

THE ROLE OF VIGILANTE SECURITY GROUPS IN CRIME PREVENTION AND CONTROL IN YAGBA EAST, KOGI WEST, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Armed robbery, kidnapping, Banditry and other violent crimes had assumed a disturbing dimension over the years in most parts of Nigerian society particularly in Yagba East LGA., of Kogi West. The Nigeria Security agencies like Police and others have also declared War against Crime several times but to no avail. This study examine the role of Vigilante Security Groups in crime prevention and control in Yagba East local government, the cross sectional survey design was adopted in the study. A total of 186 respondents, aged 18 years and above were selected for the study. Quantitative and Qualitative methods were used in data collection. Descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage were used to analyze data. Findings of the study indicate that the current level of crime reduced due to the intervention of Vigilante Security Group. Results further shows that poverty, unemployment, inequality, hopelessness are the factors responsible for the high levels of crime rate. The study recommends among others that crime and criminal activities should be effectively tackled through the cooperation and collaboration of vigilante security service groups and the Nigeria Police.

Keywords: Nigeria security agencies, Vigilante Security Groups, Crime Prevention, Crime Control,

Introduction

There is no doubt that the prevalent of crime and criminal related activities in Nigeria is in part, a syndrome from many parts of the world like Iran, Afghanistan, Iraq, Russia, Mexico and American who witnessed several forms of insecurity over the years. Safe and conducive environment is fundamental to the Development of any Society, but the prevailing situations in Nigeria constitute a reversal of this reality. The spate of insecurity and threats to lives and properties in Nigeria has reached alarming proportion despite the increasing visibility of the Nigerian state Mobile Police and Military in the management of internal security (The US department of state 2008; Erinosh 2007; Falola 1998), the Nigeria Police Annual Report (NPAR) indicated that a total of 2,704 armed robbery offences were reported in 2016; 2,863 in 2017; 2327 in 20018; 2,340 (NPAR 20016,20017 and 2018). The National Bureau of statistics Report (NBSR) in 2019 revealed that of the 36 states of the federation, Borno, Kastina, Kaduna, Zamfara, Niger, Gombe, Kano, Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Delta, Kogi and Cross river state, were the worst affected with insecurity incidences (NBSR. 2019 and Elechi, 2015). The legitimacy and right of any state over the people can best be upheld only to the extent to which it can guarantee the protection of life and property of its citizens. The war against armed robbery, kidnapping, Herdsmen, rape, Cattle rustling in Kogi state particularly in Yagba East L.G.A., In a crimogenic society only those with strength survive, the feeble are left at the mercy of the physically powerful. Shane [1980] was of the view that revolutionaries portray police as representatives of the ruling class and

oppressors of the ruled, even often as the enemy of the latter itself. On this note Nigeria police have not lived to the expectations of the general people of Yagba East.

It is against this backdrop that the delivery of safety and security is considered a justifiable public good and the very essence of the state (Lubuva, 2004). Human safety and security are indeed human rights having a value of their own and serving an instrumental function in the construction of human contentment and prosperity (Odinkalu 2005). Unfortunately, social life in Nigeria has remained largely characterized by fear and insecurity (Odekunle, 2005; Odinkalu, 2005; Bach, 2004; Alemika and Chukuma, 2005) in a manner that suggests that the country lacks the capacity to discharge its security functions especially that of policing.

Reiner (2000) observes that formal policing structures, a body of men recruited and paid by the state to enforce law and maintain order is a recent development in human history. Traditionally and historically, policing was the responsibility of every adult in the community. In medieval society, all adults were obliged to contribute towards the prevention and control of crime and disorder. This was achieved through the system of “hue cry and pursuit” and the “watch and ward” that preceded the emergence of the state (Martin, 1990:6). Achebe (1974) identified institutions like council of elders and masquerade cult as very indispensable in ensuring the prevalence of community peace, safety and security, prior to colonial rule in Nigeria. The emergence of the state as an entity with the claim to the monopoly over the means of legitimate violence in society (Weber, 1968 cited in Ritzer, 2012) resulted to the creation of specialized agencies such as the police and the armed forces for controlling. Some state governments in Nigeria are also known to have tacitly or openly endorsed armed vigilante groups as part of their campaign against crime (Amnesty International, 2002; Akinyele, 2008). In Kogi state, Vigilante service groups were established by the Kogi State Vigilante Services Law, 2000. The law was amended in 2004 and is now currently referred to as the Kogi State Vigilante Group Law, 2004. The group is empowered to assist the Nigerian police to perform its constitutional duties of protecting lives and properties. They are however expected to hand over arrested criminals to the police because they are not empowered to detain. Vigilante groups in the State have been in existence since they were established, working hand in hand with the formal police. They operate from the communities as their presence is visibly present in every community in the State. A number of factors may have occasioned the emergence of vigilante groups in Kogi state. Chukwuma (2001) asserts that the inability of the police to protect the lives and properties of members of the society has given rise to community effort at ensuring their own security. Okoro (2007) identified corruption, brutality, oppressive and repressive postures, high level of extortion, high cost of assessment to police services, poverty, non-personal relationships, as some of the factors that made the people lose confidence in the police and their consequent preference for informal policing structures.

