

**EVALUATION AND ENHANCING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF  
COMMUNITY-BASED POLICING (VIGILANTE) IN COMBATING  
CRIME IN EKITI LOCAL GOVERNMENT OF KWARA STATE**

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**ABSTRACT**

This paper was on evaluation and enhancing the effectiveness of community-based policing (vigilante) in combating crime in Ekiti Local Government of Kwara State. The work identified the roles of traditional vigilante groups in community policing in Ekiti LGA of Kwara State; found the extent to which crime constituted social menace in the area; assessed the impact of the vigilante groups in crime control in Local Government Area; determine the extent to which vigilantism has help in controlling crime in those communities; examined the problems militating against the optimal use vigilante groups to curtail crime in Ekiti and; suggested the best ways to improve the performance of the roles of the traditional vigilante groups in community policing in Ekiti LGA of Kwara State. The descriptive survey research design was adopted in the study, with the use of 330 respondents who were purposively and randomly sampled. An adapted questionnaire and interview guide was used in the study for data collection. Data collected was analysed using frequency counts, percentage scores and thematic analysis technique. Findings of the study indicated that: vigilante groups existed to save the lives and properties of people in Ekiti L.G.A. It also showed that the rate of crime was high before the formation of vigilante groups in its current form and low after the formation of the vigilante groups. It was also discovered that high rate of crime and police ineffectiveness led to the formation of the vigilante groups in its current form. More so, vigilante groups were perceived to be effective in crime control but are facing the problems of: lack of modern weapon to carry out their work effectively, poor funding and lack of mobility for them to use among others. The study concluded and recommended that: The role of community police is quite indispensable in combating crime perpetration and creation of social menace, risks and loss to the lives and properties of people in Ekiti LGA of Kwara State. It recommended that: Government should provide more modern security equipment for the vigilante group in combating crime in the LGA, provide funds adequately in paying the allowances and salaries of the Community-police members and that vigilante members should be well trained and operate within the frame work of the law amongst others.

**Keywords:** Community-based; Policing; Combating; Crime; Evaluation; Enhancing; Effectiveness; Policing; Combating

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The emergence of vigilante groups in Nigeria resulted from insufficient public police personnel to adequately protect peoples' lives and property in the country. According to Abdulkadir et.al (2023) Vigilante groups are classified in to three categories. These are the able bodied men in different wards or villages who formed themselves in to organized patrol team in order to protect members of their families and their neighbors against hoodlums. There are hired vigilante groups who are paid by the communities that hired them to protect the people. The third category of vigilante groups are those employed and equipped by the government to police the community in collaboration with the conventional police.

The increasing wave of crimes including armed robbery, kidnapping, terrorism and insurgency in many parts of Nigeria resulted in the formation of the vigilante groups to complement the efforts of security agencies. The aims and objectives of these groups are mainly to prevent and detect crimes and also to arrest suspects and hand them over to the police. In recent time, the jobs of the vigilante have become endangered in places like Kaduna, Kastina, Zamfara Niger and even Kwara state where there are incessant attacks of people by gunmen.

It is worthy of note that members of the vigilante groups make use of only traditional weapons as local bow and arrow, machetes spears, sticks, Dane guns and the likes that cannot match with the sophisticated weapons of the insurgents. This situation prompted the Governors in Zanfara and Kastina State to arm the group officially. This effort did not go down well with the then Inspector General of police, Mohammed Abubakar as it was not in line with the law granting the use of personal fire arms in Nigeria. In Bornu, Yobe, Adamawa amongst other states in the Northern part of Nigeria, there exist the Boko Haram sect who terrorizes the people. The atrocities of this deadly sect led to the formation of the Civilian Joint Task Forces (CJTF) who are assisting the conventional Military Task Forces in combating the insurgency. Residents in these cities also watch the activities of strangers in the neighborhood and report to the security personnel.

