

BORDER SURVEILLANCE STRATEGIES AND ITS EFFECTS ON INSECURITY IN KERIO VALLEY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

The study sought to determine the relationship between the border surveillance strategies and insecurity in the three counties of Kerio valley. West Pokot County, Elgeyo Marakwet and Baringo. The context along its borders have been facing insecurity challenges for decades. The study adopted a mixed methods research design and collected both qualitative and quantitative data. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data that were then presented thematically. A total target population of 230, and a sample of 133 was used, with an eventual response rate of 108. The results indicated that the independent variable (Border surveillance strategies) which included collaborations, intelligence gathering, utilization of peace committees, collaboration with community based organizations (CBO'S), Faith Based Organizations (FBO'S) AND NGOs, implementation of community policing, disarmament and border patrols all had a positive relationship to insecurity ($R=0.731$), where they accounted for 53.5% variation in the dependent variable with an adjusted R^2 of 0.518 denoting its stability in ensuring security. The study thus recommends that the government needs to adopt current up to date tech systems in the border surveillance.

Key Words: Security; Border Surveillance; Strategies; Kerio Valley; Disarmament; Border Patrols; Community Policing

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BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The border control strategies and security are key concepts around the globe that work hand in hand for a peaceful and impactful co-existence. To ensure safe mobility and protect sovereignty, states around the globe have adopted systems that support interconnectivity. Border control strategies have overtime, grown from mere protection of territorial sovereignty to a multidimensional approach that caters for early detection and prevention of terrorism, transnational crime, and tech related threats. Additionally, it encompasses intrastate relations and governance frameworks to manage factors such as management of migration.

In the middle east, Pullan (2022) while investigating the politics of separation in the West Bank, focused on the Israel -Palestinian border surveillance and security measures. The study reported that there exist barriers as part of the border surveillance strategies, meant to delineate political boundaries between Israel and Palestine and a key border security infrastructure that has since reduced the occurrence of insecurity in Israel by restricting Palestinian mobility and reinforcing territorial control.

In Israel, its border control strategies are practiced in manner that has become an integral part of the peoples everyday life, and an accepted social reality, and included the control of movements, ascertaining of identity among others that have been reported to be effective in securing Israel, but also reported to cause psychological stress and in other instances, when cross border security is bridged, causes serious economic disruption (Kotef and Amir, 2023).

In North Korea, Greitens (2022) while investigating internal security and control, noted that the cross-border control is primarily meant to prevent defection within the state as well as the control of immigration. Among the border surveillance policies reported are shoot to kill, used primarily to ensure the stability and survival of the regime and maintain territorial security. Additionally, Silberstein & Green (2023) reported that border surveillance led to the closure of the North Korea-China border during the covid-19 pandemic, an extreme strategy that included the surveillance of the state and strengthened the regimes control.

In the western part of Africa, particularly in Nigeria, the borders are highly porous consequently leading to a destabilization of security through insurgent mobility and proliferation of arms. Moreover, the country has a weak coordination mechanism among the key security stakeholders such as the customs, the military and the immigration sector, therefore, leading to rampant insecurity due to poor implementation of border surveillance strategies. Additionally, it has seen the local community members take upon themselves to organize informal border managers to secure themselves (Akinyemi, & Danjibo, 2023).

Adeola (2022) further reported that Nigeria's Border surveillance policy included land border closures, aimed at curbing the fuel and rice illicit smuggling. In return, it has acted as a corruption gateway, and heightened the illegal cross border movements. Despite the government effort to curb the vice through implementation of the land border closure policy, the gains are short-term, and with minimal effect due to enforcement gaps that has shifted crime underground.

In South Sudan, there is a fragmented and in certain instances, improvised border control, that is not centrally coordinated. There is competition for control from different quarters including the military, the local authorities and the militias, whose primary objective is to establish authority, overshadowing the key target of ensuring security. The border authority is neglected by the central government resulting to a weak state-led security policy and thus, the rise and existence of a parallel system of governance (Schomerus & de Vries, 2014).

