

The Extent Vigilante Security Group Collaborate With the Police in Minimizing Crime in ABIA State

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Abstract: *The study examined the extent vigilante security group collaborate with the Nigerian police in minimizing crime in Abia State. A research question and a null hypothesis guided the study. Using the purposive sampling technique, 726 respondents comprising of 648 Town Union Executives (TUEs) and 78 Policemen in 10 Local Government Areas with registered vigilante units were selected for the study. Questionnaire was the tool used for data collection. Data were analyzed using mean and t-test statistics. The results revealed that the vigilante collaborate with the Nigerian police force to minimize crime to a high extent. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that the government should enhance collaboration between the vigilante and police by providing platforms which will enable them embark on joint deliberations, decision making and actions. This will aid harmony, teamwork, efficiency and effectiveness among the vigilante and the police for greater crime control and protection of lives and properties.*

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I. Introduction

Security of lives and properties is quite essential in all societies. It is an indispensable aspect of life. According to Omario (2003) security is the quality or state of being secure, freedom from fear or anxiety. It is a dynamic condition which involves the ability of a State to protect its citizens against threat and danger (Omede, 2011). Globally, insecurity constitutes threat to lives and properties. It retards socio economic and political development of different countries.

According to Beland (2005), insecurity is a state of fear or anxiety absence or lack of protection. For security and stability to be sustained in all societies, there is need for all members of a society not only to set up mechanisms for minimizing crime but to collaborate and synergize towards controlling crime. Crime control can be referred to as methods of minimizing crime in any society. It is an effort to deter crime and criminals for peaceful existence (Lambert, Elechi & Jiang, 2010). In all societies, there exists formal and informal crime control mechanisms set up for minimizing crime for peaceful existence. The police is an example of formal crime control mechanism. It relies on the law and official government agencies to curb criminal actions. The informal crime control mechanism relies on social and moral institutions which include vigilante, family, church and philanthropy to curb crime and promote lawful behaviour.

In Nigeria, Vigilante can be defined as a voluntary security enforcing group who has full legal and legislative backing to complement the work of police in intelligence gathering and minimizing crime (Elekwa, 2019). Vigilante helps people to protect their lives and properties, reduce fear of crime by means of improved home security, greater vigilance and accurate reporting of suspicious incidence of crime to the police (Okeke, 2013).

The police as a formal mechanism for minimizing crime gained its acceptance during the colonial era. However, according to Garba (2012) the colonial police was seen as a scheme to advance the economic and political agenda of colonial masters, hence, in Garba's view point , the colonial police was established neither as agent for promoting the rule of law, human rights, community safety nor for delivering social services. Garba noted that police was used as an instrument of oppression, riot control, suppression and violence. The use of violence by the colonial police alienated the police from the citizens and caused some level of distrust among the citizens (Ikuteyigo & Rotimi, 2012). This alienation of the police from the people contributed to leaving crime unabated because the police were seen as anti-people (Ikuteyigo & Rotimi, 2012). The distrust and disconnect from the people led to formation and strengthening of vigilante groups in most communities to collaborate with the police in minimizing crime. According to Ero (2000) it was the disconnect between police and community members that resulted to the emergence of the vigilante groups in Nigeria.

The mission of the vigilante group in Nigeria is to supplement and complement effort of the Nigeria police, consequently, the vigilante became registered with the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) in 1999

(Obeagu, 2014). In Abia State just like in other states in the country, the Vigilante group is supposed to complement the efforts of the police in community policing by checkmating activities of hoodlums and identifying their hideouts both in the urban and rural communities. This implies that community policing is a strategy which is based on collaborative partnership between police, vigilante and community members; hence, it involves commitment of everyone to reduce crime and fear of crime in every community (Trajanowicz, 2010). Collaboration implies two or more people working together to create or achieve the same thing (Cambridge Advanced Learners Dictionary and Thesaurus, 2019).

Collaboration in this paper implies cooperative arrangement between the vigilante and the police in order to minimize crime and protect lives and properties. Collaboration requires platform for joint deliberation, decision making and actions. According to Adejoh (2013) policing function is more effective when it is carried out as a collaborative and collective responsibility among the stakeholders. Phenson(2014) observed that close liaison or networking of vigilante with police is important especially with intelligence sharing, security planning and operations. In the same vein, for effective policing community members should pass across relevant information to the police and the vigilante concerning criminal activities and hideouts of criminals in their communities. Okunola (2011) observed that some community members are reluctant to report criminal activities to the vigilante group and the police. It is quite necessary that stakeholders collaborate effectively to ensure that crime is minimized in all environments.

According to Umar and Bappi (2014), crime has multiple causes and the solutions must be equally multifaceted and cannot be handled by only the police force. Adejoh (2013) noted that community policing is more effective when it is carried out as a collaborative and collective responsibility among police, Vigilante and community members. However, in Abia state, it is still worrisome that although there is existence of both the police and vigilante in urban and rural communities, there is still some element of insecurity, lawlessness, intimidation, armed robbery and violent crimes experienced by people living in the communities. This state of affairs affects lives and properties of those living in urban and rural areas in Abia state.

