Assessment Of The Activities Of The Vigilante Group Of Nigeria In Kwara Central, Nigeria

by

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ABSTRACT

The situation of insecurity in Nigeria has given rise to non-governmental security organizations such as the Vigilante Group of Nigeria (VGN). While these groups may offer some benefits by leveraging their understanding of local communities, their operations also raise complex concerns. This study assessed the efficiency of the VGN's operations and activities in Kwara Central, Kwara State. The study relied on the Social Control Theory which notes that the society has the capacity to institute and maintain social norms within society Mixed methods research design was adopted and a total of 432 respondents participated in this study. Quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and content analysis respectively. Findings show that while collaborating with traditional rulers, community members and other security agencies, Vigilante Group of Nigeria plays crucial roles in securing Kwara Central by providing security to rural and urban communities. However, lack of legal backup, funding and training are parts of the challenges hindering their activities. This study concludes that the VGN's activities are efficient in reducing crime in Kwara Central and recommends that government should provide the necessary support in the areas of constitutional recognition, professional training and funding to further strengthen the operations of the Group.

Keywords: Vigilante Group of Nigeria; Security; Community Policing; Kwara; Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria, a country of over 200 million people, continues to grapple with pervasive security challenges. High crime rates, including armed robbery, kidnapping and

violent extremism, have a significant impact on the lives and livelihoods of Nigerians (Agba & Zubairu, 2021). The Nigeria Police Force that is responsible for maintaining law and order, continues to struggle in responding to multiple security threats effectively but has often been hampered by resource constraints, corruption, and limited community participation (Omeje, 2018; Osawe & Ashade, 2023). This context has stimulated the emergence of various non-state security actors, including vigilante groups, which provide alternative security sources to communities (Abimbola & Akeju, 2011).

The Vigilante Group of Nigeria (VGN), is an example of local policing founded to tackle insecurity at grassroot level. Entities that can be likened to the Vigilante Group of Nigeria had been in existence since 1870 (Ibrahim-Olesin et al., 2024); it was however, officially registered as an NGO in 1999; it is one of the most prominent vigilante groups in the country. It has branches in all 36 states, with a volunteer membership comprised primarily of local youth and community members (Ogunyemi, 2011).

The growing demand for localized policing has gained significant momentum recently, particularly in the nation's Southern region. This surge is a potential remedy to address perceived deficiencies within the centralized Police Force (Odigie-Oyegun, 2020). A prime example of this trend is the establishment of the Western Nigeria Security Network (WNSN), known as Amotekun. In 2020, six Southwestern states joined forces to create this network with the aim of combating issues such as kidnapping, banditry, and other security concerns in the region (Ameh & Omoniyi, 2023). While these groups may offer some benefits by leveraging their understanding of local communities and being more responsive to their needs (Adelani, 2024), their operations also raise complex concerns. Those who criticize them emphasize that they lack official training and supervision, which raises worries about human rights violations, acts of vigilantism, and the potential for manipulation by political forces (Ekeh, 2017).

Additionally, the legal status and operational framework for local security initiatives like the Vigilante Group of Nigeria still need to be clarified (Aluko, 2020) as these cause worries about possible human right violations and a lack of accountability for their actions. This lack of clarity can worsen tensions between different communities and pose potential challenges to effective cooperation with the formal law enforcement agencies (Adejumo, 2013; Ikechukwu, 2018; Ugbede et al., 2020). Many studies focused on the significance of Vigilante Group of Nigeria in preventing and controlling crime. Some scholars posit that these groups possess valuable expertise about local matters and are quick to respond, thus resulting in enhanced safety within communities (Omeje, 2017; Ugbedeojo & Omoniyi, 2020).