Order surveillance strategies in Tanzania are reported to be well organized and implemented. They have an integrated border management that carries efficient security screening, with well-coordinated security agency

mechanisms. However, they face different challenges such as limited resources to ensure effective border security measures, and existence of institution's that are fragmented, thus calling for an improved inter-agency collaboration and investment in technology and infrastructure to aid in border surveillance (Mwakangale & Rwabishugi, 2024).

In Kenya, there exists dynamics on border security: the interstate borders, inter-county borders as well as intercounty/community insecurity dynamics. According to Akenga, Morumbasi, & Handa (2017), the Kenya - Somali border has witnessed several border security bridges. This is attributed to border porosity that enables smuggling of people and goods, and the cross-border terrorism. This has been blamed on the presence of a weak governance structure that has undermined control as well as the instability that came due to the collapse of Somalia government, thus weakening the border surveillance to sustain security.

In the Kenya-Busia border, security inefficiencies have been reported to affect stability and trade operations. They include corruption, smuggling and poor infrastructure to support border surveillance. Thus, a need to adapt technology for surveillance purposes and automation at the border (Malinda and Mustya, 2025; Malinda, 2024). Sowa (2025), while investigating the Kenya border regime reported that the borders are twofold: restrictive and enabling, which yields to security inefficiencies in some areas, and institutional contradictions in others.

In the Kruio valley region, security concerns are basically transborder, either between counties or communities in the region. According to Kisang and Kipchumba (2024), while investigating the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, reported that, county boundaries/border zones have for several years been utilized by bandits as unregulated security corridors with proliferation of arms that are linked to the long-term cattle rustling. Moreover, there is weak cross border enforcement that amplify cross border illicit arms trade coupled with a terrain that overwhelms security forces and utilized by local armed groups against the inhabitants and the police to carry out their security bridges. This is lauded by Kipchumba (2019) who noted that internal borderland zones act as security frontiers, that has gaps in governance leading to the recurrences of insecurity and violence in the region.

It is based on this background that the study therefore sought to examine the effect of Border surveillance strategies in Kerio valley region, Kenya.

Statement of the Problem

Keri Valley is home to different communities: the Tugen domicile in Baringo county, the Keiyo and the Marakwet in the ElgeyoMarakwet county, and the Pokot community in the west Pokot County. These communities belong to the larger Kalenjin tribe, and inhabit the valley. The security issues arise in the Valley's contested frontier zones, that transcend not only community borders, but also happen along the borderlands of the counties forming a 'borderland security zones' particularly among the pastoralist communities. The valley is characterized by a movement between counties that mimic cross-country border migration, often associated with conflicts and insecurity, especially in the vast unguarded intercounty boundaries that have so far been treated by the government as security operation borders to curb the recurrent borderland related insecurity (Ernest, Ogenga, Kinya, 2024).

The government, has over time implemented border surveillance strategies to restore security in the valley, which has over decades caused harm, pain and pushed residence to unending cycles of poverty. The valley has become a high-risk economic zone with insecurity disrupting pastoralism and farming, basic infrastructure such as roads, schools and hospitals destroyed, causing a reverse development through economic decline. Moreover, forced emigration due to rampant raids has seen 100 % of villages indefinitely abandoned, and the rise of militarization by civilians for protection as well as constant fear, and uncertainty lead to psychological distresses among the

locals (Murkomen, 2025, Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis 2024, Ernest, Ogenga, Kinya, 2024; Musau, Ichani & Mulu, 2023).

Among the border surveillance strategies implemented to attain security stability in Kerio valley, include cross-border talks led by local community leaders and government officials, The faith-based organizations, and military organizations, the problem still persists. There is limited efficiency of security interventions and banditry closely linked to deficits in governance (Tawane, 2024). Despite the efforts in the borders, insecurity in the Kerio valley is still recurring. Moreover, there exists research gaps on the effects of border surveillance in Kerio valley, an aspect that the study sought to fill.

METHODOLOGY

A mixed method research design was adopted, composing of descriptive and inferential designs. This is because the designs allowed the collection of both primary and secondary data and analysis of the data using both the descriptive and inferential statistics. It was carried Kerio Valley, covering three counties of West Pokot, Elgeyo Marakwet and Baringo. Kerio Valley was chosen for the study because it has been for several decades a hotspot of conflicts and violence, that transverse inter-county borderlands catalyzed by hills, trenches, valleys and gorges, presence of illicit arms in the hands of civilian, banditry and cattle rustling, that has persisted despite the implementation of border surveillance policies on insecurity.

