-led operations, community engagement, visible deployment, and civic education electoral violence continues to occur, suggesting that these interventions are inconsistently implemented or insufficiently adapted to local contexts (Birch & Muchlinski, 2020; Höglund, 2009). In Africa, and specifically East Africa, electoral periods are frequently marked by clashes among political supporters, coercion of voters, and polling disruptions, often driven by socio-political rivalries and weak enforcement of electoral laws (Bekoe, 2012; Mutahi, 2024). In Uganda, despite electoral security frameworks implemented by the Uganda Police Force and district security committees, recent elections have continued to experience violence, intimidation, and public distrust in security agencies, compounded by challenges such as limited intelligence capacity, inadequate community engagement, and uneven deployment (Afrobarometer, 2025; Human Rights Watch, 2021; EU EOM, 2021; AllAfrica, 2025; Gbati, 2024). At the local level, Isingiro District has recorded incidents of voter intimidation, clashes among political supporters, and disputes during electoral periods, indicating persistent vulnerabilities in electoral security. This study therefore sought to examine the role of security agencies' strategies in the prevention of electoral violence in Isingiro District in order to generate empirical evidence that could inform more effective, context-sensitive, and sustainable electoral security interventions.

General Objective

To examine the role of security agencies' strategies in the prevention of electoral violence in Isingiro District, Uganda.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Empirical Review

Principal Strategies Employed by Security Agencies to Prevent Electoral Violence

Community policing emphasizes partnerships between security agencies and local communities to foster trust, cooperation, and proactive reporting of threats. Skogan (2006) argues that community policing enhances early detection of conflict, reduces fear among citizens, and improves legitimacy of law enforcement institutions. In electoral contexts, community policing facilitates dialogue between political actors and communities, allowing security personnel to anticipate potential flashpoints. Mutahi (2024) highlights that in East African elections, districts with strong community policing mechanisms experienced lower levels of voter intimidation and clashes between party supporters. Community policing also enables security agencies to mobilize local networks for early warning and rapid response, ensuring timely intervention in emerging conflicts. Intelligence-led operations involve the collection, analysis, and application of information to prevent and manage potential electoral violence. This approach allows security agencies to identify high-risk areas, potential offenders, and patterns of conflict before and during elections (Ratcliffe, 2016). Empirical studies in Kenya and Uganda indicate that intelligence-led policing helps deploy resources effectively, pre-empt violent incidents, and manage election-related tensions (Höglund & Jarstad, 2010; Birch & Muchlinski, 2020). By targeting interventions based on evidence, security agencies can reduce unnecessary force, build public confidence, and increase operational efficiency. Visible deployment refers to the strategic presence of security forces in key locations such as polling stations, campaign venues, and conflict-prone areas. Research shows that visible deployment acts as a deterrent

to potential offenders and reassures the public of their safety (Höglund & Jarstad, 2010; Birch & Muchlinski, 2020). In Uganda, Gbati (2024) notes that during past elections, districts where security personnel were visibly deployed experienced fewer violent incidents and reduced intimidation of voters. Visible deployment also signals government commitment to maintaining order, which can enhance citizen participation and trust in the electoral process. Civic education initiatives aim to raise public awareness about electoral processes, legal frameworks, and peaceful participation. UNDP (2024)

emphasizes that civic education reduces misinformation, equips citizens with knowledge of their rights, and encourages responsible participation. Studies in Uganda and Kenya indicate that citizens who are educated on electoral laws and conflict resolution mechanisms are less likely to engage in or be intimidated by violence (Mutahi, 2024; UNDP, 2024). Civic education also complements enforcement strategies by addressing behavioral and social drivers of electoral violence, making preventive measures more effective. The literature suggests that security agencies rely on a combination of community engagement, intelligence gathering, visible presence, and citizen education to prevent electoral violence. These strategies are interrelated: community policing and civic education enhance trust and cooperation, while intelligence-led operations and visible deployment provide deterrence and rapid response capacity. However, studies also note that the effectiveness of these strategies is influenced by resource availability, coordination, political neutrality, and community trust (Birch & Muchlinski, 2020; Gbati, 2024).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopted a cross-sectional research design, which involved collecting data from a defined population at a single point in time to examine prevailing conditions, perceptions, and relationships among variables (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The design was considered appropriate because it enabled the study to assess electoral violence prevention strategies and their perceived effectiveness within the context of Isingiro District without manipulating the study environment. The quantitative component facilitated the measurement of security agencies' strategies and their relationship with indicators of electoral violence prevention, while the qualitative component provided in-depth insights into operational experiences, institutional dynamics, and contextual challenges through key informant interviews. The integration of quantitative and qualitative methods enhanced methodological triangulation, thereby improving the validity and credibility of the study findings (Bryman, 2016; Creswell, 2014; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010).

