

Vigilantism and Crime Control in Bayelsa State

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Abstract

The rising inefficiency and ineffectiveness observed in the Nigerian Police Force's efforts to combat crime have led to the proliferation of informal security networks, commonly known as vigilante groups, in contemporary Nigeria. This research aims to investigate the intricate relationship between vigilantism and the management and control of crime in modern Nigeria, focusing specifically on Bayelsa State. To accomplish the study's objectives, a survey approach was employed, utilizing a questionnaire as the primary research tool. The research sample comprised 400 participants, and a research hypothesis was formulated and subsequently tested during the study. A multi-stage sampling technique was employed, involving cluster, snowballing, and convenience sampling methods. Of the 400 questionnaires distributed, 377 were successfully retrieved, collated, and analyzed. The research employed two main analytical techniques: descriptive statistics (utilizing simple percentages) to evaluate research objectives and the chi-square statistical method, facilitated by the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), to test the research hypothesis. The study's outcomes indicated that vigilantism has had a significantly positive impact on reducing crime rates in the research area. In light of these findings, it is recommended that vigilantism should be promoted and carried out by dedicated and well-trained individuals to complement the traditional police force's security responsibilities. Vigilante groups should receive adequate resources, funding, equipment, and the support of robust enabling legislation to ensure their independent and impartial execution of security duties. Members of these vigilante groups should adhere to established legal standards and refrain from arbitrary or capricious actions while dispensing justice. Finally, maintaining high levels of motivation among vigilante groups is crucial to enhance their determination to combat and minimize crime in Bayelsa State.

Background to the Study

Every society is confronted with a particular type of crime of varying severity. Crime has over time proven to be part and parcel of the social experience of every society. In modern times, the onus is on the government and the security forces to engineer a pitfall of criminalities in the society and country at large. Every country in the globe has a government structure in place that is responsible for governance, which includes but is not limited to maintaining law and order (Emmanuel, 2018; Iwarimie-Jaja & Raimi, 2019). It is the responsibility of the state's leaders to devise strategies to combat this heinous danger. Oba and Maduawuchi (2022), aptly captured this when they espoused that “one of the techniques the government employs in avoiding a descent to chaos and anomie is through the establishment of security forces who are charged with ensuring the safety of lives and properties of citizens.” People rely heavily on the state security mechanism in most cases to survive without jeopardizing their fundamental human rights. The state is primarily tasked with safeguarding the lives and properties of citizens in addition to pioneering the barrage against internal insurgencies and external aggressions. A sense of safety, security, and peace is essentially any meaningful development and progress that a community can manage to attain as they are required and fundamental criteria for every human society's development and accomplishment of a high standard of life. The security apparatus responsible for civilian duties (the security of the lives and properties of civilians) in the Nigerian state is the Nigerian Police Force.

The amalgamation of Northern and Southern Nigeria in 1914 was a precursor to the formation of the present Nigeria Police Force (NPF) on April 1, 1930 (Oba & Maduawuchi, 2022). In consonance with section 214 of the Nigerian Federal constitution 1999, the Nigerian Police Force is bestowed with the onus of securing the civilian populace, ensuring order and stability; law enforcement, crime detection, and mitigation; and probing into unconstitutional and unethical conducts within its geographical jurisdiction. The significance of the Police in the barrage against the rising spite in criminalities in society cannot be over-stressed as their policing duties are pivotal to any meaningful development that the society can attain. Corporate and social activities cannot be conducted openly without adequate protection. Peace, safety, and security are a necessity for development and any monumental accomplishments to be achieved and sustained and the onus is on the Police to engender it within its environs.

