# Role of Vigilante Groups in Crime Prevention and Control in Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria

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### Abstract

This study provided information on the role of community vigilante organisations in crime prevention and control in Ile–Ife. This was with a view to documenting and appraising various measures adopted in reducing criminal activities. The study identified the factors leading to the formation of community vigilante groups as recognised units of crime prevention in Ile-Ife and investigated measures deployed by community vigilante groups to fight and control criminal activities, as well as assessed the effectiveness of community vigilante groups in crime prevention and control. Qualitative method, demonstrated by the use of in-depth interviews guides, was employed to collect data from 58 key informants. The data were collected from residents of Ile Ife, and selected through stratified and purposive techniques. The study concluded that vigilante groups played an important role in crime prevention and control at the community level. Their role was/is complementary to the statutory function of the Nigeria Police Force.

*Keywords*: Community vigilante groups, crime prevention and control, local government area, Nigeria Police Force, and traditional rulers.

### Introduction

Crime prevention is an action or actions taken to stop criminal activities from happening or occurring in a society, on the hand. Crime control refers to methods taken by the government to reduce crime in a society. For instance, a theory of criminal justice places emphasis on reducing the crime in society through increased efforts of the Police prosecutorial, on the other hand. In other words, both crime prevention and control entail plethora of efforts made by governments or non-government actors to reduce crime, by using strategies and available resources at their disposal.

Historically, provision of security or prevention of crime was chiefly a concern of each family and community among the Yoruba people. The term "olode" or hunter was used more loosely to refer to any group involved in the defence of the community at night apart from the Police. But the term vigilante now seems to be used broadly to refer to groups involved in community self-policing, irrespective of their origin and mode of operation.

With modern governance, constituted authorities took over the function of security provision. Personal or family efforts could only be seen in the areas of surveillance, erection of fences, burglary- proof doors, and iron bars, among others. The increase in crime rates in the contemporary times has led to the emergence of community vigilante groups, especially when the

Nigeria Police Force has been alleged of inefficiency in crime control, largely as a result of inadequate personnel.

Nwanguma (2000) described the Nigerian Police as a corrupt, ineffective and weak organisation. This is borne out of the fact that over the years, the Nigeria Police Force has failed to perform its constitutional and legitimate duties of protecting the lives and properties of citizens as well as prosecuting offenders. The outcome of ineffectiveness spelt out in Nwanguma (2000) led to the citizenry to adopt self- help measures or take law into their own hands. Some of the measures introduced to boost safety are high-walled fences, gated streets, proliferation of private security outfits and community vigilante groups across the country (Chukwuma, 2002). By description, a community vigilante group is seen as that part of the citizens' security initiative, influenced by incessant criminal activities which undermine the safety of lives and properties in the community. It is organised along the traditional and cultural age group system which is strongly reinforced by the authority of the traditional ruler and elders of the community.

There seems to be a nexus between war and crime. This is because there were reports that the wave of crime in Nigeria increased shortly after the civil war of 1967 – 1970. Studies also confirmed this assertion that the immediate period after the civil war was characterised by various crimes such as rising number of armed robbery and burglary cases; and these were little known before the war (Fabiyi, 2004; Jemibewon, 2001; Perouse de Montclos, 1997; Akparanta, 1994; Inyang, 1989 and Tamuno, 1989). In a similar view, a study conducted at Ile - Ife township showed that the wave of crime began to increase after the Ife-Modakeke crisis in 2000. The crisis contributed significantly to the breakdown of law and order, disintegration of family values, increased unemployment among youths, poverty among citizens and the proliferation of small arms (Akinlabi, 2004). Thus, criminal activities seem to be more rampant in Ile -Ife due to the existence of adjacent rural areas and many roads leading to the town. These make it easier for hoodlums to invade the town

from the neighborhoods, and escape through the routes or ways from the metropolitan.

Presently, the Police seem to be incapable of controlling and curtailing the criminal activities in the town. It should be noted that the form and nature of crimes require scientific investigations, especially in the areas of prevention and control which is the focus of this study. In Nigeria, crime prevention and control has been the responsibility of the law enforcement agencies, but communities and diverse ethnic groups have lost confidence in the crime prevention and control ability of these agencies. Despite the efforts of law enforcement agencies in tackling crime, the rate of armed robbery, political assassinations, ethno- religious killings, kidnapping and other violent crimes remained extremely high. The response of government at the Federal and State levels to the rise in criminality and civil disorder has remained ad hoc, and comes in the form of increasing policing capacity, militarization of law enforcement, and enactment of anti-crime enabling laws. The public dissatisfaction with the response of government agencies in dealing with the increasing wave of crime and disorder has induced many communities to deeply rely on self – help measures or supporting strategies for the protection of life and security of properties within respective neighbourhoods. This has led to establishment of bodies that break the monopoly of prevention and control of crime by the State. Succinctly put, the problem relates to the failure of the law enforcement agencies to respond to the needs of crime victims (Smith, 2007; Sekhonyane, 2002; Shaw, 2000; & Scharf, 2000).

In recent years, there has been heavy reliance on community vigilante groups for security of lives and property at community levels. In some quarters, community vigilante groups have been appraised to be recording success in crime control and prevention. It is becoming a common knowledge that some communities are now engaging vigilante groups for security purposes and as an important outfit to complement the State law enforcement agencies. This strategy necessitated the formation of vigilante groups at neighbourhood and community levels. Notwithstanding the importance, roles and

contributions of vigilante groups in crime control and prevention have not been well documented, hence this study.