Research Approach

This study adopted a mixed-methods approach using an explanatory sequential design, in which quantitative data were collected and analyzed first, followed by qualitative data to explain and deepen the quantitative findings (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The quantitative phase used structured questionnaires to measure training and capacity, community engagement, intelligence gathering, enforcement and response, and indicators of electoral violence prevention, including incident reduction, perceived safety, and preparedness. The qualitative phase involved key informant interviews with security personnel, local leaders, and the Resident District Commissioner (RDC) to explain the statistical patterns and provide deeper insights into institutional practices, operational constraints, political tensions, community cooperation, and implementation challenges (Creswell, 2014).

Target Population

The target population for this study comprised all key stakeholders involved in, or affected by, the implementation of security agencies' strategies aimed at preventing electoral violence in Isingiro District. The study population consisted of 351 participants who were actively engaged in electoral processes, as identified from Crime Prevention Reports (2020–2025). The population included security personnel, local leaders, community members, and the Resident District Commissioner (RDC) as a key informant because these categories were directly linked to the study variables and electoral security framework. The population was considered appropriate because it provided a manageable yet sufficiently diverse representation of stakeholders

involved in electoral security and governance within the district, while the inclusion of different categories of respondents enhanced triangulation of information and strengthened the validity and contextual understanding of the study findings.

Sampling Techniques

The study employed a combination of purposive, stratified random, and simple random sampling techniques to select respondents from the three target categories: security personnel, local leaders, and community members. The use of these sampling techniques ensured representativeness of the study population, relevance of selected respondents to the study objectives, and adequate depth of information for both quantitative and qualitative inquiry.

Data Collection Methods

The study employed a multi-method approach to data collection, integrating quantitative and qualitative techniques. This approach facilitated data triangulation, enhanced the validity of findings, and provided a comprehensive understanding of the strategies employed by security agencies to prevent electoral violence in Isingiro District.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were coded and analyzed using SPSS version 30. Frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations summarized respondent characteristics and the study constructs. Pearson product-moment correlation analysis was then used to establish the direction, strength, and statistical significance of the bivariate relationships between training and capacity, community engagement, intelligence gathering, enforcement and response, and prevention of electoral violence. Statistical significance was assessed at $p < 0.05$. Because the empirical results reported in this manuscript are descriptive and correlational, no multiple regression or mediation analysis was claimed. Qualitative interviews were transcribed verbatim, coded, and analyzed thematically with support from ATLAS.ti. Themes were organized around the study objectives and used to explain and contextualize the quantitative findings. Integration occurred at interpretation through comparison of convergent and complementary evidence from the two strands.

FINDINGS

Descriptive Statistics for Security Agencies' Strategies

The study examined security agencies' strategies as the independent variable based on four dimensions, namely training and capacity, community engagement, intelligence gathering, and enforcement and response. Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with statements measuring each dimension. The aggregate mean scores and standard deviations for each dimension are presented in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Summary of Descriptive Statistics for Security Agencies' Strategies (Independent Variable)

Dimension of Security Agencies' Strategies Mean Standard Deviation Interpretation

Training and Capacity	3.7	0.94	Agree
Community Engagement	3.72	0.95	Agree
Intelligence Gathering	3.83	0.91	Agree
Enforcement and Response	3.76	0.93	Agree
Overall Mean	3.75	0.93	Agree

Source: Field Data (2026)