The respondents to this study comprised of Town Union Executives (TUEs) who represented the interest of community members living in urban and rural areas and Policemen working in different locations (Urban & Rural) in Abia state, hence, location is an important variable in this study. Many efforts have been made to strengthen community policing in order to minimize crime for a peaceful and harmonious environment in Abia state. However, the researchers still deemed it quite necessary to determine the extent of collaboration between the vigilante security group and the police in minimizing crime in order to identify gap(s) for subsequent filling of such gaps and further strengthening and improving their performances for effective collaborative intelligence-led policing in the communities in Abia state.

Statement of the Problem

The importance of security in the development of communities and nations cannot be overemphasized. The security of persons and properties is one of the most fundamental needs of every human society, without which life is threatened. This is why every responsible government strives to provide security for her citizens. For security of lives and properties of members of any society to be achieved there is need for the integration of the informal mechanism of crime detection and prevention into the formal policing strategies. Inyang and Abraham (2013) noted that the informal and formal policing strategies are integrated to assist the formal policing institutions when they have difficulties in detecting perpetrators of specific crimes. When this strategy of traditional policing and techniques are adopted, people who engage in crimes, who could evade detection and apprehension from the formal policing may be easily caught and made to face the full wrath of the law. In this regard, the Abia State government set up Vigilante group in 2002 to synergize with the police and compliment their efforts in combating crime and protecting lives and properties. Unfortunately, communities in Abia State still experience security challenges such as armed robbery, kidnapping, burglaries, theft, ritual killings, rape, and menace of cattle herdsmen among others. Therefore the need arises to examine the extent vigilante security group collaborate with the police in minimizing crime in Abia State for effective planning and decision taking towards a crime-free environment in the State.

Research Question

The following research question guided the study:

To what extent does Vigilante collaborate with the Nigerian Police Force in minimizing crime in Abia State?

Null Hypothesis

The following null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance:

Town Union Executives and Policemen in both the urban and rural areas do not differ significantly in their mean ratings on the extent to which vigilante collaborate with the police in minimizing crime in Abia State.

II. Method

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. Purposive sampling technique was used to select 726 respondents comprising of 648 Town Union Executives and 78 policemen. Two sets of instrument (For the TUEs & Policemen) titled Vigilante Group Collaboration with Police Scale (VGCP) was used for the study. Four point rating scale with the following response categories: Very High Extent (VHE) 4 points, High Extent (HE) 3 points, Low Extent (LE) 2 points and Not At All (NAA) 1 point was used for data collection. The instrument was subjected to face and content validity. The reliability coefficient of the instrument was determined using the Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient to establish the internal consistency of the items. t-test was used for testing the hypothesis. The reliability of the sections of the instrument was found to be high - 0.80 and 0.78 for TUE and police respectively. Thus, the instrument was highly reliable. The data collected was analyzed using weighted mean. Decision rule was based on the true limit of the four point rating scale. Thus, any mean score that is up to 2.50 and above was seen as high extent of collaboration, while mean scores below 2.50 was seen as low extent of collaboration. Null hypothesis was rejected if the t-cal. was greater than the t-crit. at 0.05 level of significance otherwise it was not rejected

III. Results

The data collected were presented and interpreted in Table 1.

Research Question: To what extent do the vigilante collaborate with the Nigerian Police Force in Minimizing Crime.

Table 1: Mean Ratings of the Respondents on the Extent Vigilante Collaborate with the Nigerian Police Force in Minimizing Crime

S/N	Items	TUE (N=648)	Police (N=78)	Mean	Decision
1.	The vigilante report any observed sign of criminal activity to the police immediately	2.51	3.01	2.76	High Extent
2.	The vigilante arrest criminals and take them to the Police for formal prosecution	2.46	3.08	2.77	High Extent
3.	The vigilante respond quickly to police calls for operational assistance.	2.50	2.89	2.70	High Extent
4.	The vigilante take operational instructions from the police to handle some criminal problems in your community.	2.50	2.91	2.71	High Extent
5.	The vigilantes treat criminal matters by cooperating with the police.	2.49	3.00	2.75	High Extent
6.	The vigilante do not respond to police instructions accordingly in your community	2.41	1.89	2.15	Low Extent
7.	The collaboration between the police and the vigilante for crime prevention is high.	2.50	3.12	2.81	High Extent
8.	In your community, the vigilante provide police with report on how to trace and control the menace of cattle herdsmen	2.41	2.03	2.22	Low Extent
9.	In your community, the vigilante gives report of criminal activities to the police to facilitate prosecution of criminals.	2.49	2.83	2.66	High Extent
10.	Information sharing between the police and the vigilante has not helped to stop the sale and consumption of hard drugs in your community.	2.52	2.59	2.55	High Extent
11.	The vigilante does not like reporting any incidence of crime to the police.	2.53	1.61	2.07	Low Extent
Grand Mean				2.56	High Extent

Table 1 shows similarity in the mean values for both the TUC and the policemen which suggests similar responses to the items. It equally shows that the mean scores of the respondents (TUC & Policemen) ranged from 2.15 to 2.81, with a grand mean of 2.56. This implies, that with reference to the decision rule, the vigilante collaborate with the Nigeria Police Force in waging war against crime to a high extent in Abia State.