In Anambra state, the "ndi -ncha" according to (Nwaeze 2010) was mobilized to work in concert with the law enforcement agents in checkmating the rising incessant killing and loss of properties in the area. The operation of vigilante group was legally passed into law by the Anambra State government in year 2000. Then about 20,000, vigilante groups were formed in 177 communities in Anambra state (Eke 2002). Also, there are sub units of these groups in villages within the towns, markets and residential areas of the state. Also, the recent arrest in Ogun and Lagos states of strangers who turned out to be members of "Boko Haram" is not without the involvement of members of the vigilante groups in the state. The same group of people were used to check the prevalence of armed robbery on Jebba-Ilorin High way. Also the traditional vigilante were also found useful in Offa Polytechnic students' crises, Offa-Erinle crisis, Fulani-Oroago crisis and are still being used in checkmating incidence of armed robbery on Obbo-Eruku -Lokoja federal road currently.

Kwara State as one of the states in Nigeria is not left out in the efforts to prevent crime, and protect lives and property of people from criminal activities. There is therefore the need to investigate the contributions of traditional vigilante groups in preventing crime in some selected communities in Ekiti Local Government Area of Kwara State.

## 2.0 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In recent times, many communities in Ekiti Local Government Area of Kwara State witnessed crimes of various descriptions. Thus, crime is becoming a serious problem in the local government area. The police and other paramilitary outfits; including the Civil Defense who are the primary agents in the fight against crime are ineffective due to concerts of internal and external factors. Thus, violent crimes are committed regularly in the study area in which many people are dispossessed of their valuables while others are killed or maimed for life. Specifically, the local governments affected by increase spate of crime in the state include communities in Oyun, Irepodun, Ekiti, Ifelodun and even Moro Local Governments Local Government Areas. This led to the introduction of vigilante groups in the state. Insecurity and lawlessness did not only lead to loss of lives but also undermines peoples' economic, political and social lives. The Nigerian Tribune (2013) reported how Odua Peoples' Congress (OPC) a group of traditional Vigilante in Kwara State dislodged some touts and thugs that were harbored by some people to disrupt kwara State election in 2003.

The increase in crime wave in Ekiti LGA and the inability of the Nigeria police to deal with the situation effectively has given rise to the emergence of vigilante groups in its current form. These vigilante groups are to ensure the safety of both their lives and property and those of their families. Eke, (2002) noted that "from time immemorial, ordinary men and women have made several sacrifices to ensure the safety of both lives and that of their families. Several vigilante groups now operate in many communities in Ekiti LGA.

Residents see vigilante groups as outfit they can always rely on in terms of security. Put differently, it seems the public is skeptical about the ability of Nigeria Police to provide adequate security services alone without the involvement of the public. This study, therefore, aimed at evaluating the contributions of traditional vigilante groups in crime control in Ekiti Local Government Area communities in Kwara State. Quite a number of research works and write ups abound on the impact of traditional vigilante groups on crime control in different parts of Nigeria but none can be found on their impact on crime control in Ekiti Local Government Area communities, hence this study.

### 2.1 Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of this study is to evaluate and enhance the effectiveness of the traditional vigilante groups. on crime control in Ekiti Local Government Area of Kwara State.

The specific objectives are to:

- i. identify the roles of traditional vigilante groups in community policing in Ekiti LGA of Kwara State;
- ii. find out the extent to which crime constitutes a social menace in Ekiti Local Government Area of Kwara State;
- iii. assess the impact of the vigilante group in crime control in Ekiti Local Government Area and determine the extent vigilantism has help in controlling crime in those communities;
- iv. examine the problems militating against the optimal use vigilante groups to curtail crime in Ekiti and;

- v. suggest the best ways to improve the performance of the roles of the traditional vigilante groups in community policing in Ekiti LGA of Kwara State

## 2.2 Research Questions

In this study the following research questions were addressed:

1. What are the roles of traditional vigilante groups in community policing in Ekiti Local Government Area of Kwara State?
2. To what extent does crime constitute security problem in Ekiti Local Government?
3. What is the impact of vigilante groups in crime control in Ekiti Local Government?
4. What are the problems militating against the optimal use of vigilante groups to curtail crime in Ekiti Local Government?
5. How can vigilante groups be optimally strengthened for crime control in Ekiti Local Government Area?