The findings presented in Table 4.3 indicate that respondents generally agreed that security agencies employ

various strategies aimed at preventing electoral violence in Isingiro District, as reflected by the overall mean score of 3.75 and standard deviation of 0.93. This suggests that respondents perceived security agencies as having moderately strong preventive mechanisms involving capacity development, community interaction, intelligence operations, and enforcement measures. Among the four dimensions, intelligence gathering recorded the highest mean score (Mean = 3.83, SD = 0.91), indicating that respondents considered the collection and utilization of security information as the most prominent strategy in preventing electoral violence. This implies that early identification of potential threats, monitoring of electoral hotspots, and timely sharing of security information are important mechanisms for reducing the likelihood of violence during electoral periods. The second highest-rated dimension was enforcement and response (Mean = 3.76, SD = 0.93). This finding suggests that respondents recognized the importance of timely security deployment, law enforcement, and rapid response mechanisms in maintaining electoral order. Effective response systems may discourage potential offenders and limit the escalation of election-related conflicts. Similarly, community engagement recorded a mean score of 3.72 (SD = 0.95), showing that respondents agreed that collaboration between security agencies, local leaders, and communities contributes to peaceful electoral processes. This highlights the importance of participatory approaches where communities are involved in identifying risks, reporting threats, and promoting peaceful political participation. The lowest-rated dimension was training and capacity with a mean score of 3.70 (SD = 0.94). Although still within the agreement range, the slightly lower score suggests that respondents perceived some limitations in the preparedness, resources, equipment, or continuous training of security personnel. This may indicate areas requiring further improvement to enhance the ability of security agencies to effectively prevent electoral violence. Overall, the findings demonstrate that security agencies' strategies are generally perceived as present and functional in Isingiro District. However, strengthening continuous training, improving operational resources, enhancing intelligence systems, and maintaining community based security partnerships may further improve the effectiveness of electoral violence prevention efforts.

Descriptive Statistics for Prevention of Electoral Violence (Dependent Variable)

The study assessed prevention of electoral violence as the dependent variable using three constructs: incident reduction, public perception of safety, and preparedness indicators. These constructs were measured using questionnaire items that captured respondents' perceptions regarding the extent to which electoral violence has been reduced, citizens feel secure during electoral activities, and security agencies are prepared to manage electoral threats. The summary descriptive statistics are presented in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4: Summary of Descriptive Statistics for Prevention of Electoral Violence

Construct of Prevention of Electoral Violence Mean Standard Deviation Interpretation

Incident Reduction	3.79	0.92	Agree
Public Perception of Safety	3.73	0.95	Agree
Preparedness Indicators	3.77	0.92	Agree
Overall Mean	3.76	0.93	Agree

Source: Field Data (2026)

The findings in Table 4.4 indicate that respondents generally agreed that measures aimed at preventing electoral violence have been effective in Isingiro District, as reflected by the overall mean score of 3.76 and standard deviation of 0.93. This suggests that respondents perceived a positive contribution of security interventions towards creating safer electoral environments and reducing election-related conflicts.

Among the three constructs, incident reduction recorded the highest mean score (Mean = 3.79, SD = 0.92), implying that respondents perceived a decline in cases of electoral violence due to interventions by security agencies. This finding suggests that strategies such as intelligence gathering, security deployment, and timely intervention may have contributed to limiting violent incidents during electoral periods.

The construct of preparedness indicators followed with a mean score of 3.77 (SD = 0.92). This indicates that

respondents generally acknowledged the readiness of security agencies in terms of planning, deployment arrangements, coordination, and response mechanisms. Effective preparedness is essential because it enables security actors to identify risks early and respond before conflicts escalate into violence.

The lowest-rated construct was public perception of safety, with a mean score of 3.73 (SD = 0.95). Although respondents agreed that security measures have improved feelings of safety, the slightly lower score suggests that some members of the community may still experience concerns regarding trust, fairness, or confidence in security operations during politically sensitive periods.

Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis was conducted to establish the direction and strength of the relationship between security agencies' strategies and the prevention of electoral violence in Isingiro District. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (r) was used because the study variables were measured using continuous composite scores derived from Likert-scale items. The analysis examined the relationship between the four dimensions of security agencies' strategies, namely training and capacity, community engagement, intelligence gathering, and enforcement and response, and prevention of electoral violence.