Conversely, some raise concerns about the absence of formal training among these groups, their potential for violence and infringement of human rights, and the risk of aggravating tensions between different communities (Adejumo, 2013; Osaghae, 2010). While some people advocate regulation and cooperation with vigilante groups (Adeshina, 2020), others call for stricter measures and disbanding the groups. The concern is about finding a way to exploit the potential benefits offered by VGN while mitigating the risks associated with their informality and lack of integration into formal structures.

Also, the Vigilante Group of Nigeria's reliance on community resources and voluntary contributions raises concerns about its financial sustainability and possible bias in its operations. This may limit its effectiveness in addressing broader security challenges and exacerbate community inequalities (Omeyer, 2017). In view of the above, this study examines the effectiveness of the Vigilante Group of Nigeria's operational activities towards crime reduction in Kwara State, Nigeria. Specifically, it assesses the public perception about the VGN's activities in Kwara Central as well as the role of the VGN in fostering peace and security in Kwara Central.

LITERATURE REVIEW

INSECURITY CHALLENGES IN KWARA STATE

Prior to British colonization in the early 20th century, Kwara State, then known as Ilorin Emirate, was a significant political and economic power within the Nupe, Igbomina, and Yoruba kingdoms, each contributing to the region's cultural heritage (Salawu, 2012). The region enjoyed relative stability, and trade flourished. However, colonial rule ushered in new administrative structures and altered power dynamics, laying the groundwork for some of the present-day challenges (Falola, 2015).

The advent of British colonization in the late 19th century led to the creation of the Northern Protectorate, incorporating Kwara (Falola, 2015). Post-independence in 1960, Kwara emerged as a distinct state, playing a significant role in national politics and economic development (Aderinto, 2010). The State emerged as a centre for agriculture, industry, and education. However, the oil boom of the 1970s led to neglect of other sectors, contributing to economic disparities and social unrest (Onuoha & Elegbede, 2018). These in addition to political instability and corruption, created fertile ground for insecurity.

Today, Kwara is sub-divided into 16 local government areas. Like many parts of Nigeria, Kwara communities face insecurity challenges, including armed robbery, kidnapping, farmer-herder clashes, and cult-related violence (Olusola, 2022). Ilorin and Asa LGAs are not immune to these challenges. Ilorin has witnessed incidents of kidnapping, armed robbery, and herder-farmer clashes (Adebayo, 2022). Asa LGA has also experienced urban crime, drug trafficking, kidnappings, communal clashes, and cultism (Edward, 2020). These incidents have instilled fear and disrupted the lives of residents, impacting livelihoods and hindering economic development (Olusola, 2022). The security challenges in Ilorin and Asa LGAs are not isolated incidents but rather born out of complex factors.

In the recent times, several factors contribute to Kwara's security challenges. High unemployment rates, poverty, and limited access to basic amenities create fertile ground for criminal activities (Olusola, 2022). Additionally, porous borders and the proliferation of illegal firearms exacerbate the situation (Adebayo, 2022). Specific to Ilorin and Asa LGAs, issues like land disputes, resource competition, and historical grievances between communities further complicate the security landscape (Olusola, 2022). Addressing these underlying social and economic factors alongside improved policing and community engagement is crucial for sustainable solutions. These forms part of the reasons that led to the rise of local policing (community policing).

NIGERIA POLICE FORCE OPERATIONS: THE CONSTRAINTS

The Nigerian Police Force (NPF), the primary law enforcement agency, has long been plagued with systemic weaknesses (Akinyetun, 2022). The centralization of the NPF has also been criticized for failing to adequately address the specific needs of diverse regions, hindering its ability to build trust and rapport with local communities (Otu & Apeh, 2022). The NPF's resource constraints, including understaffing, inadequate training, and outdated equipment, hinder proactive patrols and intelligence gathering (Osaghae, 2010). These often leave communities vulnerable, waiting for crimes to occur before responding rather than proactively addressing underlying social and economic factors contributing to crime (Omeje, 2017).