**Review of Related Literature**
This section focuses on the review of related literature on vigilante groups, otherwise referred to as an informal form of policing.

*Types of Informal Policing Structures*
Most of the studies on informal policing or vigilante groups' focus essentially on the structure and activities of vigilante groups, which is a typology of informal policing structures. However, a closer examination of the modes of operation and structure of some of the groups that are referred to as vigilantes show that none of them fits the classical understanding of the phenomenon of vigilantism as a bunch of death squads that mete out jungle justice on their victims. This is because many of the groups are rooted in their communities and often work in close collaboration with the formal Police (Chukwuma, 2002). Some of these groups are labelled as neighbourhood watches, vigilante groups, communal guards, age grades, masquerade cults or hunters' guilds.

In Africa, four typologies of vigilantism have been identified. These are: (i) religious vigilantism; (ii) ethnic vigilantism; (iii) state-sponsored vigilantism, and (iv) neighbourhood or community vigilantism. This classification is by no means rigid or exclusive, since one type of the groups could combine the features of two or more (Chukwuma, 2002). But this study will focus on community vigilante groups' activities. By definition, neighbourhood or community vigilantes are the groups of people that are organised by street associations in cities or villages in the rural areas, for the purpose of manning street entrances or village gates as the case may be, at night. They also carry out foot patrols at night to reassure members of the community that some people are watching over their communities. They are not armed, but often carry whistles with them, which they use in alerting the neighbourhoods if there are unwanted "guests" (Chukwuma, 2002).

*Community Vigilante Groups in Nigeria*

In the history of crime prevention and control in Nigeria, during colonial era the 'hunter guard' or 'night guard' system (sodesode) was used in Western Nigeria, while community guard was used among Igbo community (ndi-nche-obodo) as complementary efforts to Police force in crime control and prevention at community level. In the mid-1980, community vigilante groups emerged in various cities to replace the sodesode system (hunter guard) to complement efforts of the Police in crime control and prevention at local level.

The traditional concept of vigilante groups in Nigeria, exclusively referred to un-armed voluntary citizen groups, created in local communities to help the security forces confront common crimes and social violence, by arresting suspected criminals and handing them over to the Police. The Nigerian law recognises the lawfulness of vigilante groups arresting suspected criminals provided they are unarmed and that the suspect is immediately handed over to the Police (Amnesty International, 2008). This type of informal policing has been in existence since 1922 as neighbourhood guard in the USA. It came into existence in Nigeria in 1983 as a vigilante group during the Buhari regime, as part of the efforts to prevent and control crime. As a follow up in 1984, the then Inspector General of Police, Etim Inyang, inaugurated the Police Community Relation Committee (PCRC) in all the States of the Federations and directed Commissioners of Police to urgently revitalize vigilante groups to enable the Police and public to interact regularly in the fight against crime.

From a policy standpoint, it becomes important to register all the vigilante groups in each State to harmonize operations under the supervision of the Police (Roberts 2004; Inyang 1989). As a result of this effort, vigilante groups came to be popularized by some Military Governors, particularly in Nigeria. Since the return to democracy in 1999, however, Nigeria has witnessed proliferation of vigilantism. Vigilantes have been organised at a variety of levels from lineage to ethnic groups, in a variety of locations from village ward to city streets, to ensure

security of life and property within their domain (Prattern, 2008). These groups are called different names and are differentially related to the traditional practices and authorities of the community. Such groups are called by various names such as: Mbayer Ikyaior or Denon Toffi (Rapid Response Group) in Gboko East LGA, "Olodes" (hunters) in Oye LGA of Ekiti State, Egbe (age grade) in Ilejemeje, "Yan farauta" (local hunters) or "Yan gadin dare" (night watchmen) in Hadejia LGA of Jigawa State, "Kato da gora" (big man with a big stick) in Kenya LGA of Jigawa State, or "Yan banga" (vigilante) in Babura LGA of Jigawa State, Ndi-nche (community guard or guards) in Enugu State and Landlords Associations Ushongo LGA (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2003).

*Different Perceptions of Crime Control*
The concept of crime control in the society seemed to have been a great concern to sociologists, especially criminologists and anthropologists. Since the emergence of Sociology and Criminology even (Anthropology) in the 18th century as a discipline, much has been said and written by various scholars on the measures and control mechanisms used to check criminal activities in the society. Intent and opportunity are two major factors that led to the occurrence of a crime. An individual cannot commit a crime unless he or she gets an opportunity even if he or she has an intention to commit one. So, the real strategy for crime control is to provide no opportunity for a criminal to commit a crime either through tradition or community policing.

Traditional approach to crime control is through deterrence, with an emphasis on detection, punishment and efforts to reform convicted criminals. There is now a widespread recognition that crime prevention and improvement of public safety require a broader approach. The key is in developing public, private and community partnerships at local level in order to devise and implement strategies that 'reduce crime opportunities and social conditions, which motivate criminal deviance in the neighbourhoods (Crime Prevention Division cited in Pramatta City Council, USA, 2005).

Effective outcomes in crime prevention are achieved when programmes target the opportunities for crime and criminal behaviour, using a two-pronged approach: crime prevention through social development and environmental design. Other notable scholars have suggested various ways of controlling crime in our societies. Rotimi (1982) suggests the establishment of programmes such as stemming rural-urban migration, continued decentralisation of industries, discouragement of conspicuous consumption, revision of penal code and the stoppage of the practice of detention as solution to crime control. Other suggestions include the raising of the standard of living of urban residents, social harmonization and social restructuring (Abodunrin, 1981; Aguda, 1994; Obateru, 1994).