Vigilante service group may not have a cordial and mutual relationship with the formal policing structure, the reasons for this may include the feeling by the police that the vigilante service groups structures are not legally recognized and that they are arrogating their constitutional powers to themselves. Another reason may be the fact that the police are benefiting from the high and unabated crime rate in the country (Amuka, 2008). Shaw (2002) is of the view that there is a rise in crime because of the perceived inadequacies of the police in the society to provide safety and security to citizens. To him, crime is on the rise and the police are not coping very well with the demand for protection by the citizens who are active in countries undergoing dramatic transformation in the economic and political spheres.

Adegbusi (2009) in a study conducted in Ondo state of Nigeria on ‘Vigilante groups and the task of policing’ with 500 respondents found that vigilante service groups are important in crime prevention and control as majority of the respondents indicated that vigilante service groups can partner with the police to control and prevent crime in the state.

In view of the aforementioned problems, this study examined the role of Vigilante Security Outfit in crime prevention and control in yagba East L.G.A. Kogi west, Nigeria. The study sought information from Communities in Yagba East on how the intervention of Vigilante Service Groups contribute to the current level of crime rate in yagba east.

Statements of the Problem.

The unchecked upsurge in crime in Nigeria particularly in yagba East and the inability of the police to find a long lasting solution to the menace resulted into general disdain of the police. Hence, Community security such as vigilante group, and community self-help security outfit rose up to defend themselves and their neighbourhoods from criminal attacks.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide this study

1. What is the current level of crime in yagba east
2. What are the factors that informed such level of crime
3. What are the strategies being used by the vigilante service group in crime prevention and control in yagba east.
4. How effective are the strategies.

The Objectives of the study

The general objective of this study is to investigate the role of Vigilante Security outfit in crime prevention and control in yagba east local government area of kogi State: The specific objectives of this study are to:

1. Examine the current level of crime rate in yagba east LGA.
2. Investigate the factors responsible for such level of crime.
3. Examine the strategies used by the vigilante service group in crime prevention and control in Yagba east.
4. Known how effective are the strategies.

Literature

The rising crime wave in Nigeria

The rising crime wave in Nigeria is partly a product of widespread unemployment and a rising cost of living. For many desperate and unemployed youths, robbery seems to be the only avenue left open to them to make a living. The high rate of crime has created an atmosphere of fear, anxiety and tension-a state of insecurity. Okechukwu (2012). argue that "violent crime such as murder, armed robbery, kidnapping and terrorism are the most inhuman crime that continue to plague Nigeria. lately, kidnapping for ransom and terrorism have taken the centre stage leading to bloodshed and economic set backs. The causes are not farfetched as studies have associated rising youth unemployment to the increase in crime." situation is worsened by the ready availability of small arms like rifles and pistols in the open market, and those gave out by the politician during their election campaign. However, it appears government security agencies has failed to provide a secure and safe environment for lives and properties and the conduct of economic activities. Despite all the money the federal government has pump to security, the level of crime in the country is still high. From all of the above, it could be deduced that, there is general discontent against the failure of the state to provide some basic needs of the citizens such as security to lives, and property and this has resulted in helping themselves. In some neighbourhoods, young men form community security groups teaming up with the police sometimes to help fight crime.

Attacks by vigilantes in many of Nigeria societies on suspects with automatic double barrels, matches, koboko, torch light, rope, whsitle, stones, cutlass and sticks are common and some end with the "necklace treatment". A tire doused with petrol is put around the neck of the suspect who is subsequently set on fire. In one instance, five alleged bank robbers were burnt to death that way. There will be many more battles on Nigeria's streets as bank robbery has become a fashion for criminals. Sometimes in September 2008 in broad daylight two mobile policemen were allegedly shot dead by bank robbers around the Oyo state secretariat in

Ibadan before they fled with their loots. The battle between police and armed robbers for control of Nigerian streets is proving a costly one for both sides

Flipping through Nigerian newspapers one frequently comes across headlines like: "Police, Robbers in Bloody Gun Duel", "Robbers on Rampage Kill Police Chief" and "Police, Robbers in Midday War - Five robbers Killed." Lagos, the country's commercial capital, is the worst hit. Police statistics show that between April 2020 and June 2020, over 2,732 lives were lost in 33 states of the federation (Ankara.report,2020). Within the same period, they also killed 84 policemen and injured 133 others, 173 soldiers, 3 civil defence officers and 6 Vigilante were killed according to report title Media killing in Nigeria. In the past couple of months, criminals have been operating with impunity, snatching cars on the highways, raiding banks particularly in Ibadan and breaking into homes. Even though police authorities boast they will win the war against crime, they agree it is an uphill task and a hard nut to crack

From the above, it is apparent that the public perception is that crime rates are extremely high, particularly armed robbery, Kidnapping, Terrorism and Banditry which is traceable to rising poverty, inequality, high unemployment and the breakdown of traditional social structures which the Nigerian police have been ill-equipped to address the situation, that led to formations of Vigilante groups and self help security service in Nigeria. Chukwuma & Alemika(2011) found that rising in crime is one of the reasons for patronage of vigilante groups in Nigeria.