Bribery, extortion, and collusion with criminal elements erode public trust and discourage citizens from reporting crimes or cooperating with investigations (Adejumo, 2013; Ugbedeojo & Omoniyi, 2020). The lack of accountability creates a sense of impunity for criminals, further emboldening them and hindering effective crime prevention and prosecution. The perception of police complicity in crime discourages community engagement and cooperation, further perpetuating the cycle of ineffectiveness (Otu & Apeh, 2022).

The historical disconnect between the NPF and the Nigerian communities has fostered a deep-seated distrust in local security. Issues like police brutality, human rights abuses, and lack of transparency in investigations have alienated citizens, making them reluctant to seek help or collaborate with the police (Ikechukwu, 2018; Osaghae, 2010). This lack of trust hinders information sharing, witness cooperation, and community-based crime prevention initiatives, leaving the NPF largely isolated and operating without the crucial support of the communities it aims to protect.

The perceived ineffectiveness of local security has led to the emergence of alternative security actors, including vigilante groups and community watch programs (Aluko, 2020). While these non-state actors may offer some local security benefits, their lack of formal training, unclear legal frameworks, and potential for human rights abuses raise concerns (Adejumo, 2013; Ugbedeojo & Omoniyi, 2020). However, their existence underscores the need for reform and a shift towards community-oriented policing models prioritising trust-building, engagement, and proactive crime prevention strategies.

THE RISE OF VIGILANTE GROUPS

Nigeria's complex security challenges have fueled the rise of vigilante groups, self-proclaimed guardians of communities created by the people due to the perceived inefficiency of the Nigeria police force in securing lives and properties of the people (Omeje, 2017). The VGN's history stretches back to the colonial era, with early iterations appearing as community-based security organisations in the early 20th century (Ikechukwu, 2018). These groups played a role in maintaining order and resolving local disputes, particularly in rural areas where state presence was limited. After independence, the VGN remained active, evolving its structure and adapting to changing social and political contexts (Udoh, 2025). Identifying a single founder for the VGN is challenging due to its decentralised nature and regional variations. However, individuals like Ganiyu Adams, a prominent Yoruba leader, have been credited with spearheading the organisation's expansion and formalisation in the

southwest region in the late 1990s (Adejumo, 2013). The VGN leadership structure varies across regions, with local chapters typically headed by elected or appointed individuals.

The VGN operates through a decentralised network of regional and local chapters, each with varying autonomy and leadership structures. While a national headquarters exists, it exerts limited control over individual chapters, leading to concerns about inconsistent practices and potential abuses (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2000). Membership within the VGN is open to individuals who meet specific criteria, typically involving age, physical fitness, and moral character. The VGN's modus operandi often involves patrolling neighbourhoods, gathering intelligence, and apprehending suspected criminals.

Additionally, some VGN chapters have received financial support from government officials, blurring the lines between state and non-state actors and raising concerns about potential political influence (Omeje, 2017). Also, government documents outlining security strategies, like the National Security Strategy 2019, emphasize the need for collaboration between vigilantes and state security forces while advocating for better training and regulation of these groups (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2019). However, their methods can be controversial, with allegations of human rights abuses, extrajudicial killings, and torture frequently surfacing (Osaghae, 2010).

THE AMBIVALENCE OF VIGILANTE ACTIVITY: A GLIMPSE

The lack of clear legal frameworks governing vigilante groups often leads to concerning practices. Accusations of human rights abuses, extrajudicial killings, and torture by vigilantes continue to plague various regions (Amnesty International, 2025). A 2022 Human Rights report documented cases of torture and illegal detention by the VGN, raising concerns about their accountability and respect for human rights (United States Department of States, 2022). More so, vigilante activity can be a divisive force within communities. For instance, residents in a southeastern community expressed mixed reactions to the activities of a local vigilante group, some praising their effectiveness while others expressed concerns about their violent methods (Adesina, 2020).