Furnsteberg (1971) made attempts to conceptualise citizen's prevention responses to crime by separating the activities of community vigilante groups into surveillance and mobilisation techniques. He described them as strategic weapons which societies use to protect individuals and properties. Tannenbaum (1980) sees the community vigilante as a healthy mechanism for crime control. He expresses that unless communities make their reactions to crime more certain and more appropriate, they cannot expect any respite from the violence of crime now engulfing the universe.

Similarly, Miller (1980) observed that community responses to crime control are mechanisms by which the society exercises its authority over its members and enforces conformity to its norms. It also serves as an institution which functions to ensure that individual behaviour is in conformity with the community's demands. Cohen (1966) asserted that the informal control method in the community is even more effective in preventing crime than the formal method. He argues that, in a closely knit community, there is surveillance of public and private places. Such surveillance is effective if its activities are geared toward stopping crimes. Garland (1996) contended that the local residents, being close to the scene of crime and with their own personal knowledge in the area, have the best understanding of what

their needs are and how those needs might be met. These types of narrow-minded activities are generally surveillance and control oriented, essentially offering police an extra set of eyes and ears in the community (Sampson & Morenoff, cited in Pattavina et al, 2006). These views were supported by Shaw and McKay (1942), who argued that people who live together in the same community possess a synergistic capacity to regulate the behaviour that occurs in that community. This premise is a fundamental component to the concept of informal social control.

Nichoclas (2006) suggests that only social and educational programmes help in preventing crime. By and large, people who are well educated, in good health, comfortably housed, in employment or otherwise usefully occupied and in stable and positive personal relationships do not commit crime (unless they become excessively greedy, over-sexed or unusually intoxicated).

## Historical Perspective of Crime Control in Nigeria

In Nigeria during the pre-colonial era, there were no legislations in the collectivities of chiefdom, emirates, villages and cities. Rules and regulation evolved through African religious beliefs and philosophies and were handed down from generation to generation through immemorial customs and traditions. There were social orders without criminal law. Justice at the time was a family affair. The authority of the father was not questionable by anybody in his family, as patriarchy and patrilineal formed the order of authority and inheritance throughout Nigeria. Pre-colonial period in Nigeria witnessed the absence of a formalised Police system. Heads of households and entire villages had their ways of keeping out habitual offenders.

During the pre-colonial period, the community or village council was the highest court of justice. Also, the Emirs and Obas constituted the highest courts in their kingdoms. Each village constructed various barriers such as physical barriers, use of

rotational community watchmen against outside invasion or invasion by burglars from neighbouring villages. The efforts to prevent victimisation in Nigeria appealed to transcendental reality. In this vein, some properties were kept in the shrine grove. They believed that if anyone steals something from a shrine grove that person will die of mysterious sickness. Their cash crops, fruit trees and movable possessions outside the home were secured from vandalism and criminal intervention by using the leaves of sacred trees such as youngest leaves of palm frond, ash and others.

Criminal law emerged in Nigeria with the advent of Europeans into the chiefdoms, kingdoms, emirates, clans and villages of the Nigeria regions in the 18th and 19th centuries (Onyezili, 2005), as part of measures for crime prevention and control. In the process of colonization, each colonial power introduced its laws, political organisation and system of justice (Elias, 1954; Nwabueze, 1963; Ebbi, 1985, 1996). The annexation of Lagos in 1861 by the British government marked the beginning of a formal system of policing. The Lagos Constabulary was established to control and prevent crime at the colonial trading posts, residences and at the colonially controlled urban centres. All colonial crime prevention strategies concentrated on the security of life and property of the colonial masters. The rural areas were ignored. Thus, the traditional system of crime prevention and control (policing) predominated in the rural areas.

## Contemporary crime prevention and control in Nigeria

The Nigerian Police concentrates on sporadic patrol of the high-way and mounting of roadblocks to check for stolen vehicles and automobile and driver's licences and traffic violation. The frequent patrols of the neighbourhood to establish Police presence in the cities and to apprehend criminal offenders in the act, common in Western urban centres is not

characteristic of Nigeria Police law enforcement strategies. Instead, Nigeria's police force often deployed static law enforcement agents that would not patrol the neighbourhood or lookout for criminals, perhaps the law offenders, but they would rather choose to wait for victims or concerned citizens to report crime (Ebbi, 1996). In 1996, the Federal Government established a new crime prevention unit called 'Operation Sweep' (Para-Military-Police Force) which was created out of the Nigeria Police Force and charged with the responsibility of patrolling all the major highways, busy seaports, and large city neighbourhood, notorious for harbouring dangerous criminals.

At the local level (community), Police mount roadblocks along major roads and many armed robbers from different Local Government Areas have been apprehended through this method. Local Government Councils encourage towns and villages under their jurisdiction to continue to use the informal or traditional methods of crime prevention to help the Police. At the village or town level, the traditional methods of crime control and prevention are still in vogue. Towns or villages still maintain vigilante groups to prevent crimes and apprehend offenders; they take the offenders apprehended to the Police at the Local Government headquarters.