Crime rate in Yagba East

The rising in Crime and Criminal related activities, like Robbery, Banditry, Kidnapping for ransom, Rape and Farmer/ Herdsmen crises. etc. in Yagba East local government area of Kogi West has called for concern for all and sundry. The rising in crime, in Yagba East is partly a product of unemployment, Poverty, Frustration, inequality, influx of Fulani into the area, a rising cost of living, and the closure of forest by the state government sometimes March 2019, increased the level of crime rate, the immigrant from neighbouring state and local government became jobless thereby engaged in different forms of criminal activities. Desperate unemployed youths, robbery appeared the only avenue left open to them to make a living. Attack by the vigilante in Yagba East on suspects with light weapons, like local gun, stones, sticks and cutlass are common and some end with the "necklace treatment". A tire douse with petrol is put around the neck of the suspects who is subsequently set on fire. In 2016, two friends were fighting over a particular girl and one stabbed the other to death with a knife and immediately the angry youths apprehended the boy and burnt him to death in front of a police station in Isanlu. In November 2019, two gang robbers between Oyi river and Ido-Jesha allegedly killed an Okada rider who was chartered by the two robbers to take them to Isanlu, they stopped him and cut his head and instantly gave up and made away with his motorcycle. They were cut in Isanlu mopo popularly called Sabo. The robbers confessed that they stole about 10 motorcycles within a year. Homes were broken and several goods carted away by the criminals, March 2018, in Ogbom southern part of Yagba East LGA. Fulani herdsmen were allegedly killed one Mr Tunde on his farm when he challenged the Fulani man of destroying his farm and that led to a serious crisis and several lives were lost. Sometimes June 2020 in a broad day light, ten(10) policemen and two(2) civilians were allegedly shot dead by bank robbers before they fled with their loots. On the 23rd of September 2020 a set of armed robbers blocked the road between the bandry of Mopa-muro and Yagba East LGA. And through the intervention of the Vigilante who were given a distress call at about 10pm and they came to rescue the victims, with the effort of the vigilante one among the robbers were caught and was taken to police for prosecution.

On this note, Vigilante Security group performance in crime prevention and control in Yagba East was impressive, therefore the need for a formalized training to make the groups more useful and be responsible to the Police since the Police cannot succeed in controlling crime without the support of the public.

The Nigeria Police

The constitution vests the overall operational control of the force in the hands of the President. Each of the thirty-six states and the federal capital territory is served by a unit called a command, under a state

commissioner of police. Three or four state commands are grouped together to form one of twelve zones, each under an Assistant Inspector General. State commands are divided into smaller area commands, below which are divisional police stations, headed by a Divisional Police Officer [DPO] and finally local police posts. The force size currently stands at approximately 375,000 officers. As a federal institution, the Nigerian Police Force recruits officers from across the country. New recruits are posted to any one of the thirty-six state commands. Under a strict system of rotation officers are transferred to a new post every few years and therefore communities are policed by officers who may be from different ethnic or religious backgrounds to their own.

Serving alongside the regular police force are the Mobile Police, an especially trained anti-riot unit, numbering 30,000 officers. Known locally as MOPOL, they were originally created to contain civil disturbance or large-scale conflict but today are also deployed to carry out various other policing duties. The Mobile Police operate under a parallel authority structure with sixty-eight squadrons, organized into state and zonal commands and headed by a commissioner of police at the force headquarters. While crime trends are notoriously difficult to analyze or interpret in Nigeria, it is apparent that the public perception is that crime rates are extremely high, particularly armed robbery which is traceable to rising poverty, high unemployment and the breakdown of traditional social structures which the Nigerian police have been ill-equipped to address.

The police have often been unable to meet the safety and security needs of local communities and are often overpowered by well-armed and often violent criminals. According to Nigerian police reform experts, the police force has insufficient well-trained manpower to adequately address policing needs. The loss of public confidence in the effectiveness of the police has resulted in the emergence of Vigilante security outfits and community self-help groups, the most virulent of which include the Bakassi Boys in the south-eastern states, the OPC in south west and CJTF in north east Nigeria but also extends to hundreds of smaller groups across the country.