Amnesty International has consistently reported on human rights abuses by vigilante groups in Nigeria, including torture, unlawful detention, and extrajudicial killings (Amnesty International, 2021a). They have called for independent investigations and accountability for perpetrators. The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) of Nigeria has also documented cases of human rights violations by vigilante groups (Okoye & Adejoh, 2025). They have urged the government to take action to address these issues. Several news outlets in Nigeria and internationally have reported on specific incidents involving alleged human rights abuses by vigilante groups (Amnesty International, 2021b).

For instance, police operatives arrested Lukman Rasak, a vigilante member in Lagos State, for shooting an innocent boy, Musa Yahaya, in his chest at the Ijora area of the State (Sunday, 2021). The victim later died at a hospital. Also, on suspicion of having ties to cults and kidnapping in Rivers State, the Onelga Security Peace and Advisory Council (OSPAC) members were accused of unlawfully holding and torturing innocent people in the State (Nelson & Maurice, 2024).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Social Control Theory

This study was guided by the Social Control theory, which posits that individuals are naturally prone to deviant behavior, and that societal institutions, including law enforcement, play a crucial role in regulating and controlling these behaviors (Costello & Laub, 2019). According to the Social Control theory, strong social bonds, such as attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief, act as protective factors against engaging in criminal activities (Widowaty, 2019). These bonds create a sense of connection and obligation to conform to societal norms. The theory suggests that individuals with weakened social bonds are more likely to engage in delinquent behavior (Costello & Laub, 2019). Factors such as weak family attachments, lack of commitment to conventional activities, low involvement in community affairs, and a lack of belief in societal values contribute to an increased likelihood of criminal conduct (Takahashi, 1960).

The establishment of vigilante groups can be viewed as an institutional response aimed at strengthening social bonds within the Southwestern Nigerian communities. By enhancing local security, they seek to foster a sense of attachment, commitment, and belief in the effectiveness of collective efforts in crime prevention. Positive changes in attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief could signify the efficacy of local policing in reinforcing social control mechanisms.

METHODS

A mixed-method research design combining quantitative and qualitative methods was employed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the study's objectives. The study was carried out in Kwara Central Senatorial District because it is the largest base for VGN activities in the State. The study employed a multi-stage sampling technique to ensure a representative sample of diverse groups within the population. Stratified sampling was adopted to divide the District into strata based on local government areas (Ilorin West, Ilorin East, Ilorin South, and Asa). This ensured adequate representation from each area. Using systematic random sampling, households were systematically selected from each local government area. This reduced selection bias and ensured fair distribution across the strata. Since there is no recent population data on the LGAs, 100 respondents were purposively taken from each LGA (Menon et al., 2020). Also, a total of 32 participants were purposively selected for the interview; these include officials of VGN (8), community leaders (4), officials of NPF (4) and National Civic Defense Corps (2), and members of VGN (14). This is due to their knowledge and experience about the matter. Therefore, a total of 432 respondents participated in this study (questionnaire = 400, interview = 32). This combination of techniques ensured a balanced and comprehensive dataset, reflecting diverse perspectives on the VGN's activities, effectiveness, and sustainability.

The quantitative data collected from the survey were analyzed using the Statistical Product and Service Solution (SPSS) version 25. Descriptive statistics was adopted to summarize responses on various security-related questions. The qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and themes in the narratives. This qualitative approach allows for a nuanced understanding of individual experiences and perceptions. Ethical approval was obtained from the Faculty of

Humanities and Social Sciences Ethical Review Committee of Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin, Nigeria.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Demography	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	167	41.7
Female	233	58.3
Age		
18-20	42	10.5
21-30	129	32.3
31-40	120	30
41-above	109	27.2
Local Government Area of residence		
Ilorin East	100	25
Ilorin West	100	25
Ilorin South	100	25
Asa	100	25
Educational level		
O/A level	99	24.7
Undergraduate	84	21
Graduate	139	34.8
No formal education	78	19.5
Employment status		
Self-employed	92	23
Employed	263	65.8
Unemployed	45	11.2
Total	400	100%

Source: Researcher field work, 2024.