*Community vigilante groups, local government areas, and traditional rulers in Nigeria*
A sound academic discourse on crime prevention and control in Ile-Ife would be rendered incomplete and irrelevant without paying particular attention to pertinent concepts earlier identified in the body of this work. Thus, this section deals with the elucidation of concepts as the foundation of its analysis (Akindele et al, 2012:175). Such orientation is informed and compelled by the fact that existential complexities of crime, either economically-induced or politically-motivated; cannot be isolated from the various communities, local government areas and traditional rulers; particularly when thinking and appraising the role played by community vigilante groups in Ile-Ife, and by extension, in Osun State at large. More than that, the nation's security architecture has failed to provide effective safety and security services for her citizens.

Community vigilante groups are considered as the first concept, referring to different groups of people who take up arms to protect themselves, families and their communities when they feel the absence of the security presence of the government. It is a term used to describe an unofficial security outfit of a community that provides security and safety to its members. The earlier views are corroborated by this assertion, "they are groups of people who carry armaments to protect themselves and their community when they feel that the government has failed to do so" (Oyagi, 2016). Newby (2012) opined that vigilante are followers of volunteer groups structured to conquer and penalise criminality instantly, once the procedures of the law are realised to be insufficient. For the purpose of this article, community vigilante groups are therefore conceptualised loosely, in line with Alemka and Chukwuma (2004: 14) as a generic term in describing the different types of sub-state policing system of a country. Four types of community vigilante groups identified are religious, ethnic, state-sponsored, and neighbourhood/community (Chukwuma, 2002:11-12). In Nigeria, two major community vigilante groups that had attracted international attention were the Bakaasi Boys domiciled in the South-eastern part, as well as the Oodua People's Congress (OPC) of South-western geopolitical zone (Felbab-Brown, 2021). Ikelegbe (2005:496) reported that the establishment of Arewa People Congress was informed by reaction to the attacks of OPC on the Hausas in the southwest. Extreme anger, poor management, insufficient funding, jungle justice, instrument of political violence and election rigging are some of the challenges

confronted by community vigilante groups in Nigeria.

Local government areas, being the second concept, which describe the levels of government at lower ebb and closest to the people in terms of decision making, decentralization of powers and functions, channel of communication, and allocation of the nation's resources. Local government therefore becomes a substructure upon which the superstructures of the federal and state governments are anchored, that is to say, local government provides immense support for both the federal and state governments to continue to exist and function. Corroboratively, local government is defined as "that unit of administration with defined territory and powers as well as administrative authority with relative authority" (Akhape, 2011). Akindele (2004) noted that "local government institution is a mechanism for mobilizing and integrating the grassroots for management and governance of local affairs, satisfaction of the needs of local people through effective service delivery, efficient and effective mobilization human and material resources for effective and efficient service delivery." In Nigeria, there are 774 local government areas, while Osun State has 30 local government areas; and Ile-Ife city is located in Ife central local government area. Observably, contrary to the expectation of duties of a local government in Nigeria, it seemed that the local government areas were marginalised, as such, did not enjoy required support to fight crime like the state and federal governments.

Traditional rulers as the third concept could be seen to belong to a primordial and sacrosant institution existing before the advent of colonialism in Africa. Their indigenous structure appears in different forms as well as in their changing roles from pre-colonization to the present date in Africa (Ihemeje, 2014; Tonwe & Osemwota, 2013). For instance, before the arrival of British colonial administration in

Nigeria, traditional rulers are glimpsed as the epitomes and emblems of cultural, social, economic, religious and political heritage, performing the role of government within their various locales. Institutionally speaking, it possesses legislative, executive and judicial powers which mirrored government formation to preside over the people within its own swing whose roles premised on collection of royalties, adjudication and settlement of disputes as well as transferring culture and traditions from one generation to another within their various geographical limits.

## Methods

The study is a descriptive survey design in nature, involving collection of cross-sectional data. In-depth interview guide was used to secure relatively dependable information. The study was conducted in Ile-Ife, Osun State, among traditional rulers and community leaders because they were chief security officials and spiritual leaders in their domain which mobilised resources and represented their domain in security affairs with public functionaries (Police and Civil society).

The study population consisted of all community opinion leaders in six quarters made of Ile Ife. Multi-stage sampling technique was adopted; the first stage involved purposeful selection of three quarters out of the six existing quarters. The second stage involved purposive selection of three communities from each of the three selected quarters. These are: Arubiidi, Iyekere and Ehindi (Okerewe quarters), Eleyele, Parakin and Oluwalose (Ilare quarters) and Oke Otubu, Itamerin and Akarabata (Modakeke quarters). The criterion for the selection of the nine communities is based on information or tips received from key informants (vigilante leaders and Police reports). The third stages involved simple random selection of five streets from each of the nine communities.

The sample size for this study was then 58 key informants, opinion leaders who were purposively selected for in-depth interviews comprising the following: (i) Three (3) traditional rulers from each of the selected quarters, (ii)

Divisional Crime Officer (DCO) of each of the three stations, (iii) The three (3) leaders of vigilante groups, (iv) The Chairmen of Police Committee Relation Committee (PCRC) in Ife Central and Ife East Local Government Areas, (v) Chairmen of the two Local Government Areas (vi) Nine (9) Chairmen of Landlord Associations, (vii) Nine (9) Secretaries of Landlord Associations, (viii) Nine (9) Leaders of neighbourhood vigilante group, (ix) Nine (9) neighbourhood or community leaders and (x) Nine (9) members of vigilante groups.