However, the ideals and goals of the Nigerian Police Force, have been in practice relatively underperforming when juxtaposed with the grave expectations of the public who are the recipients of their policing services. The Police has lost its place and face in the sight of many citizens due to a series of allegations of corruption, arbitrariness in the exercise of its powers of arrest and prosecution, subversion of justice, the administration and entronement of crude methods of inquiry, conspiracy with criminal and plethora of cases of accidental discharge of firearms, utterly brutal in its approach in addition to the violation of the fundamental human rights of the citizens (Oba & Maduawuchi, 2022). A significant amount of the general populace has over time come to perceive the Nigerian Police as not worthy of their trust, an anathema, and grossly incompetent regarding their

security functions in society. The police and community members, for example, have had a long-standing adversarial relationship. Sequel to this, the populace in an innovative attempt to surety the security of their lives and properties has resorted to complementing the conventional police by gathering local intelligence, apprehending criminals, and handing them over to the central police for law enforcement (vigilantism). This is also true in Bayelsa State where vigilantism is used to manage both social and criminal activity.

Many localities in Bayelsa State have experienced numerous sorts of crimes in recent years (Jibril & Musa, 2019). Armed robbery, burglary, kidnapping, rape, gang violence, and other crimes are among them. The existence of criminal vices is and has always been a persistent threat to any real growth within its surroundings, and in some situations, it swells up and infects the surrounding ecosystems. It is against this backdrop that the governments created and established the Nigeria Police Force within their respective regions to combat the wave of criminality pragmatically and tenaciously. Nonetheless, as admirable as the Nigeria Police's goals and responsibilities for ensuring the security of residents' lives and property are, they have been somewhat ineffectual and inefficient in delivering security services to the citizens who are the end-users of the services over time.

Insecurity and lawlessness have recently gripped Bayelsa state as burglary, armed robbery, and other violent crimes have reached unprecedented levels, particularly in the Ogbia local government area, where criminal occurrences are a serious problem that has severely hampered the state's development and achievements in recent years. Nearly every day, violent and property crimes are committed without being detected or prosecuted (Jibril & Musa, 2019). Armed criminals are robbing people of their valuable possessions and killing or maiming others for the rest of their lives. Residents in many communities and settlements in the state are robbed of their personal belongings daily at gunpoint. The rate of burglary theft has also climbed to an all-time high in Bayelsa state, causing rippling effects in business and other social activities. Community armored cables are routinely cut off at midnight from several electricity transformers by these criminals and sold cheaply on the black market, leaving the community to bear the brunt of replacing it (usually very expensive) or endure the ordeals of not having electric power over time. Farmers are routinely ripped off their harvest by criminal miscreants who waste no time harvesting farm products like fish from private and family fishponds, plantains, and other farm produce in hindsight in the rural areas. Bayelsa state has seen crime evolve to the level where criminals have a flagrant disregard for personalities and authorities as both people living in poverty and the wealthy are victimized. The media is littered with account criminalities within the Bayelsa environs. For instance, according to Sahara Reporters, unknown gunmen in April 2015 abducted Mr. Enaye Abah, the chairman of Ogbia LGA. Vanguard also reported on May 21, 2015, that gunmen abducted Patience Egbeni and Kate Eni in Akipelai, Ogbia LGA. Ritual killing has in recent times been added to the crime trends in the state. For instance, the Guardian newspaper reported on the 25th of May 2021 that, in Sagbama Town, Sagbama Local Government Area, a man killed his roommate and sold the vital organs of the deceased for rituals to a pastor in Port Harcourt. Still citing from the same source and environs, three teenagers (all

of 15 years) were arrested for hypnotizing one Endeley Comfort to follow them to an apartment where they cut off her finger and sprinkle the blood on a mirror for money ritual purposes on the 5th of January 2022. The fact that little children are not just the victims of these crimes, but perpetrators put society at great peril. Yenagoa, the state's capital is a den for all manner of criminalities ranging from cultism, armed robbery, kidnapping, burglary, and other violent crimes. Many people are frightened to sleep in their homes at nightfall for fear of being victimized. Those who spend the night in their homes do so at their peril. As a result, this state of insecurity and anomie began to affect more than just the inhabitants, as traders began to flee certain settlements in the state out of dread. As society becomes more dynamic and complicated, the police, who are the principal agency in the battle against crime, are rapidly losing their effectiveness in securing lives and property.