## 3.0 METHODOLOGY

This study adopted the descriptive survey of evaluative type. The design was considered suitable for this study because it enabled the researcher to investigate the effects of traditional vigilante groups on crime control in Ekiti Local Government Area of Kwara State, evaluated their performance, reported the situation as it existed and made necessary recommendations. The population comprise 54850 residents. In particular, people between the ages of 18 years and above residing in the LGA were considered eligible to react to questions from the researcher. This was so because, constitutionally, 18 years below were regarded as under aged and therefore have no capacity for rational thinking. The sample was made up of 330 respondents who were selected through a stratified purposive random sampling technique. The stratification was based on peoples' ability to read and write, age and three years and above residency in the Ekiti LGA communities. Thirty respondents were randomly sampled from ten communities purposively in the LGA where cases of armed robbery burglary and insurgents were more pronounced. The learned respondents were given the prepared questionnaire to fill from each purposively selected town. Also, three members of the vigilante groups who were not literate were interviewed from each community. The instruments that were used in collecting data for the study was an adapted Questionnaire titled "Vigilantism and Crime Control in Ekiti Local Government Area" (VCCELGA) and a self-designed semi structured interview guide. The questionnaire which was adapted from Nwaeze (2010) was given to the literate respondents in the study communities. The questionnaire was in two parts "A" and "B". Part A consisted of demographic data of the respondents while the B part contained 26 structured questions on the contributions of traditional vigilante on crime control in Ekiti LGA of Kwara State. The interview schedule was used to elicit information from the non- literate members of the vigilante groups, their leaders and other members of those communities used as the need be. The instrument was validated by five experts in the Centre for Peace and Strategic Studies, of University of Ilorin, Ilorin. The reliability of the instrument was ensured through split-half method to get a reliability index of 0.81, while consent and thematic analysis of the qualitative aspect of the study was done. The data collected through questionnaire was tabulated and analyzed using frequency counts and percentage scores. The data collected through interview was analyzed thematically and reported appropriately.

**4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

**Research Question 1:** What are the roles of traditional vigilante groups in community To answer this research question, percentage scores of data analysis in Tables 1, 2 and 3.

**Table 1 Percentage analysis of the rate of crime in communities in Ekiti LGA 'before the formation of vigilante groups**

Rate of crime before current vigilantism	Frequency	Percentage
High	168	56 %
Moderate	120	40 %
Low	12	4 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100 %</b>

**Source:** field work

As indicated in Table 1, 168(56%) of the respondents accepted that crime rate was high before the formation of vigilante groups in its current form while 120 (40%) of the respondents were of the opinion that crime rate was moderate. while 12 (4%) of the respondents held that crime rate was low. The above tabulation shows that the largest proportion of the respondents accepted that crime rate was high before the formation of vigilante groups in its current form. Their views tend to be in consonance with the trend in literature as represented by the views of Eke, 2002, Igbo, 2001 and 2007

**Table 2 Percentage analysis of the rate of crime in communities in Ekiti LGA after the formation of vigilante group**

Crime rate after current vigilantism	Frequency	Percentage
High	22	7.3 %
Moderate	10	3.3 %
Low	258	86 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100 %</b>

**Source:** field work

Table 2 showed that 22 (7.3%) of the respondents agreed that crime rate was high after the formation of vigilante groups while 10 (3.3%) said that crime rate was moderate after the formation of current vigilante groups while 258 (86%) agreed that crime rate was low. From

the above; it is clear that the largest proportion of the respondents held that crime rate after the formation of vigilante groups in its current form was low in their communities. Their views agreed with the current trend in literature as exemplified by the phrase "luxury of sleeping with both eyes closed". (Post express, Sept. 29 2010).

**Table 3: Percentage analysis of respondents on prevalent crime in their area**

Prevalent crime	Frequency	Percentage
Armed robbery	300	100 %
Murder	45	15 %
Burglary	280	93.3 %
Rape	10	3.3 %
Others	60	20 %

**Source:** field work

Table 3 indicated that 300 (100%) of the respondents said that armed robbery was prevalent in their communities. 45 (15%) of them accepted that murder was prevalent, 280 (93.3%) said that burglary was common, 10 (3.3%) said that it was rape while 60 (20%) of the respondents mentioned other crimes. The above tabulation shows that the largest proportion. of the respondents agreed that armed robbery was prevalent in their area. Their views agreed with Eke, (2002) that noted that armed robbery and other violent crimes reached unprecedented level in Udenu L.G.A

Considering the findings analyzed in Tables one, two and three, one can conclude that the major roles of vigilante groups in communities in Ekiti Local Government of Kwara State is to save the lives and properties of people in the local environment from the various crimes being committed by the criminals in the area.