The analysis of the null hypothesis was presented as follows:

Hypothesis

Town Union Executives and Policemen in both the urban and rural areas do not differ significantly in their mean ratings on the extent to which vigilante collaborate with the police in minimizing crime in Abia State.

Table 2: t-test comparison on the extent which the Vigilante Collaborate with the police in minimizing crime in Abia State.

Variable	N	X	SD	Df	t-cal	t-crit	LS	Decision
Rural	648	2.48	0.03	646	-	1.96	0.05	Not sig
Urban	78	2.63	0.08	76	1.87			

Table 2 shows that at 0.05 level of significance and 76 degree of freedom, the calculated t-value (-1.87) is less than the critical t-value (1.96). Therefore, the hypothesis which states that Town Union Executives and Policemen in both the urban and rural areas do not differ significantly in their mean ratings on the extent to which vigilante collaborate with the police in minimizing crime in Abia State was not rejected.

IV. Discussion of Results

The findings of the study revealed that the vigilante collaborate with the police to a high extent in Abia State. This shows that the vigilante security group work together with the police in community policing functions to ensure protection of lives and properties of community members. Thus, both the vigilante and police collaborate effectively in crime control. This may be because there exists a cordial relationship between the vigilante and the police in Abia State. This relationship if maintained will yield fruitful security results in the State. This finding is in agreement with Adejoh (2013), who affirmed that policing function is more effective, when it is carried out as a collaborative and collective responsibility between the vigilante and the police. In addition, Phenson (2014) noted that, every successful security operation is dependent upon effective planning and extent of intelligence information sharing between the vigilante and the police. However, Okunola (2011) observed that there was poor rate of crime reporting to the police and vigilante by community members and this affected the effectiveness of the police and vigilante in minimizing crime. This may be one of the reasons why sale and consumption of hard drugs is still high in some communities in Abia State. In addition, the study reveals that the vigilante provides police with report on how to trace and control the menace of cattle herdsmen to a low extent. The poor rate of crime reporting by some community members to the vigilante may affect timely sharing of intelligent information between the vigilante and the police. In this instance, Umar and Bappi (2014) affirmed that information sharing between the vigilante, community members and police will help to develop cooperative and collaborative ties for the purpose of crime prevention, crime reduction and maintenance of law and order.

The test of the null hypothesis showed that there was no significant difference in the mean ratings of policemen serving in the urban and rural areas on the extent to which vigilante collaborated with the police in minimizing crime in Abia State. Thus, Policemen serving in the rural and urban areas agreed that the vigilante collaborate with the police in the war against crime in Abia State. It is worthy of note at this point that community policing should not be seen as a sole preserve of the vigilante and the police but an integrated effort by all and sundry to wage war against crime and enthrone law and order in every community.

V. Recommendations

Government should plan and organize joint periodic seminar and training programmes for the police and the vigilante. This will provide a platform for the two groups to deliberate on security matters and chart a course for minimizing criminal activities in communities in Abia State and Nigeria in general. If Vigilantes are managed carefully by the government in this way, they could help to improve local and national security, and help to advance peaceful governance because of their roots.

The task of combating crime should be embarked upon collectively and holistically. In this vein, the vigilante group needs to be encouraged by organizing periodic refresher courses for them. These courses could focus on rule of law, innovation on intelligence gathering, communication skill, and human right among others. They could also be given incentives in cash, award or prizes for effective service and good performance. In a similar vein, any recalcitrant vigilante should be identified and publicly disgraced by the community members and the government. The police also need to be constantly trained and retrained. The need for sincere collaboration with the vigilante should be made known to them.

Community members through native communication channels and use of platforms such as faith-based programmes, women and men group meetings, age grade meetings and town hall meetings should be regularly informed of the necessity to collaborate and report intelligence information to the vigilante and police for sustainable security in both the rural and urban areas. Involvement in community policing to abate crime and criminal activities should also be made known to them through such platforms.

Provision of state of the art communication gadgets by the government for timely passing across of intelligence information among the vigilante, police and community members will go a long way to close communication gap among the stakeholders and encourage collaboration for effective community policing.

VI. Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that sincere collaboration between the vigilante and police without exclusion of community members will enhance the much needed community policing in the rural and urban communities in Abia State.

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