Other law enforcement agencies

Several other national agencies carry out law enforcement functions and have the power to arrest and detain suspects at their own detention facilities. These include the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), the Customs and Immigration Service and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), a body established in 2002 to investigate a range of financial crimes such as money transfer fraud and money laundering. In addition, there are two principal intelligence agencies: the State Security Service (SSS) and the Directorate of Military Intelligence (DMI), dealing with criminal matters affecting the security of the state.

Vigilante Group of Nigeria

The countrywide Vigilante Group of Nigeria originated in Benue and registered as an NGO in 1999. The group is highly structured and collaborates with the police and military. Like the Civilian Joint Task Force, it has also played a role in combating Boko Haram. With an understanding of the local communities in which they work, the Vigilante Group of Nigeria has been very successful. Recently, the House of Representatives passed a bill authorising the group. However, its members have not been exempt from committing abuses. This is not an exhaustive list. Vigilantes cooperate with the police and military amidst farmer-pastoralist conflicts in Plateau state. In Kano, aside from the Hisbah, operates several vigilante groups registered with and funded by the state. In October 2009, the Nasarawa Commissioner of Police announced a partnership with local hunters and vigilantes.

Vigilante groups as security outfits are mostly composed of volunteers, operating under the mandate of communal consensus to fight crime. As the waning capacity of the police could not curtail the rising trend of urban violence and crime, communal policing or vigilante were created to protect the neighbourhoods. According to a report cited by Baker(2016),

The helplessness of the Federal government in addressing the rising crime wave across the country brings to the need for restructuring. A centralised police force remote from the communities, the police is incapable of providing effective protection to the citizens. Indeed, in many regions in Nigeria, parallel local organisations and vigilante groups have proved far more effective in combating crime. Whilst we recognise the danger of untrained citizens, without defined structures or commands acting outside the structures of law to enforce law and orders, the police, pending the creation of independent state police commands must recognise the need to show greater understanding and appreciation of the useful and positive role that the... Bakassi boys, Amotekun and other vigilante groups could play in the effective maintenance of law and order. In truth, the 'folk hero' status of these groups is a result of the failing of the police. The police would be well advised to see how the efforts of various vigilante groups can be harnessed in combating the intolerably high level of crime in the country (Baker, 2002:223).

According to Baker (2016:403-423), vigilantism is a category of non-state or self-policing. It is characterised by reactive, ad hoc and often violent methods of crime control. A vigilante is a group of committed people at the micro level of the community, set up to collate information on suspected criminals in its area, for use by the police in the detection and prevention of crime. It is often made up landlords, tenants, community associations and leaders of the neighbourhood, who keep watch over their area and report suspicious people to the police (Albert, Awe, Herault, Omitoogun, 1995: 53). Vigilante groups are largely informal and composed of volunteers and are largely funded through communal contributions. Contributions are insignificant and often irregular compared to the risks vigilante are exposed.

Since 1985, community vigilante became more involved in confronting youth gangs that use drugs and commit crimes including abduction of young girls. Community vigilante groups assisted the police in suppressing criminal activities of kidnapping young girls. Burglaries, duping, raping and kidnapping of children were on the increase and so vigilante groups were formed in all the local government through security committees that involved ward heads. The ward heads mobilised volunteers to organise and register vigilante groups in their communities (DawakinTofa, 1994: 57 and Yaqub and Olaniyi, 2004:12).

The resurgence of modern vigilante groups in Kogi state has been closely associated with the disproportionate increase in the rise of crimes and conflicts. The inability of the police to tame the rising menace of the gangs has led to the proliferation of vigilante groups. In the early 2004, vigilante groups were formed in almost all the local government within Kogi state (Yaqub and Olaniyi, 2004:12).

The aims and objectives of the vigilante groups as defined in Article (4) of the Constitution include:

To assist the Police and law enforcement agencies to curb crime;

To protect and preserve public property;

Assist the Police in crowd control and maintenance of peace at public functions where the need arises;

With the clearance of the police, assist public agencies in the protection of their establishment plants and equipment;

To give information to the police and other security agencies of criminals or wanted persons residing in the ward or Local Government;

To locate the permanent or temporary residencies of receivers of stolen properties and 419 practitioners for the purposes of enabling the police to arrest or monitor their activities;

To make positive and useful contributions to the advancement, progress and well-being of the community by mobilising and assisting in communal development efforts; and

To abide by the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and all relevant laws and byelaws.