**Research Question 2:** To what extent does crime constitute security problem in Ekiti Local Government?

To answer this question, percentage scores were used in analyzing the data collected.

**Table 4 Percentage analysis of respondents on extent to which crime constitute security problem in the local government**

Extent of problem	Frequency	Percentage
Loss of life	300	100 %
Loss of property	300	100 %

Disruption of business	78	26 %
Sleepless night	189	63 %

**Source;** field work

In Table 4. all the 300 (100%) respondents indicated that crime. constituted security problem in Ekiti LGA through loss of life and property.189 (63%) percent of the respondents were of the view that people were having sleepless nights in the communities in Ekiti LGA Especially before the formation of vigilante groups while 78(26%)respondents showed that peoples' businesses were disrupted as a result of crime rate in the area .Findings in Table 4 corroborates that of Omojo et.al (2022) and this discussion as it was analysed under the Table that crime rate was high in the local government before the formation of vigilante groups.

**Research Question 3:** What is the impact of vigilante groups on crime control in Ekiti Local Government?

To investigate the impact of vigilante groups on crime control in Ekiti LGA, respondents were asked to rate their job performance and percentage scores were used in analyzing data gathered as discussed in Table 5

**Table 5 Percentage analysis of respondents rating on the impact of vigilante groups on crime control in Ekiti LGA communities**

<b>Vigilante groups performance</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Excellent	86	28.6 %
V. Good	206	68.6 %
Fair	08	2.6 %
Poor	----	00 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100 %</b>

**Source:** field work

Table 5 indicated that 86 (28.6%) of the respondents agreed that vigilante groups are excellent in crime control. 206 (68.6%) said that they are very good while 08 (2.6%) were of the view that they were fair in terms of crime control while no respondent indicated that their performance was poor. The above data is an indication of the fact that the highest proportion of the respondents were of the view that vigilante groups were effective in crime control in their communities. This finding is in alliance with what a journalist who visited Bakassi Boys

Headquarters in Aba wrote "Today, Aba has the lowest crime rate in Nigeria.....Aba now enjoy luxury of sleeping with both eyes closed." (Post Express, Sept. 29, 2001). The findings equally corroborated Obidiegwu (2019) who posited that crime rate was low with the formation of the traditional vigilante groups.

**Research Questions 4:** What are the problems militating against the optimal use of Vigilante groups to curtail crime in Ekiti Local Government?

**Table 6: Percentage analysis of respondents views on problems militating against the optimal use of vigilante groups in crime control in Ekiti LGA communities**

Problems of Vigilante	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of mobility	300	100 %
Lack of fund	300	100 %
Use of obsolete weapons	284	94.6 %
Peoples uncooperative attitudes	102	34.0 %

**Source:** Field work

In Table 6, all the 300(100%) respondents were of the opinion that lack of mobility and fund, were the major problems in the optimal use of vigilante groups in crime combating in different communities in Ekiti Local Government of Kwara State, 284 that is 94% respondents also indicated that the vigilante groups make use of obsolete weapons while about 34% that is, 102 respondents pointed it out that in some communities, people were not cooperating with them as expected. This finding corroborates the respondents of the vigilante people interviewed. In their submission, they complained that they should be provided with adequate mobility like patrol vans, motor cycle and even, bicycle. Further, they complained about insufficient funding to pay their remuneration promptly and purchase modern outfits for their job. Equally, they complained of use of obsolete equipment like, Dane gun, knob, cutlass, rope, and cane as against sophisticated weapon criminals' use in their operations. Omojo et.al (2022) had the same submission of the above findings.

**Research Question 5:** How can vigilante groups be optimally strengthened for crime control Ekiti Local Government Area?