The justifications for the selections were informed by status and the preliminary investigations in the study area which showed the following: (a) some were chief security officials and spiritual leaders in their domain, (b) they mobilised resources (men and materials) for the protection of life and property in their domain, and (c) they represented their domain in security affairs with public functionaries (Police and Civil society).

In-depth interview guide was adopted to collect qualitative data from respondents. Content analysis method was used while interesting quotations were reported verbatim where necessary.

**Figure 1: Four Quarters in Ile-Ife Township**
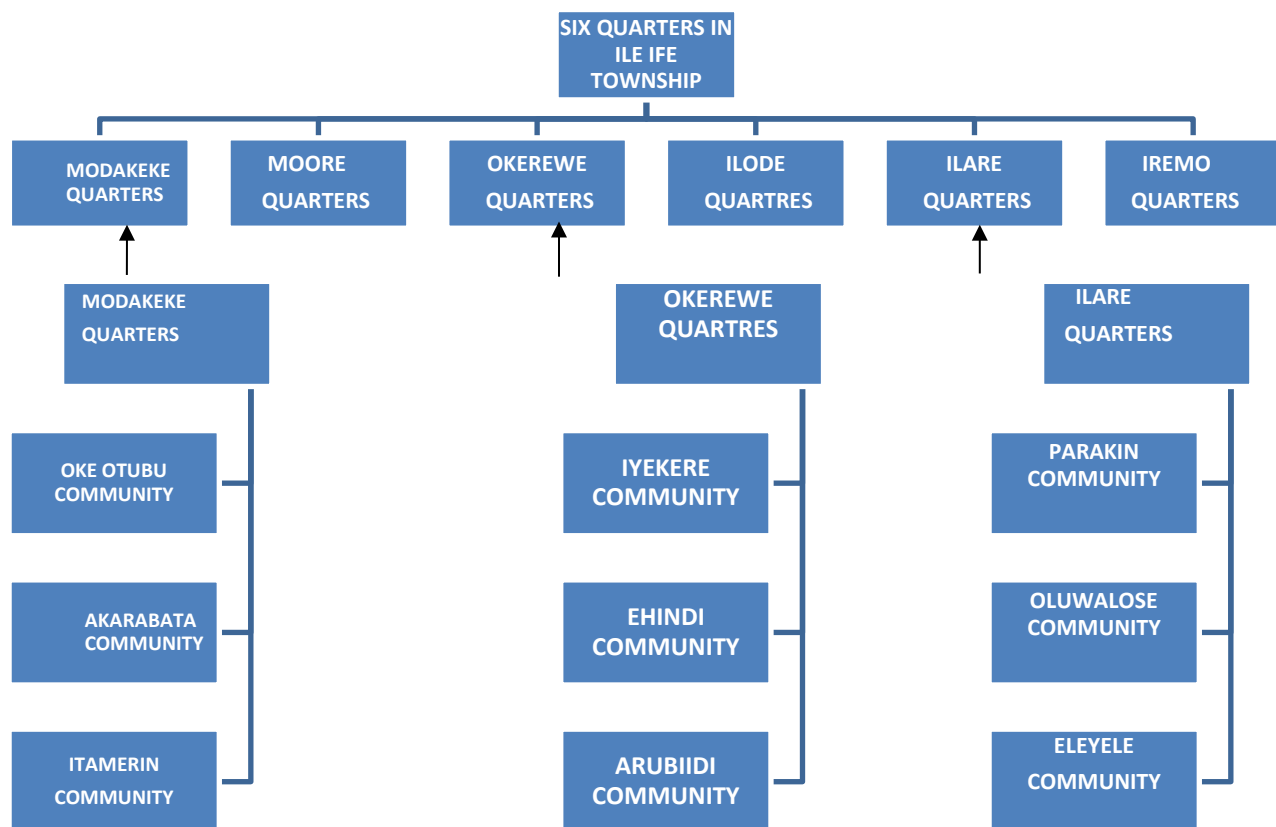


**Source: Authors' Schema, 2017.**

**Results**

This section is for the presentation of data, analysis of results and findings.

**Table 1**
**Socio – demographic Characteristics of Interviewees**

| Variable | Frequency Distribution | Percentages |
|---|---|---|
| **Sex** | N =58 | % |
| Males | 55 | 94.8 |
| Female | 3 | 5.2 |
| Total | 58 | 100.0 |
| **Age Groups** | | |
| 31 - 40years | 12 | 20.7 |
| 41 – 50years | 31 | 53.5 |
| 51 – 60years | 05 | 8.6 |
| 61 and above | 10 | 17.2 |
| Total | 58 | 100.0 |
| **Level of Education** | | |
| No formal education | 4 | 6.9 |
| Primary school | 15 | 25.9 |
| Secondary school | 27 | 46.5 |
| Post-secondary school | 12 | 20.7 |
| Total | 58 | 100.0 |
| **Marital Status** | | |
| Married | 50 | 86.2 |
| Widowed | 8 | 13.8 |
| Total | 58 | 100.0 |
| **Occupation** | | |
| Farming | 18 | 31.0 |
| Private business | 10 | 17.2 |
| Artisan | 13 | 22.4 |
| Retired | 5 | 8.6 |
| Civil service | 12 | 20.7 |
| Total | 58 | 99.9 |
| **Religion** | | |
| Christianity | 27 | 46.6 |
| Islam | 21 | 36.2 |
| Traditional | 10 | 17.2 |
| Total | 58 | 100.0 |
| **Ethnic Groups** | | |
| Yoruba | 52 | 89.7 |
| Ibo | 5 | 8.6 |
| Hausa | 1 | 1.7 |
| **Total** | **58** | **100.0** |

**Source: Field Work, 2017**

*Sample Characteristics*

Socio demographic characteristics of the respondents are presented in table 1 that showed the predominance of male over female. Male vigilante members constituted a little above 95 percent while the female counterparts accounted for only about 5 percent of the total population. This implies that sex is an important variable of explaining security provision, which cultural expectation has placed the responsibility of security provision on men (elders and age grade) in the community.