The study targeted a range of security stakeholders composed of the local government officials, Officers working in the border management unit, local community leaders, and security personnel, totaling 230. The security personnel were drawn from the Kenya Police and the Kenya defense forces working in the region, The National government Administration officers inclusive of chiefs and assistant chiefs and leaders of the local community-based organizations.

A sample size of 133 was eventually determined using Yamane Taro (1970) formula, and drawn proportionately from all the targeted groups and counties, especially from the wards affected by border security challenges. 33 were drawn from the KDF, 27 from the Local Community leaders and CBOs, 20 from the NGAO, and 53 from the community representatives composed of the faith-based organizations and the community policing leaders.

The research collected data using semi-structured questionnaire to attain both qualitative and quantitative data. A pilot study was carried out using 10 percent of the sample size in the neighboring counties of Laikipia because they have same characteristics with the area of study. The pilot study tested the instruments validity and reliability. Additionally expert opinion of the supervisors was also sought.

The ethical considerations in research were adhered to. Research authorization was sought from Kenyatta university graduate school, a research permit from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI), further authorization from the directors of education and the county commissioners. Additionally, participants informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity observed.

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data and relationship between the research variables sought using regression analysis. The data was presented in themes. The regression model adopted was $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \epsilon$ Where: Y = Security in Kerio Valley, X_1 = Border Surveillance Strategies, β_0 = Constant term, β_1 = Regression coefficients and ϵ = Error term.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Demographic Data

A total of 120 questionnaires were distributed among the respondents. The returned an adequately filled questionnaires were 108(90.2%). This is a high response rate, adequate for the analysis of the data. Among the respondents, 72(60%) were male, 48(40%) were female, denting adequate gender representation in the study. Among the, 24(20%) were aged 20-29, 40(33.3%) belonged 30-39 age group, 32(26.7%) were 40-49 while 24(20.0%) were above 50 years. This indicated that all age groups were represented in the study.

On their level of education, 20(16.7%) had primary level of education, 45(37.5%), secondary, 35(29.2%) diplomas, and 20(16.7%), had a university degree. People of all levels of education were thus represented. Additionally, 42(35%) were security personnel, 26(21.7%) came from the national government administration officers' team, 18(15%) from the civil society organization and NGOs, 34(28.3%) were local community representatives.

Border surveillance strategies and the effect on security

The study, sought to examine the effect that strategies use in order surveillance on security in Kerio valley. The strategies examined included patrols in the borders, systems of surveillance, and illicit cross border movement and how they contribute to security. The research sought the opinions of the respondents in a five-point Likert scale, where 1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree. The results are presented in themes.

Border surveillance and improvement of security

The respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement on the statement that border surveillance in their jurisdiction led to improved security. Out of the total response of 108, 1(1.0%) strongly disagreed, 3(3.2%) disagreed, 7(6.5%) neither agreed nor disagreed, 56(51.8%) agreed, and 41(37.5%) strongly agreed. A mean and standard deviation of 4.21 ± 0.73 revealed that majority of the respondents were in agreement that the border surveillance contributed to the attainment of security.

From the open-ended questions, it was also clear that the border surveillance indeed had a positive effect on security. In areas that had the higher number of patrols, security was reported to have been restored, due to the constant visibility of the security officers, and their swift response, when need be, from the local community members. Frequent and coordinated responses were reported in the patrol zones that are currently stable.

The outcome of this study agrees with results from previous studies. Świerczyńska (2023), while examining the effect of European union border surveillance, reported that surveillance is the core to the security of countries in the region, and that presence of weak surveillance systems in the borders has negative security effects. Additionally, Morral and Willis (2010), while reporting on the United States of America border security in the ports as entry points, note that the surveillance mechanisms are useful in the detection and response to any threats.