**Table 7: Percentage analysis of respondent's views on how vigilante groups can be optimally strengthened for crime control in Ekiti LGA communities**

Problems of Vigilante	Frequency	Percentage
Provision of mobility	300	100 %
Provision of fund	300	100 %

Use of modern weapons	206	68.6 %
Peoples' positive attitudes	213	71 %

**Source:** Field work

In Table 7, all the respondents 300(100%) indicated that vigilante groups in the local government can be strengthened for optimal use in combating crime in the local government if they are provided with patrol vehicles and some other motilities and adequate funds. Two hundred and six respondents that is, 68.6% were of the opinion that use of modern weapons would go a long way in enhancing the job performance of the groups in the local government communities while 213(73%) of the respondents submitted that positive attitude of people in the communities towards the group would aid their optimal performance in Ekiti Local Government Area of Kwara State. This finding is in consonance with the findings of Kehinde & Godwin (2021) who posited that traditional vigilante groups in Ile-ife will perform valiantly if they are equipped with modern equipment and are well motivated.

In view of analysis in Table 7, addressing all the aforementioned suggested solutions will go a long way in assisting optimal performance of the vigilante groups in the locale of study. For example, effective security work will be difficult to carry out without a patrol van to contact members of the group in their different locations. Prompt payment of salary and allowances is equally needed to motivate the group members. Money is equally required to purchase befitting outfits in their jobs performance. Modern fire arms and equipment are needed by the group to enable them to perform their jobs optimally. Security issue is expected to be the concern of all and sundry. Members of communities in the LGA are expected to be conscious of this and cooperate maximally with the vigilante groups in the performance of their jobs. This they can do through being hospitable to the groups and giving the group important information that will facilitate their job performance in the local government.

## 5.0 QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

This part of data the analysis deals with the interview schedule with Vigilante group members, members of the groups were interviewed to elicit information from them on 'crime, their mode of operation, their relationship with the police and their relationship with the public. Semi-structured interview was used in collecting data.

### **Analysis of interview conducted with members of vigilante groups**

The interview was conducted with 30 people from ten communities in Ekiti LGA ofl Kwara State.

#### **(i) Assessment of crime rate before and after the formation of vigilante groups in its current form**

The interviewees were of the opinion that crime rate was on the increase before the current vigilantism. They however said that crime started to decrease after the formation of current

vigilantism. This attests to the result of data analysed in Tables 1, 2 and 3. Of the quantitative analysis.

**(ii) Whether increasing crime wave constitutes a social problem**

On this issue, there was a consensus among the interviewees that crime constituted a serious social problem in communities in Ekiti Local Government Area. They mentioned loss of lives and properties, disruption of business activities, sleepless night as some of the problems caused by increasing crime wave.

**(iii) Causes of vigilantism in its current form**

There was also consensus among the interviewees that vigilantism in its current form started as a result of increasing crime wave in Ekiti LGA and inability of the Nigerian Police to checkmate it. In their opinion the police men in the LGA were suspected of collaborating with the criminals to perpetrate crime.

**(iv) Types of weapons used by the vigilante groups in Ekiti LGA**

They mentioned that automatic double barrels, matches, koboko, torch light, rope, knobs and whistle as the weapons they use. On further enquiry, they stated that certain crime requires giving the culprits some latches of koboko or tying him or her with rope. This findings suggest that severe punishment is part and parcel of their crime control strategy.

**(v) Time for reporting to and closing from office by the vigilante groups in Ekiti LGA**

The vigilante group members that were interviewed said that they reported to their duty post between 6-9.30 pm and closed between 5.30-6 am and some of them employed by the local government who claimed that they work round the clock (24) hours daily. The findings suggest that vigilante groups in Ekiti L G A work mainly at night.

**(vi) Financing of vigilante group members in Ekiti LGA**

With the exception of the vigilante employed by the LGA, the others said that they were financed by their communities. According to them, each village was grouped according to families. Men kept vigil in turn. However, they said that men above 45 years and some other persons who were engaged in essential duties paid some amount of money for the upkeep of the guards in terms of provision of torch lights, battery, cutlasses, double barrels, whistle and the likes. They however said that they were not paid anything since each male member of the community contributed to vigilantism in one way or the other. This finding affirms the opinion of majority of community members who held that the members of the community formed and financed vigilante groups.