Police efficiency in the battle against crime may be limited due to understaffing, under-equipment, corruption, and a lack of public collaboration, among other factors. These have resulted in an under-policing problem across Nigeria, with Bayelsa State not being an exception. The Nigerian Police Force's increasing inability to deal with the crime wave has given rise to vigilante organizations in their current form. These vigilante groups are dedicated to protecting their own lives and properties and the lives and properties of their families and loved ones. Vigilantism is not new in Nigeria; it has long been practiced before the advent of modern-day conventional police forces. It was relegated to the background as a result of the establishment of formal policing systems. However, due to widespread public dubitation of the modern-day traditional police, vigilantism appears to be gaining traction once again as a crime-fighting tool in numerous settlements and communities in Bayelsa state, and Nigeria at large. Several vigilante organizations now operate in various towns within the eight local government's several settlements. Residents now regard vigilante organizations as a source of protection they can always count on. To put it another way, the public has doubts about the Nigeria Police's ability to deliver effective security services without public participation (Jibril & Musa, 2019).

Several research has been conducted on the link between the variables under investigation. For example, a paper titled "The Role of Vigilante Service Groups in Crime Control for Sustainable Development in Anambra State, South-East Nigeria," was conducted by Chikendu et al, (2016). According to the study, factors such as the rise in crime, the inability of the formal police to control and prevent crime, loss of trust in the police, and the inability of the formal police to protect lives and properties all contributed to the formation of vigilante service groups in Anambra State. In their study titled "Role of Vigilante Groups in Battle against Terrorism in North-Eastern Nigeria," Aina & Odiji (2019) discovered that the civilian JTF, as a vigilante group, has favorably contributed to the Federal Republic of Nigeria's continuing war against terrorism. They concluded that one cannot but congratulate them for their varied counter-insurgency measures, which are responsible for the earlier feats recorded by the Nigerian side. They were responsible for the identification, apprehension, and killings of the Boko Haram terrorists. However, despite the literature on the subject matter, none has particularly examined the Ogbia

experience in Bayelsa state. This leaves a gap in the literature. It is against this backdrop that this study aimed to examine the impact of Vigilantism and crime control in Bayelsa State. It became imperative at this point to ask certain fundamental questions that will guide this research. These are: what is the rate of crime in the state before the emergence of the present vigilante groups; the nature of the crime; the causes of crime; the extent vigilante groups have helped in controlling crime, and the general perception of vigilante groups in Bayelsa.

Study Objectives

The thrust of this research work is to examine the relationship between Vigilantism and crime control in Bayelsa state. Other specific objectives are:

1. To examine the rate of crime in Bayelsa state before the formation of the present vigilante groups.
2. To examine the rate of crime in Bayelsa state after the formation of the present vigilante groups.
3. To examine the nature of crime in Bayelsa state.
4. To ascertain the causes of crime in Bayelsa state.
5. To investigate the extent vigilante groups have helped in controlling crime in Bayelsa state.

Hypothesis

The more vigilante groups are motivated to work, the more crime will be reduced in Bayelsa state.

Vigilante and Crime Control

The presence of vigilantes and other private citizens in Nigerian law enforcement processes has elicited a variety of responses from researchers. The goal of vigilantism is to prevent and (or) regulate crime. They are a civilian information security organization united by the shared goal of combating crime in and around their community. The activities of Vigilante groups are not somewhat different from those of the Nigeria Police Force in general. Their activities are organized to assist the conventional and central Police forces in performing certain Policing functions to stem the rise and perpetuation of crime in society. The history of the Police is the history of the rule of engagement in a society, more particularly, the history of enforcement of those rules related to criminal behavior. According to Danbazau (2007), Policing is all about guaranteeing the security of individuals who live in a certain geographical area and share a shared interest in defending their lives and property, as well as recognizing that some activities are detrimental to community well-being. It equally connotes the act of guaranteeing the safety of persons who live in a certain location and shares the goal of shielding residents from harm. Every culture has laws and regulations that govern everyone's behavior. Violations of these rules result in societal censure or sanction.