Reduction of cross-border criminal activities

The respondents were asked to indicate whether surveillance strategies improved cross-border criminal activities. From a scale of 1-5, 1(1.2%) strongly disagreed, 4(3.8%) disagreed, 8(7.0%) maintained a neutral stance, 54(50.0%) agreed while 41(38.0%) strongly agreed. A mean and a standard deviation of 4.23 ± 0.72 indicated that there is a general agreement by the majority that surveillance in the areas is closely linked to cross-border criminal activities and the standard their response was almost similar among all the respondents.

Additionally, surveillance was reported to have reduced organized criminal gangs that transcend borders of the counties and communities. The 'unholy alliance' between criminal minds from different communities converge to exploit the already volatilize situation by stealing from their own communities, and drive the proceeds(livestock)

to their allied friends in the neighboring communities, exploiting an existing cultural difference that has existed for ages, thus further causing tension and animosity among different communities. Surveillance has therefore unveiled the cross border criminal activities, and has to some extent reduced or broken down the 'unholy alliances' whose main benefit in the crime is proceeds from the commercialization of stolen livestock.

This outcome has been reported in other findings. Kipchumba (2023), in a conference proceeding on the dynamics of perennial insecurity in the Kerio Valley found that conflicts across local communities were fueled by alliances among criminal individuals who plan, organize and implement cattle theft from their own communities, and send them to neighboring communities, for their fellow friends. Networks to sell and the proceeds shared. Additionally, Mlambo (2022), while reporting on South Africa and the Royal United Services Institute (2010) on USA cross border security noted that surveillance reduces cross-border criminal activities such as illegal migration, drug trafficking, smuggling of illicit weapons and infiltration of illegal militant groups.

Collaboration and intelligence sharing

Collaboration for purposes of sharing intelligence and deterring any activities that may inhibit security efforts is one of the surveillance strategies. The respondents gave their opinion on their level of agreeableness, whether indeed the strategy was used to deter insecurity. The outcome showed that 1(1.0%) strongly disagreed, 4(3.5%) disagreed, 7(6.5%) neither agreed nor disagreed, 55(51.0%) agreed and 41(38.0%) strongly agreed. A mean and standard deviation of 4.21 ± 0.75 denoted that the respondents had a strong positive perception that collaboration led to the sharing of intelligence which consequently improved security with low to moderate response variations. Thus, the popular acceptability of the strategy and its effectiveness. A minority (4.5%) disagreed, indicating an insignificant level of skepticism towards the strategy. The respondent who maintained a neutral position (6.5%) suggests that a minimal number of the respondents were not certain and this may be attributed to either lack of information or experience on the strategy.

The level of collaboration and intelligence sharing was reported to depend heavily on the level of collaboration among the different agencies in the region. These include the different roles played by the Kenya police, the national Police reservists, the Kenya defense forces, the National government administrative officers as well as local leaders, and the leaders of community policing.

The members of the general public also share critical information that aid in deterring security bridges, in some instances, providing early warning, in others, building peace and in some instances, carrying out post conflict efforts to restore peace. Thus, the existence of co-ordination security operations transcending borders of the West Pokot, Baringo, Elgeyo-Marakwet and Turkana counties. This surveillance strategy carried out in form of a joint operations, have been reported to have reduced the mobility of bandits across counties, led to recovery of illicit arms, and disruption of armed networks (Africa Press, 2025).

Other studies have reported the same trend. Bureš, (2016) while reporting on counter terrorism in the European Union reported that that cross-border intelligence is a core strategy to counter movement of criminals and counter terrorism, while Babanoski, & Lijewski (2025) noted that co-ordination leads to faster detection, the disruption of cross-border criminal networks.

Peace Committees

Another surveillance strategy reported was the utilization of peace committees. This entails the coming up of local community elders from different groups and counties to forge for peaceful co-existence. They play different roles such as allocation and utilization of grazing lands and resolutions of conflicts that may arise from it, water points and handling of cattle raids. Their efforts as a collaborative surveillance measure were reported have led to lasting

peace pacts and reduction of revenge related attacks as well as improved trust between the people and the security forces in among communities in some places.