Theoretical Orientation

This study is anchored on broken window theory and Social movement theory of collective behaviour. While broken window theory was used to explain the place of Vigilante security outfit in crime prevention and control, the social movement theory was used to explain the structural imbalances and inadequacies in Nigeria society that call for agitation for self-help security outfit. The proponent of broken window theory is Philip Zimbardo (1969). The theory focuses on the control and prevention of crime from within the community as against from outside the community. It explains how effective and efficient informal policing structures are in controlling crimes compared to the formal policing structure that is made up of 'strangers'. The theory holds that only the community members can safeguard themselves from crimes. This is because they live in the community and can work and watch at all times. They also know who those potential criminals are and how best they can be contained. The core principle of informal policing structures is the constant maintenance of law and order in the various communities by members of that community. This is in line with the core notion of broken window theory, which asserts that the constant presence of police structures makes a community less conducive for crime and criminals. Increased police presence and enforcements of informal rules of conduct and laws can make a community seem less chaotic and safer, thereby, increasing the presence and involvement of residents in their community and lowering crime rates (Palmiotto,2000).The BWT can be incorporated into the concept of informal policing in the sense that collective efforts by both the police and community dwellers can help alleviate the rate of crime in the community as the police see residents as partners in development and vice versa. The broken window theory asserts that if there is a crack anywhere in the community and no one is available or observant enough to take care of it, overtime it becomes a deep ditch that would pose a serious security risk to members of the society. The BWT assumes that most neighborhood crimes are more often than not perpetrated by offenders who reside near the victims; this makes crime primarily a local problem which can best be solved locally.

Theory of social movement was developed by Smelser (1963). According to him, the structural imbalances and inadequacies in Nigeria during the military rule particularly the annulment of the June 12, 1993 presidential election, political marginalization, and economic deprivation of the south west created an enabling condition for people's agitations and restiveness. The police are expected to prevent crime, bring sanity to the disorderliness of Nigerian polity and maintain social order. Their failure to effectively manage the security apparatus of the society brought about the operations of primordial groups such as Vigilante group [Ajayi, 2008]. Other parameters such as structural strain, growth and spread of generalized beliefs, precipitating factor, mobilization for action and social control contribute in different proportions to the formation of the social movement aimed at fighting for rights and privileges of the society. According to Ajayi [2008] what is being established here is that there is crime problem in the yagba east kogi state and the police seem incapable of arresting the phenomenon. This was one of the major reasons why Vigilante and other Community security got involved in crime prevention in Yagba East, Kogi State

Methodology

The cross sectional survey design was adopted in this study. The study was conducted in Yagba east L.G.A., one of the twenty one Local Government Areas of kogi State. Yagba east was created out of Oyi local government on august 27, 1991. It has twenty communities (20) and the Headquarter in Isanlu. The local government is bounded by yagba west and mopa-amuro local government in kogi west, Nigeria. The indigenous ethnic group in the local Government area are Okun Yorubas. The predominant religious in yagba east are Christianity and Islam. It has an area of 1,396km² and a population of 140, 150 at the 2006 census. The male population is 65,450 while female population was 75,150. Kogi (state, Nigeria) population statistics (2006), The largest population to this study comprise of male and females aged 18 years and above, this group of people are used because they are adults and mature enough to answer question on vigilante security and crime prevention and control.

Both quantitative and qualitative tools were employed for the study. This enable the researcher achieve a maximum result, Instrument for the quantitative data was the questionnaire while for the qualitative data, focused group discussion guide (FGD) and in-depth interview guide were used. The major instrument

however was the questionnaires; the questionnaires were self-administering on face to face contact with respondents. The focus group discussion (FGD) was conducted with participants purposely drawn from the LGA, the study covered. A total of 4 FGD sessions were conducted. To ensure gender homogeneity, FGDs were conducted for male and females separate

Table 1: Number of Research Instruments used in each community in yagba east LGA.

Communities In yagba east	Instruments used					Total
	IDIwith members of vigilante	IDIwith Opinion leaders	Community level interviews using semi structured questionnaires	Focus Group Discussion held	Consultative and interactive Meetings with members of vigilante	
Makutu	5	2	20	2	2	31
Mopo	5	2	20	2	2	31
Odogbe-Ilafin	5	2	20	2	2	31
Ogbom	5	2	20	2	2	31
Ifeolukotun	5	2	20	2	2	31
Idofin- Idojesha	5	2	20	2	2	31
Total	30	12	120	12	12	186

Source: Field Survey, 2020

Data Collection

The study was divided into two sections. The first section which is the main object of this report was the baseline data section of the study. In the first section of the study, emphasis was on the collection of primary data which then provided information. There are other activities in this section these are: i] interactive meetings with specific leaders of Vigilante and rank and file members, ii] in-depth interviews [IDIs] with members of Vigilante and with key informants, members of the public and leaders of thought in each of the communities, iii] Focus Group Discussions [FGDs] with members of the community in which the Vigilante group is based, iv] Community level surveys using a pre-designed semi structured questionnaire to probe, among others the current level of crime in yagba east LGA., the factors that informed such level of crime, and the relationship between the vigilante and the Nigeria Police Force in crime prevention and control and their effectiveness in providing security to the neighbourhood. Secondary data obtained from books, journals, newspapers, magazines and archival materials were used to complement the primary ones. Responses from the questionnaires were analysed using statistical techniques; this was expressed in frequency distribution tables and percentages