It is worth mentioning that there were informal and traditional security structures hitherto that preceded what we now know as the Nigerian. Antecedently, private citizens

took on the onerous task of safeguarding the protection of their lives, properties, and loved ones in society. However, with the increasing complexity of society as engineered by technological advancements, these private security structures began to increasingly lose their relevance and effectiveness in society due to the transition from homogenous to heterogeneous population, division of labor, and specialization that weakened social solidarity and control. The unprecedented social transformation accompanying the advancement in technology led to the development and establishment of the watch system in Europe and America. It is against the ineptitude of the watch system in maintaining conformity and order in society, that the modern and contemporary Policing system was ushered into the global landscape in 1829.

In Nigeria, the formation and establishment of the police were concomitant to the British colonial administration. The Nigeria Police Force was established in 1930 with the primary objective of guaranteeing the British colonial economic and political interest in Nigeria. For the British colonialists to be able to subject the estimated 400 Nigerian nationalists to their domination: the British established police Forces and constabularies to protect their interests (Chukwuma cited in Dambazau (2007). The Police were brutal in dealing with and subjugating the different communities and enthrone brute force in submerging opposition and resistance to colonial rule and interests in Nigeria. Since the beginning of the colonial era, the use of brutality and repression has defined law enforcement methods in Nigeria (Innocent, 2000). The transition from military rule that lasted for thirty-three (33) years to a democratic system of government was a pragmatic attempt to submerge police brutality and the enthronement of illegitimate force in society. The brutal subjugation of citizens in the process of carrying out their constitutional duties was however not dusted off at the point of transition but was carried over to the democratic Nigerian state. The Nigeria police have for decades been alleged with criminal tendencies ranging from aiding and abating criminals and incessant cases of accidental discharge of lethal bullets, corruption and perversion of justice, use of crude techniques of investigation, arbitrariness in the exercise of its powers of arrest and prosecution extortion, extra-judicial killings with impunity (Olujinmi, 2005; Raimi & Balogun, 2022). A prominent incidence of police brutality was the extrajudicial murder of five young male traders and their female companion (Apo six) by cops on June 8, 2005, in Apo village, Abuja (Nigeria's Federal Capital Territory), the culprits of which have yet to be brought to justice.

Roadblocks and checking points that were ostensibly put in place to fight crime have become a lucrative business venture for police officers who use them to prey on citizens for pecuniary economic gains. This depicts that they have over time been running antithetical to the duties they swore to serve and the oath of office they took at the point of entry. It is ideal that the Police who are tasked constitutionally with heightening tranquillity and adherence to the rule of law, are expected to act ethically. These negative behaviors have contributed significantly to the spite and sustenance of crime in society. It has contributed to their inefficiency and ineffectiveness in orchestrating a pitfall in the rate of criminalities in society. This and many more have created a negative image of the Nigeria Police Force in the eyes of citizens for are the end-users of their security service.

A significant portion of citizens developed a morbid fear of the Police which they now see as a repressive instrument in the hands of elites in the society. Alemika & Chukwuma (2000) observe that major segments of the Nigerian population portray the police in negative terms. This viewpoint may look extreme, yet it is a glaring fact. The ordinary public believes that the rank and file of the police are corrupt and cannot be trusted. This has been further exacerbated by the media, which has hitherto exposed instances of police sub-culture of violence and unfairness. The dismal image of the Nigeria Police accounts for the noncooperation of the public who are often reluctant to volunteer useful information to the police. Faced with the bitter reality of the inability of the Police to contain the rising spate of insecurity of lives and properties, citizens opted to take their destiny into their own hands through vigilantism (an informal security organization and structure).