From their opinions on whether the enforcement of peace committees as a border surveillance measure to attain cross border security was effective, 1(1.2%) strongly disagreed, 4(3.8%) disagreed, 7(6.8%) maintained a neutral stance, 56(51.5%) agreed while 40(36.7%) strongly agreed. A mean and standard deviation of 4.18 ± 0.75 denoted that most respondents, 88.2%) were in agreement, therefore, indicating a strong positive perception that the utilization of peace committees as a surveillance strategy across borders in Kerio Valley was effective in Improving security in the Valley. The low standard deviation denotes that the variation level of the responses was minimal and thus outcome generally agreeable.

Studies carried before indicate the same trend. Elfversson (2016) reported that overtime, the peace committees have gained its legality in communities and have become trusted strategies as compared to formal peacebuilding and security strategies by the government. They have led successful mediations, organized effective local dialogues across communities and produced effective and lasting peace agreements. Kioko (2017) noted that they provide early warning, report suspicious activities that can jeopardize security and strengthen cooperation between the government led security team and local community members.

Local community-based organizations, Faith Based organizations and non-government organizations

As a surveillance strategy to ensure cross-border security, there is need to incorporate local institutions. Partnerships have also been forged with local community-based organizations, and non-governmental organizations, Faith Based organizations and non-government organizations whom have been reported to be instrumental in engaging the youth in discussions and activities that do not only foster collaboration but also encourage sharing of information. They are key partners in the Valley who carry out civic education on peace and peaceful co-existence, and in some critical cases, provide support on the affected peoples livelihood. This has been key in reducing the people's reliance on cattle and has also reduced cattle raids.

Responses on whether the organizations were effective in securing peace as a surveillance strategy, were captured in a five-point Likert scale. Asked about the effectiveness of these agencies in coordinated efforts to secure the valley, 3(2.5%) strongly disagreed, 6(6.0%) disagreed, 13(12.0%) were neutral, 51(47.5%) agreed, while 35(32.0%) strongly agreed. The level of agreement rated 79.5%, showing a strong positive perception that Local Community Based Organizations, Faith based organizations and Non-Governmental Organizations had an effective coordination mechanism that was critical in restoring and maintaining peaceful co-existence, even across borders in the valley.

There was 6.0% of the respondents that neither agreed nor disagreed, showing their undecidedness, blamed on absence of direct contact and participation with the agencies. Another 9% who disagreed as equally insignificant. A mean and standard deviation of 3.99 ± 0.92 shows a general opinion that the coordination was generally effective but with opinions being mixed. The NGOs named to operate in the valley were the Shalom Centre for conflict resolution whose role was reported to be training workshops on peace, reconciliation, mediation and dialogues across communities to build a peaceful cross-border coexistence (Shalom Centre for Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation, 2025). The National Council of churches of Kenya also trained peace actors and carried out early warning that help deter conflict, community dialogues and forums among others (Kenya News Agency, 2024).

Community Policing

Local community policing is a legal policy utilized as a surveillance strategy in Kerio valley to secure peaceful cross-border co-existence. When the respondents were asked to indicate their opinion on the statement: implementation of the community policing strategy is effective in maintaining cross border security. 4(3.5%)

strongly disagreed, 9(8.0%) disagreed, 14(12.5%) neutral, 50(46.0%) agreed and 32(30.0%) strongly agreed. 76.0% agreed, meaning that there is a strong positive perception that community policing implementation improved cross-border security in Kerio valley. A 12.5% of the respondents were undecided, which in this case is attributed to uneven implementation of community policing in the counties.

The disagreement was 11.5% indicating that concerns existed that the strategy is not meeting its intended goal. A mean and standard deviation of 3.91 ± 0.97 indicates a general agreement among the respondents that the community policing strategy is adequately implemented and is effective. However, the standard deviation means that there are noticeable differences in the people's experiences and perceptions on its effectiveness.

Sharing of intelligence also reported to have thrived through collaboration with the people at the local basic units through the nyumba Kumi initiative. At the local/village level, the citizen reports any criminal or suspicious activities through the National Government administrative officers, starting with the chiefs and escalates to the county security committees, where all security teams converge for action. This acts as the key intelligence gathering point that with officers adopting discreet intelligence gathering methodologies in the surveillance strategies.