Results/ Findings

Table 2: Socio demographic characteristics of respondents

Age	Frequency	Percentage
18 – 25	40	21
25 – 29	50	26
30 – 34	20	10
35 – 39	20	10

40 – 44	6	3
45 – 49	25	13
50 and above	25	13
Total	186	100
Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	106	57
Female	80	43
Total	186	100
Marital status	Frequency	Percentages
Single	70	38.0
Married	90	48.0
Divorced	10	5.0
Widowed	16	9.0
Total	186	100
Educational qualification	Frequency	Percentage
No education	0	0
Primary education	60	32.0
Secondary education	86	46.0
Tertiary education	40	22.0
Total	186	100
Religious affiliation	Frequency	Percentage
Christianity	130	70
Islam	51	27
Others	5	3
Total	186	100
Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Civil servants	40	22
Students	50	27
Farmers	30	16
Unemployed	40	22
Artisan	26	13
Others	0	0
Total	186	100

Table 2: indicates that there are 106 (57%) male respondents while the number of female respondents is 80 (43%) This implies that there are more male respondents than female respondents in the study. The table indicates that respondents who are within the ages of 18-25 years are 40(21%), those who fall within the ages of 25-29 years are 50 (26%), and those between the ages of 30-34 are 20 (10%), while those between the age of 50 and above are 25 (13%). This shows that majority of the respondents are between the ages of 18 - 29. Table 2 reveals that 70 (38.0%) of the respondents indicated “never married” as their marital status, 90 (48.0%) indicated that they are married, 10 (5.0%) of the respondents indicated divorced as their marital

status, while 16 (9%) indicated widowed as their marital status. This implies that majority of the respondents are not married. In terms of educational qualification, table 2 shows that 0 (0%) of the respondents have no formal education, 60 (32%) of them have obtained primary school certificate/FSLC, 86 (46.0%) of them have the GCE/SSCE/WAEC as their highest educational qualification, 40 (22.0%) of them have obtained HND/First degree and above as their highest educational qualification. This shows that majority of the respondents have obtained HND/First degree and above. On religious affiliation, table 2 shows that 130 (70%) of the respondents are Christians, 51 (27%) of them are Muslims while 5 (3%) of them are practicing others religious affiliation. This implies that majority of the respondents are Christians. A further look at table 2 reveals the occupation of the respondents. The table indicates that 40 (22%) of the respondents are civil servants, 50 (27%) are students, 30 (16.0%) are farmers 40 (22.0%) are unemployed, 26 (13%) are artisans while no respondent (0%) indicated others as his/her occupation

Analysis of research Question

Research Question one: What are the Current Levels of Crime in Yagba East.

Table 3: Levels of Crime in Yagba East

The current levels of crime	Frequency	Percentage
Very high	50	27.0
High	36	19.3
Very low	60	32.2
Low	40	21.5
Total	186	100

Source: Field survey, 2020

Table 3: Respondents view on the level crime in yagba east local government

The responses of the respondents to the Levels of crime in yagba East are shown in Table 3. About twenty seven per cent [27%] of the respondents said current level of crime trend was very high, 19.3% saw the trend as high; while 21.5% and 32.2% believed it was low and very low respectively. In other words majority of the respondents, that is, 53.7% believed that crime rate was on the downward trend; while 46.3% said it was on the upward trend. The survey findings are corroborated by the qualitative data generated on the field. An interviewee explained the scenario thus:

An IDI respondent note:

Isanlu contains both the lazy and the thieves, and they are in large numbers threatening the lives of the people day and night. The situation was so frustrating and hopeless that one wonders what the police are actually doing. They are only very efficient in aiding and abetting, extortion of ₦20 from commercial motorists. In addition, so many of our youths and able-bodied men and women are jobless, life has been so hard and extremely difficult for the majority of our people. This situation has led to unprecedented high incidence of crime before Vigilante came on board.

**Male IDI/ Makutu Isanlu /Opinion Leader
[June, 26,2020]**

To further establish this fact an FGD session in Mopo Isanlu generally submitted that:

The level of crime was very high before vigilante involvement in crime prevention in this community. Armed robbers were too many. Even there was a time that when these armed robbers came around and their victim does not have money or property like television, Gold, Jewries they can steal, they subject the person to vicious beating until one becomes breathless. I want to say the level of crime was high, the armed robbers often come in groups of fifteen or twenty to attack their victims, life was not safe until the emergence of Vigilante.

Female FGD/ mopo Isanlu/ Adult 40 years and above (July 2,2020)

Data from IDI and FGD further show that the level of crime has reduced downward at the instance of Vigilante involvement in crime prevention and control in the communities elected for this study. The reaction from the citizens also show that the presence of Vigilante in the community alone, made some of the criminals to run away from the community to hide somewhere else. Based on this perceived effectiveness and the support the group enjoyed from the public, there is need for reorganization of the group by the government to make them more relevant and useful for security purposes particularly in Kogi state.