The data in Table 1 reveals that the majority of the respondents are female (58.3%), while male respondents were 41.7%. The age distribution shows that the largest age group among the respondents is 21-30 years (32.3%) indicating a predominantly young adult population within the sample. Based on the methodology, the respondents are evenly distributed across the four Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Kwara Central: Ilorin East, Ilorin West, Ilorin South, and Asa, each accounting for 25% of the respondents. This balanced representation ensures that the survey captures a comprehensive perspective from all parts of the region. Regarding educational attainment, the majority of the respondents are graduates (34.8%) indicating that most of them are educated and enlightened. The employment status of respondents also shows that a significant majority are employed (65.8%). In summary, the demographic data presents a detailed overview of the respondents, highlighting a predominantly female and young adult population with a balanced representation across different LGAs in Kwara Central.

Table 2: Public Perception of VGN's activities in Kwara Central

Presence of Insecurity in the Study Area

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	162	40.5
No	238	59.5
Total	**400**	**100%**

Prevailing forms of Insecurity

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Theft and burglary	104	26
Assault and violence	26	6.5
Drug-related crimes	23	5.8
Kidnapping	0	0
Cultism	9	2.3
Killing and ritual	0	0
No	238	59.5
Total	**400**	**100%**

Support for Local Security Initiatives

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly supported	236	59
Somewhat supported	164	41
Indisposed	0	0
Somewhat opposed	0	0
Strongly opposed	0	0
Total	**400**	**100%**

Perception on Trust and Confidence in the VGN

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Very high	120	30
High	177	44.3
Moderate	52	13
Low	29	7.3

Very low	22	5.5
Total	**400**	**100%**

Effectiveness of VGN activities in Reducing Crime

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Very effective	122	30.5
Effective	163	40.8
Neutral	42	10.5
Ineffective	43	10.7
Very ineffective	30	7.5
Total	**400**	**100%**

Source: Researcher field work, 2024.

Table 2 shows that a significant portion of the respondents (40.5%) reported experiencing insecurity challenges in the study area. Conversely, 59.5% (238) do not perceive insecurity challenges in their localities. This suggests that while a majority feel secure, there is a substantial number of people facing security issues. This division highlights the importance of understanding the specific factors contributing to these perceptions of insecurity. For instance, those that were never victims of insecurity may believe that there is no security challenge in a community.

Regarding the prevailing forms of insecurity, theft and burglary are mostly reported (26%). This highlights a significant concern for property-related crimes in the community. The study shows that assault and violence (6.5%), and drug-related crimes (5.8%) are rising issues of concern within communities. Although kidnapping and killing/ritual are security issues in Nigeria, they were not reported as a common crime in Kwara Central.

The Table further shows that all the respondents (100%) supported the local security initiatives to address security challenges. This suggests a high level of community readiness to cooperate on localized efforts to enhance security. In addition, the majority of the respondents (74.3%) had trust and confidence in the activities of the VGN. This suggests that Group will enjoy the cooperation of the people in securing the communities. Also, over 70% of the respondents believed that the activities of the VGN had helped in reducing crime in their areas. This indicates that while not perceived as exceptionally successful, the VGN's efforts are generally considered to be effective in addressing crime-related issues.

This indicates that the VGN's presence has a positive impact on the perceived safety and security of the community. In support of the above, the qualitative data highlighted the role that the VGN plays in ensuring the safety of lives and properties, particularly in their respective rural communities. According to him:

> VGN has been instrumental in maintaining peace and security within Kwara Central. Our activities are particularly noted during nighttime, although we also operate during the day in some rural areas (VGN Official 1).