The Pearson correlation coefficient ranges from -1 to +1, where a positive value indicates a direct relationship between variables, a negative value indicates an inverse relationship, and a value closer to zero indicates a weak relationship. The strength of the relationship was interpreted based on Cohen's (1988) guidelines, where correlation coefficients of 0.10–0.29 indicate weak relationships, 0.30–0.49 indicate moderate relationships, and 0.50 and above indicate strong relationships. The results are presented in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5: Pearson Correlation Analysis between Security Agencies' Strategies and Prevention of Electoral Violence

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1. Training and Capacity	1				
2. Community Engagement	.542**	1			
3. Intelligence Gathering	.586**	.634**	1		
4. Enforcement and Response	.571**	.609**	.672**	1	
5. Prevention of Electoral Violence	.624**	.681**	.734**	.658**	1

Correlation is significant at $p < 0.01$ (2-tailed)

Source: Field Data (2026)

The findings in Table 4.5 indicate that all dimensions of security agencies' strategies had a positive and statistically significant relationship with the prevention of electoral violence in

Isingiro District. This implies that improvements in security agencies' strategies are associated with enhanced prevention of electoral violence.

The results show that training and capacity had a positive and significant relationship with prevention of electoral violence ($r = 0.624$, $p < 0.01$). This indicates that increased training, improved skills, and enhanced operational capacity among security personnel are associated with reduced incidents of electoral violence. The finding suggests that well-prepared security agencies are better positioned to identify risks and respond effectively during electoral periods.

Similarly, community engagement demonstrated a strong positive relationship with prevention of electoral violence ($r = 0.681$, $p < 0.01$). This implies that stronger collaboration between security agencies, local leaders,

and community members contributes to peaceful electoral environments. Effective engagement may improve information sharing, reduce misinformation, and encourage communities to support non-violent electoral participation.

The strongest relationship was observed between intelligence gathering and prevention of electoral violence ($r = 0.734$, $p < 0.01$). This suggests that intelligence-led approaches are highly important in identifying potential threats, monitoring electoral tensions, and enabling early interventions before violence occurs. The finding highlights the importance of proactive rather than reactive security approaches.

Furthermore, enforcement and response had a strong positive relationship with prevention of electoral violence ($r = 0.658$, $p < 0.01$). This indicates that timely deployment, effective enforcement of electoral laws, and rapid response mechanisms contribute significantly to maintaining electoral peace.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that all four dimensions of security agencies' strategies are significantly associated with prevention of electoral violence. Among the strategies, intelligence gathering had the strongest association, followed by community engagement, enforcement and response, and training and capacity. This suggests that although all strategies are important, preventive intelligence systems and community-based approaches may play a particularly critical role in reducing electoral violence in Isingiro District.

Qualitative Findings

This section presents qualitative findings obtained from key informant interviews (KIIs) conducted with selected stakeholders involved in electoral security management in Isingiro District. The qualitative phase was conducted after the quantitative analysis in line with the explanatory sequential mixed-methods design. The purpose of the qualitative inquiry was to provide deeper explanations regarding how security agencies' strategies influence the prevention of electoral violence and to explore contextual factors that may not have been fully captured through questionnaires.

A total of 15 key informants participated in the interviews, including the Resident District Commissioner (RDC), police officers, security personnel, and local leaders. Data were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using thematic content analysis with support from ATLAS.ti software.

The analysis involved coding meaningful statements, grouping related codes into categories, and developing broader themes aligned with the study objectives. The major themes that emerged included: enhanced security preparedness through training and capacity building, community engagement as a foundation for peaceful elections, intelligence gathering and early warning mechanisms, enforcement and rapid response capacity, and persistent challenges affecting electoral violence prevention.

Table 4.6: Summary of Qualitative Themes Generated Using ATLAS.ti

Main Theme	Sub-themes/Codes Frequency Generated of Mentions	Interpretation
Training and Capacity of Security Agencies	Electoral security training, operational preparedness, 18 skills improvement, resource availability	Security preparedness was viewed as essential for effective management of electoral threats.
Community Engagement and Collaboration	Community meetings, stakeholder dialogue, local 22 leader involvement, public sensitization	Cooperation between communities and security agencies was considered critical in preventing violence.
Intelligence Gathering and Early Warning	Information sharing, identification of hotspots, 25 monitoring threats, community intelligence	Intelligence-led policing was perceived as the most important preventive mechanism.
Enforcement and Response	Deployment, rapid response, law enforcement, 21 coordination among agencies	Timely intervention was reported to reduce escalation of electoral conflicts.