Disarmament

Disarmament is a key cross border surveillance strategy. They entail large scale operations in an effort to disrupt, and dismantled organized armed bandit groups, recover illicit arms in the hands of civilians and reduce the rampant cattle rustling in the valley, particularly in pre-unidentified areas marked as hotspots. The respondents were asked to indicate their opinion in a five-point Likert scale. The statement was: Joint disarmament operations have reduced cross-border crime in Kerio Valley.

From the responses, 1(1.2%) strongly disagreed, 4(3.8%) disagreed, 8(7.0%) were neutral, 54(50.0%) agreed and 41(38.0%) strongly agreed. The total level of agreement was 88.0% denoting a general strong positive perception that disarmament reduced cross-border crime. Additionally, 7.0% of the respondents were undecided and this was based on limited exposure to security operations. An insignificant number 5.0% disagreed. A mean and standard deviation of 4.20 ± 0.77 denoted a strong overall perception that joint disarmament operation strategies reduce crimes and the Responses had minimal variation, thus a strong agreement among respondents.

In Karamoja, along the Kenya-Uganda border, the same research outcome was reported. Mkutu (2008) found that disarmament reduced cross-border illicit arms movement. Musau, (2016), while examining the horn of Africa, reported that it has reduced violence, though weak enforcement and co-ordination reduce its efficiency, and Kaino et al. (2022), found that disarmament led to strengthened cross-border cooperation in pastoralist communities.

Border Patrols

The border patrol in Kerio valley is another government surveillance strategy. It is used to curb the movement of cross-county armed groups, banditry and cattle rustling. It entails the implementation strategy that brings multiple agencies together such as the intelligence systems, and multiagency security forces. The administration police, the National police reservists, the administrative police, and the Kenya police join hands to provide the adequate well-trained personnel to patrol the borders of the Elgeyo Marakwet, the west Pokot and Baringo counties.

To ascertain the consistency and effects of its implementation, the respondents gave their opinions based on the statement: Border patrols and monitoring systems are consistently implemented in the region. The outcome showed that, 1(1.3%) strongly disagreed, 4(4.1%) disagreed, 8(7.5%) neutral, 54(50.4%) agreed, and 41(36.7%) strongly agreed. A total agreement level was 87.1%, indicating that majority believed that the border patrols were consistently implemented. A minority, 7.5% were undecided, attributed to the uneven patrol visibility across the

areas of study. Moreover, an insignificant number of respondents, 5.4% disagreed. A mean and standard deviation of 4.18 ± 0.81 showed that majority of the respondents believed that patrols were consistently implemented. Additionally, there was minimal respondent variation.

Previous studies have supported this finding. Juma & Oyombra (2024) reported that border patrols as a surveillance strategy along the Kenya Somalia border leads to improved security. Kuria (2022) while reporting on the activities of the Border police unit noted that the patrols have improved the crime prevention and detection, while Oyosi (2024), focusing on Namanga one stop border stop, noted that the patrols have reduced smuggling, and illegal entry, enhanced early threat detection and contrabands and led to strong border security management.

Regression Analysis

A regression analysis was carried out using the model: $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \varepsilon$ Where: Y = Security in Kerio Valley, X_1 = Border Surveillance Strategies, β_0 = Constant term, β_1 = Regression coefficients and ε = Error term. The aim was to ascertain the relationship between the variable of the study. The outcome posted $R=0.731$, $R^2=0.535$. Adjusted $R^2=0.518$ and the $\varepsilon=0.32941$. This denotes that there is a strong positive relationship between the independent variable: border surveillance strategies and the dependent variable: security.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Border surveillance strategies are critical policy provisions that are depended on to attain stable security in Kerio valleys Pokot, Elgeyo Marakwet and Baringo counties. Their implementation included effective collaboration among stakeholders and intelligence gatherings to deter security bridges, utilization of Peace committees, incorporation of CBOs, FBO's and NGOs, adoption and implementation of community policing, joint disarmament and border patrols. Moreover, a strong positive relationship existed between border surveillance strategies and security.

The study recommends that the government should strengthen border surveillance through increased investment in modern monitoring technologies such as drones, CCTV systems, and digital tracking tools. Regular patrols should be enhanced, especially in high-risk border areas. Additionally, capacity building for security personnel on intelligence gathering and surveillance techniques should be prioritized to improve effectiveness.

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