Age groups showed that the ages of respondents' range between 31 and 78years, with mean age of 47.5. Age group 41 -50years was in the majority accounting for (53.5%) of the total respondents. This was followed by those between the ages of 31 and 40 years (20.7%). Interviewees who were older than 61years constituted about 17.2% of the total respondents. The significant finding from this data is that the selected groups for the study were mostly adults who were physically fit for security provision of the community.

On the level of education, findings revealed that 46.5% of the interviewees had basic education up to secondary school, followed by 25.9% who had primary education and 20.7% who had up to tertiary level, while 6.9% did not have any formal education or basic education. This finding implied that at least 9 out 10 of the interviewees had basic education and would be able to participate effectively in the study. Such a form of education would enable them to read, write and handle numeracy, and particularly respond appropriately to the interview questions.

Data on marital status of the respondents showed that the majority (87 %) of them were married, while 13% were widowed. The deduction here is that the majority of the interviewees were married. In relation to the occupational status of the interviewees, (31%) of the respondents were farmers, 22.4% were artisans, and 20.7% were civil servants. Traders and retirees constituted 17.2% and 8.6% respectively. This affirms that altogether most of the interviewees were self–employed and preoccupied with artisan and farming engagement. The informal economic sector is the largest sector of any community, with artisans and traders. The low level of business activities in the community may be connected with the series of past crises that have occurred in the locality.

Data on the ethnic origins of the interviewees showed that 89.7% were Yoruba; Ibo were 8.6%, while Hausa constituted 1.7%. This could be attributed to the fact that the survey was conducted in Yoruba- speaking areas. However, the presence of other ethnic groups was a strong indication of the cosmopolitan nature of the area.

The Christians in the study area were 46.6% while Moslems constituted 36.2% and 17.2% were traditional worshipers. This finding showed that Christianity (46.6%) was a predominant religion in study area, followed by Islam or Moslems (36.2%). Also, indigenous ways of worship have not been completely wiped out by modernity in Ile–Ife; and this is evident in 17.2% of the respondents who indicated they were into traditional religion. Information on the religious affiliations of the respondents was deemed important because its influence could affect the perception of the respondents.

Key Findings on socio-demographic characteristics of the interviewees reflected the following:

- Adults were the ones performing responsibility for the security affairs of the community. The interviewees had a mean age of 47.5years, showing that the respondents were adults controlling security affairs of the community.
- Most of the respondents had formal education.
- Majority of the respondents were Christians which indicated that the area was dominated by Christians.
- Farming was the most predominant occupation among the respondents.

Key Findings on socio-demographic characteristics of the interviewees reflected that adult were the ones performing responsibility of security affairs of the community. The interviewees had a mean age of 47.5years, showing that the respondents were adults controlling security affairs of the community. Most of the respondents had formal education while the majority of the respondents were Christians which indicated that the area was dominated by Christians and Farming was the most predominant occupation among the respondents.

**Table 2: Factors Leading to Formation of Vigilante Groups**

| INFORMANTS:   Chief Security Officers of the Community | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Factors Leading to Formation of Vigilante Groups.** | **Vigilante Chairmen** | **Police Officers** | **Traditional Rulers** | **Pcrc Chairmen** | **Local Government Chairmen** |
| | **VC** | **PO** | **TR** | **PC** | **LGC** |
| **Increase in crime rates.** | + + | + - - | + + + | + + | + + |
| **Inability of anti-crime patrol vehicles to reach some inner parts of the town at night to curb crime.** | + + | + + + | + + + | + + | + + |
| **Incapacity of Police personnel to have detailed insight of our local terrain.** | + + | + + - | + + + | + + | + + |
| **Police force's lack adequate personnel.** | + + | + + - | + + - | + - | + + |
| **Proximity of vigilante members to the scene of crime than Police.** | + + | + + + | + + + | + + | + + |

**Source: Authors' Field Survey, 2017**

**Key:**
+ + +    Where the opinions were expressed by three people.
+ +      Where the opinions were expressed by two people.
+        Where the opinions were given by one person
_        Where the opinions were not expressed

**Abbreviation:**
VC      Vigilante Chairmen
PO       Police Officers
TR       Traditional Rulers
PCRC    Police Community Relation Committee Chairmen
LGC     Local Government Chairmen

The results showed that virtually all the interviewees identified inability of anti-crime patrol vehicles to reach some inner parts of the town at night to curb crime, incapacity of Police personnel to have detailed insight or knowledge of the local terrain and proximity of vigilante members to scene of crime more than Police. Other factors given by interviewees most especially the traditional rulers were increase in crime rates. The Police force lacked adequate personnel and their incapacity to have adequate insight or knowledge of the local terrain led to the formation of community vigilante groups in Ile

Ife. Conversely, the Police officers interviewed expressed different opinions that did not support the idea that increase in crime rates led to the formation of vigilante groups in Ile Ife. The following extract sheds more illustration on the finding:

*Police could not be everywhere; the idea for individual assistance to secure the area where he lives came up. One thing is very clear. We don't have enough personnel that can take care of the population; therefore, we needed assistance from people to help the*

*police in patrolling the inner parts of the town where anti-crime patrol vehicles could not reach (Male Police Officer at "Moore" Station, Age 45 years).*

*Also, people of the community understand their terrain better than us (Police) and are closer to the criminals. These make them*

*better understand criminals' hide –outs within their community than police. Thus, in order to detect, combat and prevent crime effectively we needed and still need assistance from residents in various communities (Male Police Officer at "Oke Otubu" Station, Age 52 years).*

**Table 3: Factors Leading to Formation of Vigilante Groups**

| INFORMANTS: **Community Members [Residents]** | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Factors Leading to Formation of Vigilante Groups.** | **NEIGHBOURHOOD VIGILANTE LEADERS** | **LANDLORD ASSOCIATION EXECUTIVES** | | **COMMUNITY VIGILANTE** | **LEADERS MEMBERS** |
| | **NVL** | **CLA** | **SLA** | **CL** | **VM** |
| Increase in crime rates. | + + + | + + + | + + + | + + + | + + + |
| Issue of bureaucracy of Police response | + + - | + + + | + + + | + + + | + + - |
| Police force's lack adequate personnel. | + + + | + + - | + + - | + + - | + + + |
| Corruption among Police personnel. | + - - | + + - | + - - | + - - | + - - |

**Source: Authors' Field Survey, 2017**

**Key**

+ + +  Where the opinions were expressed by nine people.
+ +  Where the opinions were expressed by six people.
+  Where the opinions were expressed by three persons
_  Where the opinions were not expressed

**Abbreviation:**

NVL  Neigbourhood Vigilante Leaders
CLA  Chairmen of Landlord Associations
SLA  Secretaries of Landlord Associations
CL  Community Leaders
VM  Vigilante Members

The results showed that different factors led to formation of vigilante groups. Majority of interviewees identified increase in crime rates, issue of bureaucracy of the Police response and lack of adequate personnel as the main cause of vigilante groups. Another factor illustrated was corruption among Police personnel which was expressed by few of the interviewees as a factor

which led to the formation of vigilante groups. The following extract sheds more illustration on the finding:

*Vigilante groups were formed because of this issue of bureaucracy of the Police response. You know the Police is a government agency. When you invite the Police, they would tell you 'No personnel or no vehicle'. When they*

*come, it would be behind schedule and the criminals would be killed and destroyed. The Police would be asking 'where were the criminals? (Male Community Leaders in Akarabata, Age 75 years).*

Therefore, common factors which led to the formation of vigilante groups in Ile-Ife as expressed by interviewees are itemized as follows (see Tables 2 and 3).

- Increase in crime rate.
- Inability of anti-crime patrol vehicles to reach some inner parts of the town at night to curb crime.
- Police force's lack of adequate personnel.
- Incapacity of Police personnel to have detailed insight of the local terrain.
- Proximity of vigilante members to the scene of crime than Police.
- Corruption among Police personnel.
- Issue of bureaucracy of the Police response.

*Measures Employed to Prevent and Control Criminal Activities by Community Vigilante*

The high incidence of crime made community members to organise self-help measures (community vigilante groups) to compliment Police efforts to minimize incidence of crime even if it cannot be totally eliminated. Property offences such as burglary, theft and housebreaking were the commonest types of crime in the study area. Most of the crimes take place at night. This is as a result of the patrol of law enforcement agencies at various strategic places (major roads and highways) during the day.

The results showed that different strategies were adopted to fight criminal activities. Majority of the interviewees expressed the following; night patrols of residential areas and surveillance on uncompleted or dilapidated buildings in the area. Other strategy identified includes mounting roadblocks at strategic places at night.

Various strategies adopted to prevent crime activities were: night patrol of residential areas, clearing of bushy sites or land and reporting of suspicious movements of people with dubious

integrity to the Police. Other strategies included burning of tyres at strategic places, which was expressed by few interviewees. All these strategies were used to prevent criminal activities. The following extract elucidates this finding: A key informant expressed that:

*We report person(s) with suspicious movement during the day to the Police and keep eyes on sudden wealth or unscrupulous wealth of any member of the community and report such person to the Police. We also rise to the scene of crime when there is a distress call or alarm. In some cases when criminals are operating, we swiftly and secretly attack them, apprehend them and hand them over to the Police* (Male Leader of Ife Main Vigilante Groups in Iyekere, Age 73 years).

Summary of common strategies adopted to prevent crime activities in Ile Ife which are stated below by:

- Night patrol of residential areas.
- Reporting of suspicious movements of people with dubious character and doubtful integrity to the Police.
- Surveillance on uncompleted or dilapidated buildings in the area.
- Clearing of bushy sites or land.
- Burning of tyres at strategic places.

*Measures Employed to Control Crime by Community Vigilante Groups*

The different measures adopted to control criminal activities, as identified by majority of the interviewees were that people were educated to engrave their properties, such as computer, electronics, vehicles and instruct hoteliers to screen all their guests, monitor them and report any suspicious movement to either the police or the vigilante groups as a part of strategies to control criminal activities in Ile Ife, they also engaged proper screening of tenants by landlords before room letting and monitor their movement as well as banned the use of commercial motor cycle at night from 10.pm.