Mechanisms		
Challenges	Limited resources, political Affecting Electoral tensions, misinformation, 19 Violence Prevention public distrust	Structural and social challenges continue to affect effectiveness of security interventions.

Source: Field Data (2026), Generated using ATLAS.ti

Training and Capacity Building as a Foundation for Electoral Security

The first theme that emerged from the interviews was the importance of training and capacity building among security agencies. Key informants indicated that effective prevention of electoral violence depends on the preparedness, professionalism, and competence of security personnel. Participants noted that electoral environments are dynamic and require officers to possess skills in conflict management, human rights-based policing, crowd control, and community relations.

One police officer explained:

“Before every election period, officers are usually prepared through briefings and training because election security requires a different approach from ordinary policing. We need to understand the political environment and how to manage tensions without escalating conflicts.” (Police Officer, KII 3)

Similarly, the RDC emphasized that:

“The ability of security agencies to maintain peace depends on how prepared they are. Training helps officers know how to respond appropriately and avoid actions that may create more tension among citizens.” (RDC, KII 1)

The findings suggest that training improves the confidence and professionalism of security personnel, enabling them to respond effectively to electoral risks. However, some respondents noted that inadequate logistical resources and limited personnel sometimes affect the practical implementation of security plans.

Community Engagement and Collaboration in Preventing Electoral Violence

Community engagement emerged as another major theme. Key informants emphasized that preventing electoral violence cannot be achieved through security enforcement alone but requires cooperation between security agencies, communities, political actors, and local leaders.

Participants highlighted community dialogues, sensitization meetings, and collaboration with local leaders as important mechanisms for building peaceful electoral environments.

A local leader stated:

“When security officers involve communities early enough, people understand what is expected of them during elections. Many conflicts can be prevented through dialogue before they become serious problems.” (Local Leader, KII 7)

Another respondent noted:

“Community members are the first people to know when there are plans for violence. If they trust security agencies, they provide information that helps prevent problems.” (Police Officer, KII 5)

The theme demonstrates that community engagement strengthens cooperation and improves access to early information. It also supports the quantitative finding where community engagement showed a strong relationship with prevention of electoral violence ($r = 0.681$, $p < 0.01$).

Intelligence Gathering and Early Warning Systems

Intelligence gathering was identified as the most prominent theme emerging from the interviews. Key informants explained that early identification of threats allows security agencies to intervene before violence occurs. Participants mentioned community informants, monitoring of political activities, intelligence networks, and coordination among security agencies as important sources of information.

A senior security officer explained:

“The best way of dealing with electoral violence is preventing it before it happens. Once you have information about possible conflicts, you can deploy early and engage the concerned groups.” (Security Officer, KII 4)

The RDC further stated:

“Information flow between communities and security agencies is very important. Many incidents can be avoided when security receives timely information about emerging tensions.” (RDC, KII 1)

The findings indicate that intelligence-led operations enable proactive security management rather than relying only on reaction after violence has occurred. This supports the quantitative results where intelligence gathering had the strongest correlation with prevention of electoral violence ($r = 0.734$, $p < 0.01$).

Enforcement and Rapid Response Mechanisms

The fourth theme concerned enforcement and response strategies. Respondents reported that visible security presence, timely deployment, and quick response to emerging conflicts help deter potential offenders and prevent escalation.

A police respondent observed:

“During elections, presence of security officers in sensitive areas helps to discourage people who may want to cause violence. Response time is also important because delays allow conflicts to spread.” (Police Officer, KII 8)

Another participant noted:

“Security agencies must balance enforcement with professionalism because excessive force can reduce *public confidence*.” (Local Leader, KII 10)

The findings indicate that enforcement measures are necessary but must be implemented fairly and professionally to maintain public confidence. This theme corresponds with the quantitative findings showing a significant relationship between enforcement and response and prevention of electoral violence ($r = 0.658$, $p < 0.01$).

Challenges Affecting Prevention of Electoral Violence

Despite the reported effectiveness of security strategies, key informants identified several challenges affecting electoral violence prevention. These included inadequate resources, political polarization, misinformation, and limited trust between citizens and security institutions.