Research Question two: What are the factors that informed such level of Crime

Table 4

Factors responsible for the current levels of crime rate	Frequency	Percentage
Poverty	45	24.0
Unemployment	70	38.0
Inequality	21	11.0
Frustration	31	17.0
Hopelessness	19	10.0
Total	186	100.0

Source: Field work 2020

Table 4: Respondents view on the factors responsible for the levels of crime in Yagba East local government.

The responses of the respondent to the factor that informed the current level of crime in Yagba East are shown in table 3, 45(24%) said poverty, 70 (38%) saw the trend as a result of unemployment while 21(11%), 19(10%) believed that Inequality and frustration are responsible for the current level of crime.

An Opinion leader provided insight into factors responsible to the levels of crime rate in Ilafin Isanlu thus:

The factors that responsible for the level of crime rate is as a result of poverty, unemployment, inequality and hopelessness and the worst of it, is the closure of forest by the state government which affected our youth and they engaged into criminal activities.

**Male IDI/ Ilafin Isanlu/ Opinion Leader
[June 6, 2020]**

Data from IDI and FGD further show that poverty, unemployment and hopelessness are the factors responsible for the current levels of crime rate in Yagba East. For example, members of a FGD session in Makutu generally agreed that:

Poverty, unemployment, inequality, hopelessness and closure of the forest by the state government constituted majorly to the current levels of crime rate in Yagba East. Now thieves collect hand bags and phones when they are on motorcycle with high speed, you can no longer close your two eyes again. Just about last week, a thief came and wanted to steal my phone through the window while I was sleeping and I suddenly woke up when I heard a sound. I shouted at him then he took to his heels.

**Female FGD/ Itedo Isanlu/ Adult 40 years and above
[June 7, 2020]**

From the above, it could be deduced that, there is general discontent against the failure of the state to provide some basic needs of the citizens such as employment, reduce the level of poverty and inequalities, security to lives, and property and this has resulted in criminal activities. Meanwhile like Anifowose [2004] observed, here was an army of unemployed youngsters, street urchins and loafers, and area boys prowling the densely populated slums and commercial centers of Lagos harassing, intimidating and extorting money from helpless citizens and frequently engaging in violent crime. Government should provide employment opportunity for

the Youth, open up the forest for the forest activities to start again and regulate the movement of the Fulani cattle rarer to avoid herders/farmer crises.,

Research Question 3: What are the strategies used by the Vigilante group in Crime prevention and control in Yagba East LGA.

Qualitative Analysis;

Analysis of interview conducted with Vigilante on the strategies used in crime prevention and control in yagba east local government.

This part of data analysis deals with the interview schedules with Vigilante members to illicit information from them on the strategies used by Vigilante in crime prevention and control in yagba east; The interview was conducted with five(5) members including their commandant who happen to be the spoke person for the group on strategies used by vigilante groups, The interview was conducted on the 12th of October 2020 at the vigilante Headquarter Isanlu at 12; 30pm. According to the commandant of the vigilante who spoke in the condition of anonymity mention the following strategies: Strategic spiritual intelligence (SSI), use of charm and Juju, physical present in strategic location vulnerable to crime occurrence, tracking down criminals, identifying black spots, acting as informants to the police. On further enquiry, he stated that certain crime requires giving the culprits some latches of koboko or tying him or her with rope. This finding suggest that severe punishment is part and parcel of their crime control strategy.

From the above, on the condition of anonymity by the commandant shows that security strategies are not for public consumption that may be reason why he could not further tells the researcher more strategies.

Source: Field work 2020

Research Question 4; How effective are the strategies

Table 6

How Effective are the strategies	Frequency	Percentage
Very Effective	60	32.2
Effective	90	48.3
Ineffective	26	14.0
I don't Know	10	5.3
Total	186	100

Source:Field work 2020

Table 6: Respondents view on the effectiveness of Vigilante

The responses of the respondents on the effectiveness of the strategies used by the vigilante group are shows in table 6, 60 (32.2%) said very effective, 90 (48,3%) saw the strategies as effective, while 26 (14,0%) said ineffective and 10 (5.3) said I don't know. In other words, majority of the respondents that is 80.5% believed that Vigilante strategies was very effective and effective respectively, while 14% said the strategies are ineffective and 5.3 said I don't know. It could therefore be inferred from the data that Vigilante being part of the community, know and appreciate the need of the people for security and are ready to render that The majority of the interviewees and discussants agree that the vigilantes are very effective and prompt in response to distress calls against the police. An interviewee says:

The vigilante are effective and prompt in response to distress calls as against the police who we complain of no fuel in their car and waiting for order from the police IG before taking any action. level of crime in mopo Isanlu reduced drastically, because the vigilante knew those that commitcrime in the community so they go for them, they deal ruthlessly with the criminal, most of themran away to other areas to hide. The contribution and effort of the vigilante helped a great deal tominimize crime in this community. Tell me who would not be afraid of vigilante treatment.