Other measures were: using young children as spies indicating criminal hideouts and reporting

such places to the Law Enforcement Agents. Community also, canvassing for the closure of beer parlours and all restaurants by 10:00pm. This was expressed by some of the interviewees as part of the preventive measures used to control criminal activities. The following extract relates to the findings:

We instruct hotel operators to screen all their guests or lodgers before checking them into the room, monitor them and report suspicious movement of any guest to either the Police or the vigilante groups after which the vigilante or the Police would be alerted in order to put surveillance on the hotel premises (Male Community Leader in Ilare, Age 60 years).

Therefore, summary of common measures adopted to prevent criminal activities were listed below:

- Proper screening of tenants by landlords before room letting and monitor their movement
- Using young children as spies on criminals hide out and reporting such places to the law enforcement;
- Educating people to engrave their names on their properties like computer, electronics and vehicles;
- Canvassing for closure of beer parlour outlets and all restaurants by 10:00pm;
- Ban on the use of commercial motor cycle at night from 10.00pm; and
- Instruction that hoteliers should screen all their guests, monitor them and report any suspicious movement to either the police or the vigilante group.

Measures adopted to prevent and control criminal activities in Ile Ife explained by interviewees are summarised in the table below:

| Preventive Measures | Control Measures |
|---|---|
| Night patrol of residential areas.<br>Report people with suspicious movement and people with unscrupulous wealth to the Police.<br>Surveillance on uncompleted or dilapidated buildings in any area.<br>Clearing of bushy sites or land.<br>Mounting of road blocks at strategic places at night.<br>Burning of tyres at strategic places. | Proper screening of tenants by landlords before giving them room let and monitor their movement<br>Use young children as spies on criminals to hide out and report such places to the law enforcement agents.<br>Educate people to engrave their properties like computers, electronics and vehicles.<br>Canvases for closing of beer parlour outlets and all restaurants by 10:00pm.<br>Ban the use of commercial motorcycles at night from 10.00pm.<br>Instructing hoteliers to screen all their guests monitor them and report any suspicious movement to either the police or the vigilante group. |

## Discussion

Findings established that elders in the community control activities of vigilante groups in conjunction with age-grade which played an active role to ensure security of lives and safety of property. The stakeholders also noted that the vigilantes' stakeholders had investment in the area of their operation and therefore played an important role in the maintenance of law and order. This is in line with social bond theory Hirsch's (1969) which argued that people who build an investment in life, property and reputation are not likely to engage in criminal acts, but rather will be involved in acts that will protect their investment and social position.

During the in-depth interviews conducted in Ile Ife township. The study showed that the main rationale for the formation of vigilante groups was the failure of the police to effectively protect the communities against crime. Thus, Nigeria Police ineffectiveness in carrying out their professional responsibilities in the face of increasing crime rate generally was largely described as a factor in the resurgence of vigilante groups. Another factor identified was the lack of personnel of Nigeria Police to ensure security in some communities. In fact, crime statistics can be used to buttress this point to the fact that the ratio of Police vs. population shows 633:1. This figure also indicates the ineffectiveness of the Nigeria Police Force to perform their constitutional roles effectively. This agrees with the findings of Sekonyane (2002), and Francis (2006) who stressed that insufficient man-power has affected the Nigeria security agencies in effectively tackling the issue of crime in the country. The lack of knowledge of the local terrain that is also necessary for effective crime detection, as well as proximity of the vigilante group to the scene of crime led to the resurgence of the vigilante groups. These confirmed the observations made by Garland (1996), and Chuwkuma (2002), that the local residents being close to the scene of crime and with their own personal knowledge of the area, had the best understanding of what their needs were and how those needs could be met. This implied that the formation of the vigilante groups represented a self-help measure or self-defence mechanism which communities could embark upon in order to fill -in the gaps left by the Nigeria Police.

*Conclusion*
Conclusively**,** it was discovered that many factors led to the formation of community vigilante groups. The prevailing factor was inability of the Police patrol teams to reach some inner parts of the town. The other factors were: proximity of vigilante members to criminals and better understanding by the vigilante groups of their terrain than the police.

Community vigilante groups emerged in Ile Ife to augment Police efforts in combating and preventing crime more effectively in the face of noticeable shortfall in manpower needs and logistics support for the Police. Besides, the measures adopted to fight and control criminal activities, showed that every community member was implored to keep watch on uncompleted buildings in their areas. The other measures were reporting of person(s) with doubtful integrity and nefarious character in the community to the Police, using young children as spies on criminals' hide- outs and reporting such hiding places to law enforcement agencies. Not only that, people also embarked on engraving their valuable properties like vehicles, computer devices, and electronics, while proper screening of tenants by landlords before room letting was an effective strategy employed in preventing crime.

Furthermore, findings on the usefulness of study observed that community vigilante groups prevented and controlled crime through useful information passed to the Police from time to time. Thus, many burglary cases, house breaking and thefts had been foiled through frequent patrols around residential areas during the day and night**.**

From this study, it is established that community vigilante groups in Ile- Ife were a self–help or supporting strategy of preventing and controlling crimes at community level. They were effectively coordinated through communal efforts to provide security and crime–control mechanisms against property crime and other hoodlums within their community. Thus, one could deduce that vigilante groups play an important role in crime prevention and control at the community level. The Nigeria Police Force also accepted the role of community vigilante groups as complementary to the statutory function of the police.

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