One participant explained:

“Sometimes the challenge is not lack of security plans but the political environment.

When communities are divided, even small disagreements can become serious conflicts.”

(Local Leader, KII 12)

Another security officer stated:

“Resources are always a challenge. Elections require more personnel, transport, and communication equipment, especially in areas that are difficult to reach.” (Security Officer, KII 6)

These findings suggest that although security agencies have established mechanisms for preventing electoral violence, broader social and institutional factors influence their effectiveness.

Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

This section presents the integration of quantitative and qualitative findings in accordance with the explanatory sequential mixed-methods design adopted by the study. The quantitative findings established the statistical relationships between security agencies’ strategies and the prevention of electoral violence, while qualitative findings provided deeper explanations of how and why these relationships occur within the context of Isingiro District. Integration was achieved by comparing, confirming, and explaining quantitative results using themes generated from key informant interviews.

The integration of findings demonstrates strong convergence between the quantitative and qualitative results. The statistical findings revealed that all dimensions of security agencies’ strategies were positively and significantly associated with the prevention of electoral violence. The qualitative findings supported these relationships by explaining the mechanisms through which these strategies operate within the electoral environment of Isingiro District.

The strongest convergence was observed regarding intelligence gathering, which recorded the highest correlation coefficient ($r = 0.734$, $p < 0.01$) and was repeatedly identified by key informants as the most important preventive strategy. Both datasets indicate that early identification of threats, community-based information sharing, and timely intervention are critical in preventing violent escalation during elections.

Similarly, findings on community engagement demonstrated that security agencies’ collaboration with citizens and local leaders enhances trust, improves communication, and promotes peaceful electoral participation. The qualitative findings further suggest that communities are more willing to provide information and cooperate with security agencies when they perceive them as accessible and responsive.

The integration also reveals that training and capacity building and enforcement and response mechanisms remain important foundations for electoral security. While respondents acknowledged the competence and preparedness of security agencies, qualitative evidence highlighted persistent challenges related to resources, personnel limitations, and maintaining public confidence during enforcement operations.

Overall, the integrated findings confirm that preventing electoral violence requires a combination of operational effectiveness, community cooperation, and institutional credibility. Security agencies’ strategies were more effective when supported by trained personnel, reliable intelligence systems, responsive enforcement mechanisms, adequate resources, and constructive relationships between security institutions and communities. The qualitative evidence therefore explained and reinforced the statistically significant bivariate relationships observed in the quantitative strand without implying a formally tested mediation effect.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented, analyzed, and interpreted the findings of the study on security agencies’ strategies and prevention of electoral violence in Isingiro District. The study achieved an 89% response rate, with data obtained from 167 respondents out of the targeted 188 participants, making the findings adequate for statistical analysis and interpretation. The demographic findings showed that respondents were diverse in terms of sex, age, education level, respondent category, and years of residence, indicating that the study captured views from individuals with different experiences and knowledge of electoral security issues.

The descriptive findings revealed that respondents generally agreed that security agencies employ strategies

aimed at preventing electoral violence. Among the dimensions of security agencies' strategies, intelligence gathering recorded the highest rating (Mean = 3.83, SD = 0.91), followed by enforcement and response (Mean = 3.76, SD = 0.93), community engagement (Mean = 3.72, SD = 0.95), and training and capacity (Mean = 3.70, SD = 0.94). The overall mean score for security agencies' strategies was 3.75, indicating that respondents perceived these strategies as generally effective in promoting electoral peace.

Regarding the dependent variable, prevention of electoral violence, respondents agreed that security interventions had contributed to reducing electoral conflicts, improving public safety, and strengthening preparedness. The overall mean score for prevention of electoral violence was 3.76 (SD = 0.93). Among the constructs, incident reduction was rated highest (Mean = 3.79), followed by preparedness indicators (Mean = 3.77) and public perception of safety (Mean = 3.73).

The correlation analysis established that all dimensions of security agencies' strategies had positive and statistically significant relationships with the prevention of electoral violence. Intelligence gathering had the strongest relationship ($r = 0.734$, $p < 0.01$), followed by community engagement ($r = 0.681$, $p < 0.01$), enforcement and response ($r = 0.658$, $p < 0.01$), and training and capacity ($r = 0.624$, $p < 0.01$). These findings suggest that stronger implementation of security strategies is associated with improved prevention of electoral violence.