Male IDI/ Mopo Isanlu/ chairperson of Landlords Association
[May 3, 2020]

Yet a youth male in FGD session submit thus:

The level of crime in Ejuku Town was very high before vigilante came in, high to the extent that lives and properties were very unsafe. Crime reduced after vigilante involvement in crime prevention. This is because vigilante punish the thieves mercilessly. They kill most of them while the rest left the community.

Male FGD/ Ejuku/ 18 - 39 years of age

[May 27, 2020]

From the above, it could be deduced that the insecurity to lives and property in the Yagba east has reduced as a result of the vigilante intervention and prompt response to distress calls. Response from the public affirmed that crime rate started decreasing following the intervention of Vigilante in crime prevention in the Yagba east.

Source: Field work 2020

Discussion

It was found in the study that level of crime has reduced downward at the instance of Vigilante involvement in crime prevention and control in the communities elected to study. This findings is corroborated with that of Chukwuma and Alemika (2004) who found that rise in crime is one of the reasons for patronage of Vigilante service group in Kogi state particularly Yagba East LGA. Also, findings further revealed that factors responsible for the level of crime is as a result of Poverty, Unemployment, Inequality, Hopelessness and the closure of the forest against the Timber contractors by the state government constituted majorly to the current levels of crime in yagba east LGA., thieves collects bags, phones, Motorcycle, Kidnapping, armed robbery and farmer/herdermen crisis. Findings further shows that Vigilante service groups used some strategic methods to reduced the activity of the criminals through spiritual strategic intelligence (SSI) and covering and combing the nocks and crannies of the Community/street which the Nigeria Police have been unable to do effectively, maintaining constant presence in the community/street to prevent criminals from operating and repaid response to security threats to prevent breakdown of law and order.

This finding is in line with that of Adegbusi (2009) who posited that vigilante service groups partner with the police in every community they operate in and this partnership have gone ahead to see to reduction in crime rate.

This is also in line with the finding of Chukwuma and Alemika (2004) who found that vigilante service groups are always available whenever they are needed since they maintain constant presence in the community/streets to prevent criminals from operating. Further findings reveal that Vigilante are very effective and prompt in response to distress call..

CONCLUSION

Vigilante organisation has contributed positively to the ongoing war against Kidnapping, armed robbery, Banditry, Rape, and terrorism being fought by the Federal Republic of Nigeria. One cannot but applaud them for their various counter-insurgency activities which are responsible for the earlier feats recorded by the Nigerian side. They were responsible for the identification, apprehension and killings of the armed robbers, kidnapper, Banditry and Terrorist. This is largely part of the reasons major communities such as Ejuku, Idofin, Ife-Olukotun and Ogbom where the Vigilante are highly present are witnessing downward reduction in crime and criminal activities. These feats notwithstanding, some negative attitudes of the group must be condemned. The practice of burning alive, beheading or any other form of extra judicial killing or punishment of captured criminals should be discouraged as this in itself not only negates the provisions of the Geneva Convention of 1949 which guarantees the security and safety of prisoners of war. Such act it should be recalled in the case of Mohammed Yusuf who was murdered while in police custody heightened Boko Haram attacks against the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

The role of the vigilante organisations in crime prevention and detection/control is mainly in the area of assistance rendering to constituted authorities. Their specific functions are that of providing intelligent information on crime and threats to the military and police, apprehending criminals where law enforcement agencies are absent and handing them over to appropriate security agencies. But we must be quick to also draw government's attention to the need for a proximate security system. In other

words, no community should be deprived of visible State protection, else vigilantes should not be blame for maltreating criminals who when left untamed may overpower them. It is in view of the foregoing that this paper makes the following policy recommendations which are aimed at properly positioning vigilantes and their groups to perform effectively for enhanced national security.

RECOMMENDATIONS

□□ Since the role of the vigilantes in any security situation is that of assisting the regular forces in identifying criminals and those who constitute threats to the community, the government should make bold an effort to proximately locate competent police or military bases to every community that constitute a part of the country. For the absence of this exposes the vigilantes as well as other citizens to the risk of possible reprisal attacks. This has been the case in many remote towns in Yagba east. Kogi west, Nigeria.

□□ Because vigilantes live and operate within their local communities, states and local governments should be mandated and empowered constitutionally to operate and remunerate vigilante organisations in all states of the federation. This will help immensely in addressing security problems before they get out of hand. The policy will also serve to provide employment to the local youths whom themselves constitute security threat when not employed.

□□ There should be an arrangement of constant periodic interactions between the regular security forces in every particular area with the local vigilantes. These meetings will avail them the opportunities to share intelligence and create a forum for training the locals on how to go about the task of enforcing laws and providing security in their localities.

□□ Finally, following the vital roles they play in local communities which are subsets of the Nigerian system, it is important for the state to find a place for this group in her current National Defence Policy as published in 2006. This will not only motivate the group, it will certainly increase their efficiency and indeed enhance Nigerian National Security.

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