This implies that the VGN's presence deters criminal activities, provides immediate response to security threats, and fosters a sense of safety among community members. A community leader recounted an incident where VGN members thwarted a planned burglary. He noted that:

> The vigilantes, acting on a tip-off, conducted a night patrol and apprehended the suspects before they could execute their crime. This incident underscores the VGN's proactive approach in crime prevention, which significantly contributes to community safety (Community Leader 3).

The Nigeria Police Force and community leaders corroborated the positive impact of the VGN on local security. They acknowledged that the VGN's efforts complemented the formal security apparatus, covering gaps, especially in areas where police presence is limited. According to an Officer: *This collaborative effort between the*

VGN and other security agencies has been pivotal in enhancing overall security in Kwara Central (NPF Official 1).

On the issue of misconduct, the VGN in Kwara State had categorically denied engaging in unlawful acts, such as human rights violations or jungle justice. A leading member noted that *"none of our members engages in any act of jungle justice, not in this state. We ensure that all our members had adequate training and are law abiding citizens"* (VGN Official 2). This is supported by the NPF, which confirmed that any past misconduct has been rectified, and VGN members are now working within the legal framework. For him, *"All those act of indiscipline, human right violations, etc are in the past, we now ensure they follow due process and work within the law"* (NPF Official 2). Similarly, a community leader noted that *Whenever Vigilantes arrested any criminal most especially thief, they will detained the individual and promptly handed them over to the local police station, ensuring due process was followed* (Community Leader 2).

Table 3: Challenges of Vigilante Group of Nigeria in carrying out their Duties Effectively

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of adequate training and resources	149	37.2
Lack of support from the community	63	15.8
Interference from political entities	86	21.5
Ineffective collaboration with other law enforcement agencies	102	25.5
Total	**400**	**100%**

Transparency and Accountability within the VGN

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Very high	36	9
High	63	15.8
Moderate	100	25
Low	129	32.2
Very low	72	18
Total	**400**	**100%**

VGN as a Sustainable Solution to Addressing Security Challenges

Response	Frequency	Percentage

Yes	266	66.5
No	45	11.25
Not sure	89	22.25
Total	**400**	**100%**

Source: Researcher field work, 2024.

Table 3 shows that the majority of the respondents (37.2%) identified lack of adequate training and resources as the biggest challenge faced by the Vigilante Group of Nigeria (VGN) in carrying out their duties effectively. Meanwhile, the Civic Defense Corps is responsible for the registration and training of VGN members. An Officer confirmed that; "*We are responsible for their registration and training as a civil security, however, they have their own rules, mode of operation and funding*" (NCDC Officer 1). Other major challenges identified are ineffective collaboration with other law enforcement agencies (125.5%) and interference from political entities (21.5%). These data underscore the multifaceted nature of the challenges confronting the VGN and the need to address them. Also, about one-fourth (24.8%) of the respondents noted that there is high level of transparency and accountability within the VGN. More than half of the respondents (50.2%) rated the level of transparency and accountability in the VGN operations as low. These findings highlight the importance of enhancing transparency and accountability measures within the VGN to build public trust and confidence in its operations.

In addition, the Table shows that a significant majority of respondents (66.5%), believed that the VGN is a sustainable solution to addressing security challenges. While some people were not (22.25%), a minority of the respondents (11.25%), did not believe that the VGN is a sustainable solution to addressing security challenges in their localities. These findings suggest the need for critical evaluation and of VGN activities to ensure that they remain effective and relevant in addressing evolving security challenges within local communities.

DISCUSSION

The findings from the study conducted in Kwara Central provide a comprehensive overview of public perception regarding the Vigilante Group of Nigeria (VGN). A significant portion of the population holds a positive view of the Vigilante Group of Nigeria activities. The mean rating of 3.76 out of 5 regarding the overall effectiveness of the VGN in reducing crime indicates a generally positive perception among the public. This aligns with (Adelani, 2024), who found that community-based vigilante groups in Nigeria are often perceived favorably due to their ability to address security issues swiftly and effectively.