**(vii) The relationship of the vigilante groups in Ekiti LGA with police**

Most of the vigilante group members interviewed agreed that they had cordial relationship with police. They held that the Nigeria police force inaugurated them and when arrests were made, the offenders were handed over to the police for prosecution. The interviewees held that they

had cordial relationship with the police. He further opined that they usually met with police on appointed dates and discussed security matters. This was supported by others.

**(viii) Major problems in the performance of the functions of the vigilante groups in Ekiti LGA**

Vigilante group members interviewed pointed out that lack of fire arms, poor funding, lack of patrol vehicle were among the major problems confronting them. The above finding suggests that vigilante group members were confronted with some major problems which affected their operation in a negative way.

**(ix) How best can the problem of crime be solved in Ekiti LGA?**

While some members of vigilante groups were of the opinion that the problem of crime in Nigeria could be solved by providing employment opportunities to the youths, others believed that the vigilante groups should be funded properly and also be given incentives to enable them combat crime adequately and effectively.

**(x) Whether they are satisfied with the mode of operation of vigilante groups in Ekiti LGA**

They had consensus of opinion that were satisfied with the mode of operation of vigilante groups. To them, the mode of operation of vigilante groups was responsible for its effectiveness. It deterred people from engaging in criminal acts.

**(xi) The relationship between the vigilante groups in Ekiti LGA with their communities**

They maintained that they had cordial relationship with their community members. One of them pointed that the people relied more on them than the police. In extreme cases criminals could be summarily executed he said. People with questionable character and suspected criminals were always reported to us not the police. The findings suggest that they related well with their community.

**(xiii) How best can the problem of crime in Nigeria be solved**

Among the ways the crime problem of Nigeria could be solved as mentioned by the interviewees are: Providing job opportunities for the youth through industrialization, better remuneration for the police and other law enforcement agents to enable them combat crime effectively and funding and giving incentives to vigilante groups to enable them perform their functions effectively in terms of crime prevention. These findings are in agreement with what the vigilante group members suggested in respect of solving the crime problem in Ekiti Local Government Area.

**6.0 CONCLUSION**

The main objective of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness and enhance the effectiveness of vigilante groups on crime control in Ekiti L.G.A of Kwara State. Data collected indicated that vigilante groups existed to save the lives and properties of people in Ekiti L.G.A. It also

showed that the rate of crime was high before the formation of vigilante groups in its current form. However crime rate was low after the formation of vigilante groups. It was also discovered that high rate of crime and police ineffectiveness led to the formation of the vigilante groups in its current form. More so, vigilante groups were perceived to be effective in crime control. So, community members believed that vigilante groups should be given the responsibility to control crime and so on. It is worthy of note to say that the role of traditional vigilante groups is indispensable in not only Ekiti local government areas communities but in the entire nation because of the complexities of various social problems that go beyond the scope of the various security. Outfits of the government. Therefore, as a matter of fact, all stake holders in the Nigeria project should have all hands-on deck to enable them to perform optimally in combating crimes in the society. It is therefore expedient for the LGA, the state government and the federal government to give all it takes to establish community police and fund them adequately to in order to mitigate crime perpetration in not only in Ekiti Local Government, kwara state but in Nigeria at large.

### 6.1 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Vigilante activities should be carried out by well-trained, able-bodied persons recruited from the communities and by the government
2. State government should encourage vigilante activities. Incentives, provision of funds and adequate logistics should be made available to vigilante groups. This is to ensure effectiveness in their operations.
3. Members of the community should be properly educated on their needs to cooperate with the vigilante groups, by assisting them with timely information.
4. To enhance the relationship between the police and vigilante groups, there should be adequate legislative frame work for the operation of vigilante groups.
5. Vigilante group members should be properly trained in aspects of crime detection and knowledge of the law. This is to enable them to operate within the provision of the law.
6. Security committees should be set up at the Local Government level and should also be headed by the Divisional Police Officer (D.P.O.). The committees should organize periodic meetings to discuss security issues.
7. Finally, the researcher recommends that further research be carried out on vigilantism joint Police/Army Patrol and Law Enforcement in Nigeria.

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