The qualitative findings generated through ATLAS.ti analysis further supported the quantitative results by identifying key themes related to training and capacity building, community engagement, intelligence-led operations, enforcement and rapid response, and challenges affecting electoral security management. Key informants emphasized that proactive intelligence gathering, community cooperation, and professional security deployment are critical for preventing electoral violence. However, challenges such as limited resources, political tensions, misinformation, and fragile public trust were identified as factors that may weaken security interventions.

The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings demonstrated strong convergence between the two strands of evidence. The results indicate that effective prevention of electoral violence requires operational capacity alongside constructive cooperation between security agencies and communities. The findings therefore provide empirical evidence that stronger security strategies are associated with improved electoral violence prevention in Isingiro District, while qualitative accounts clarify how preparedness, information sharing, timely deployment, professionalism, and implementation constraints shape these relationships.

Relationship between Training and Capacity of Security Agencies and Prevention of Electoral Violence

The findings revealed that training and capacity had a positive and statistically significant relationship with prevention of electoral violence ($r = 0.624$, $p < 0.01$). Descriptive findings further indicated that respondents agreed that security agencies possess adequate training and capacity to manage electoral security challenges (Mean = 3.70, SD = 0.94).

The findings imply that the ability of security agencies to prevent electoral violence is strongly influenced by the competence, preparedness, and professionalism of security personnel. Training equips officers with the necessary skills to identify potential threats, manage political tensions, apply appropriate conflict resolution mechanisms, and respond effectively to emerging security challenges during electoral periods. In the context of Isingiro District, where electoral competition may create tensions among political actors and supporters, trained security personnel are better positioned to maintain order while respecting citizens' rights.

The qualitative findings supported the quantitative results by revealing that security personnel require continuous preparation before, during, and after elections. Key informants emphasized that election security requires specialized knowledge beyond routine policing, including crowd management, mediation skills, human rights awareness, and understanding of local political dynamics. This demonstrates that electoral security is not only dependent on the presence of security personnel but also on their ability to apply professional approaches in complex political environments.

The findings are consistent with Routine Activity Theory by Cohen and Felson (1979), which emphasizes the importance of capable guardians in preventing criminal activities. Within electoral contexts, trained and competent security agencies represent capable guardians who reduce opportunities for violence by identifying risks and responding effectively. Where security institutions lack adequate preparation, violent actors may exploit institutional weaknesses to disrupt electoral processes.

The findings also agree with recent scholarship emphasizing that institutional capacity is a critical determinant of electoral violence prevention. Birch and Muchlinski (2020) argue that election-related violence often emerges where preventive institutions lack adequate capacity to anticipate and manage threats. Similarly, Frank (2025) notes that weak preparedness and limited enforcement capacity increase opportunities for violent escalation during competitive elections.

However, despite the positive perception of security capacity, the findings revealed some challenges related to equipment availability, staffing levels, and operational resources. This suggests that training should be complemented by adequate logistical support, modern equipment, and sufficient deployment capacity. Therefore, strengthening the professional and operational capacity of security agencies remains essential for sustainable electoral violence prevention.

Relationship between Community Engagement and Prevention of Electoral Violence

Community engagement had a strong positive and statistically significant relationship with prevention of electoral violence ($r = 0.681$, $p < 0.01$), while its descriptive mean (Mean = 3.72, SD = 0.95) indicated general agreement that engagement practices were present. The qualitative evidence explained this association through community dialogue, sensitization, local-leader involvement, and information sharing. A local leader observed that early involvement enabled many conflicts to be addressed through dialogue before they became serious, while a police officer emphasized that community members often possess the earliest information about planned violence. These findings are consistent with Community Policing Theory, which emphasizes partnership, accessibility, and cooperative problem solving between police and communities. They also align with Skogan (2006) and Mutahi (2024), who associate community-oriented policing with improved information flows and preventive capacity. For Isingiro District, the finding implies that community engagement should be institutionalized as an operational component of election security rather than treated as an occasional sensitization activity.