The survey revealed also that 58.3% of respondents feel significantly safer due to the presence of the VGN. This finding is consistent with the conclusions of Badiora (2019) who noted that the presence of vigilante groups contributes to a heightened sense of security among community members. The study emphasized that the visibility and proactive patrolling of these groups deter criminal activities and provide reassurance to the populace. Borovec et al. (2019) also supports this view, suggesting that a

visible security presence is crucial for maintaining public order and safety. The VGN's visibility and proactive engagement in Kwara Central have evidently contributed to a perceived reduction in crime and an enhanced sense of safety among residents.

Despite the high trust and confidence in the Group, Osaghae (2010) documented instances of vigilante groups engaging in extrajudicial activities and human rights violations. These actions undermine public trust. Also, Olaniyan (2017) highlights that vigilante groups can sometimes engage in extrajudicial actions due to inadequate oversight. This can lead to human rights violations and undermine public trust. The study also shows that inadequate training hampers the performance of the VGN. Accordingly, Ugbedeojo and Omoniyi (2020) argues that with appropriate training and oversight, vigilante groups can complement formal policing efforts and enhance community security. Hence, if proper training mechanisms are put in place, the low level of transparency and accountability found in this study can be effectively addressed. While vigilante groups are praised for their effectiveness, their operations often lack the oversight and accountability mechanisms present in formal law enforcement agencies. This gap is noted in the literature as a significant challenge for the legitimacy and sustainability of vigilante operations (Olaniyan & Yahaya, 2016).

The study reveals a belief in the VGN's collaboration with other law enforcement agencies, with 91.5% of respondents agreeing that the VGN effectively collaborates to combat crime. This finding is corroborated by Ikechukwu (2018) which highlights that successful crime prevention often hinges on the seamless integration of efforts between formal police forces and community-based security groups.

Meanwhile, this study found that a vast majority of respondents consider the VGN to be either "Very effective" or "Effective" in preventing crime before it occurs. This aligns with the findings of Miller (2025), who found that proactive community-based security measures are instrumental in reducing crime rates and enhancing public safety. For instance, Onuoha (2013) notes that vigilante groups often emerge in response to gaps in formal policing, providing rapid responses to security threats that formal agencies may be slow to address. This swift response capability is a defining characteristic of vigilante groups, making them an essential component of community security in areas with limited formal police presence.

However, it is important to consider potential issues highlighted in the literature. Olaniyan (2017) argues that while vigilante groups are effective in immediate threat response, their actions sometimes lack oversight, leading to potential human rights abuses and extrajudicial practices. This critique underscores the necessity for proper regulation and collaboration with formal security agencies to ensure that vigilante activities remain within legal bounds. Contrasting with more reactive approaches often seen in formal law enforcement, the VGN's proactive stance is highlighted as a key strength. Adedoyin (2020) argues that community vigilance and early intervention are more effective in preventing crime than traditional reactive methods. The proactive measures taken by the VGN, as perceived by the respondents in Kwara Central, underscore the importance of such strategies in fostering a secure environment.

Further, the Vigilante Group of Nigeria (VGN) in Kwara State faces several significant challenges that hinder their ability to effectively perform their duties,

although many officers declined to discuss the issues. Some of the primary challenges faced by the VGN are lack of formal power and legal authority, inadequate and funding (Ugbedeojo & Omoniyi, 2020). Onuoha (2013) noted that insufficient funding can lead to lower motivation and ineffectiveness, on their risky and demanding work.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the VGN plays a critical role in maintaining security and fostering peace within Kwara Central. Their efforts are widely supported by the community and are seen as effective in crime reduction. Also, the VGN enjoys collaboration and cooperation with the law enforcement agencies, and this needs to be sustained and improved. However, to sustain and enhance their impact in community security, it is essential to address the challenges they face such as improved legal status, training and capacity building, compensation, appreciation, adequate funding, as well as implementation of robust oversight and accountability mechanisms.

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