The study concludes that security agencies' strategies are strongly associated with the prevention of electoral violence in Isingiro District. All four dimensions examined—training and capacity, community engagement, intelligence gathering, and enforcement and response—showed positive and statistically significant relationships with prevention, with intelligence gathering recording the strongest bivariate association. Qualitative evidence confirmed that preparedness, early warning, community cooperation, visible deployment, and timely professional response are central to preventing escalation. However, the study also established that resource shortages, logistical limitations, misinformation, political tensions, and perceptions of partisan enforcement can weaken otherwise sound security interventions. Electoral violence prevention should therefore be approached as an integrated and preventive security function that combines professional capacity, reliable intelligence, sustained community engagement, adequate operational resources, and impartial enforcement. Because the design was cross-sectional and correlational, the findings demonstrate association rather than causation.

Intelligence gathering showed the strongest positive bivariate relationship with prevention of electoral violence ($r = 0.734$, $p < 0.01$) and also recorded the highest descriptive rating among the security strategies (Mean = 3.83, SD = 0.91). Qualitative participants consistently described early information as the basis for identifying hotspots, monitoring emerging tensions, deploying personnel, and engaging potentially conflicting groups before violence occurred. This finding supports intelligence-led policing, which prioritizes systematic collection and use of information to guide preventive deployment and resource allocation (Ratcliffe, 2016). It also accords with Birch and Muchlinski (2020), who emphasize anticipatory prevention in managing election-related risks. The result should nevertheless be interpreted as an association rather than proof of causal superiority because the cross-sectional design did not establish temporal causation. Operationally, the evidence supports strengthening lawful early-warning networks, information verification, inter-agency sharing, and rapid communication between

communities and district security structures.

Relationship between Enforcement and Response and Prevention of Electoral Violence

Enforcement and response had a strong positive and statistically significant relationship with prevention of electoral violence ($r = 0.658$, $p < 0.01$), with respondents also rating the strategy positively (Mean = 3.76, SD = 0.93). Qualitative findings indicated that visible deployment and rapid response could deter potential offenders and prevent localized conflicts from spreading. However, participants also cautioned that enforcement had to remain professional and proportionate because excessive or partisan action could reduce public confidence. The finding is consistent with Routine Activity Theory, in which capable guardianship reduces opportunities for offending, and with literature emphasizing strategic deployment and timely intervention in electoral settin-

gs (Höglund & Jarstad, 2010; Birch & Muchlinski, 2020). The practical implication is that deployment numbers alone are insufficient; response protocols should emphasize legality, proportionality, political neutrality, documentation, and accountability.

Practical And Policy Implications

The findings have direct implications for electoral security stakeholders in Uganda. First, because intelligence gathering had the strongest association with prevention, district security committees should strengthen lawful early-warning arrangements, hotspot mapping, verification procedures, and real-time information sharing before and during electoral periods. Second, the reported shortages of personnel, transport, communication equipment, and other logistics indicate that election-security planning should be accompanied by needs-based budgeting and pre-positioning of operational resources, particularly for hard-to-reach areas. Third, community engagement should be sustained throughout the electoral cycle through structured dialogue with local leaders, political actors, civil society, and community representatives rather than being concentrated only around polling days. Finally, concerns about political tensions and partisan distrust require security agencies to reinforce impartial, rights-respecting, and transparent enforcement. Clear rules of engagement, consistent application of electoral laws, complaint and accountability channels, and communication explaining security decisions can reduce perceptions of selective enforcement. Together, these measures would translate the study findings into a more preventive, coordinated, adequately resourced, and publicly credible electoral security approach.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that training and capacity of security agencies have a significant positive relationship with the prevention of electoral violence in Isingiro District. The findings established that security personnel who possess adequate skills, knowledge, and preparedness are better able to manage electoral security challenges, identify emerging risks, and respond effectively to potential conflicts. The significant relationship between training and capacity and prevention of electoral violence indicates that strengthening institutional competence enhances the ability of security agencies to maintain peaceful electoral environments. However, the study concludes that training alone is not sufficient to guarantee effective prevention of electoral violence. Continuous professional development, adequate logistical support, modern equipment, and sufficient staffing are necessary to translate security knowledge into effective field operations. Therefore, investment in the capacity development of security agencies remains critical for strengthening electoral security.

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