The resurgence of vigilantism in Nigeria has brought about significant improvement in the fight against crime in many Nigerian societies. Vigilante groups have over time proven to be trustworthy highly disciplined and committed to the rules of engagement and their goal. As a result, deviations from the standard are usually punished severely. The Bakassi Boys (vigilante gang) were formed, for instance, as an immediate and pragmatic response to recurrent violent robberies by the "Mafia" in major marketplaces in South-eastern Nigeria, precisely in Aba, Abia state. The Bakassi Boys were able to submerge the "Mafia" where the Police seem impotent in bringing criminals to book or even arresting the situation. To reduce the occurrence of crime at the time, the Bakassi Boys undertook an operation of capturing and executing suspected criminals, primarily armed robbers, until practically all suspected criminals were either slain or deserted the region for fear of being killed by the Bakassi Boys. The exploits of the Bakassi Boys in Abia convinced major stakeholders in the region and their nearby neighbors that their savior had arrived and was committed to guaranteeing the security of their lives and properties. Furthermore, major stakeholders and merchants began to seek after the services of the Bakassi Boys in the southeast. The original objective of the Bakassi Boys was defeated as they evolved into becoming a tool in the hands of the governors of the Southeastern states when their activities became hijacked by Political leaders and other powerful individuals in these regions.

The O'Odia People's Congress (OPC) is another example. On August 24, 1994, seven Yoruba people founded OPC in Mushin, Lagos. It was the dominant vigilante group in the Southwestern Nigeria region. It is worthy of note to emphasize that OPC did not start as a vigilante group. Originally, OPC was birthed out of the concern of the Yoruba people to the interest of the Yoruba Nation in the Nigerian project. OPC was birthed in a pragmatic attempt to militate the gross injustice measured to Chief Moshood Abiola (a prominent son of the Yoruba Kingdom) and by extension, the entire Yoruba race because of Gen. Ibrahim Babangida's annulment of the 1993 Presidential election Originally won by Abiola. It is also worthy of note that it was not formed to restore Abiola to the Presidency but to militate a recurrence of such a fate on any Yoruba citizen in the Nigerian Political Landscape.

As a vigilante group in the South-west, OPC officially became a vigilante group when it accommodated crime-fighting and the security of lives and properties to their objectives to submerge the unprecedented rise in criminalities in the region amidst the ineptitude of the Nigeria Police in addressing the situation effectively. Crime-fighting soon took over as the dominant objective of the OPC vigilante group. Through the employment of mystical methodologies (religious rituals and charms) that gave them the impetus to thread into the dens of criminals that the Police could not dare to encroach, OPC was able to engender a pitfall in the crime rate in the region, and as such gained prominence and the general recognition/ acceptance of the populace irrespective of the fact that their activities in some cases were a threat to public order.

More recently in River's state, the ONELGA Security Planning and Advisory Committee (OSPAC), a vigilante group also ensured the increasing rate of criminalities in the state, more especially the incessant kidnapping activities and armed robbery around the Emohua Local government area was arrested. Rivers state, particularly Emohua/ONELGA, has been seriously afflicted by gang violence from the region's multiple cult organizations. Abduction, and other associated crimes too numerous to name added to the till. The bulk of it was committed by young men with somewhat older guys as leaders (Mackintosh & Emmanuel, 2021). The electoral process at the time turned into a do-or-die affair, insurgency, and other criminal activities such as arson, armed robbery, burglary, cultism, etc. had concomitantly skyrocketed in the region. The problem of crude oil and its derivatives exacerbates the situation. As various cult groups led by Ejima Iwedibia, also known as Don Waney (Lord of the Manor who dared to walk where angels feared to tread), and his likes began to fight over crude oil compensations, the area became more insecure, resulting in more loss of lives and properties - people were killed, houses were burned down, and properties worth millions of naira were destroyed. The Port Harcourt - Rumuji - Elele - Warri Road was a flashpoint for highway robbery and Kidnapping. In the same vein, Elele - Egbeda - Omoku road was a den for kidnapers and their activities. Commuters were traveling in perpetual fear, especially when plying these roads and in most cases, resorted to taking a different turn to arrive at their destination in one fletch. The unprecedented level of gang violence and other criminal activities in ONELGA engineered a drastic and dramatic migration of residents out of their dwelling place from fear of victimization. For fear of the unknown, residents and community members began to desert the region and temporarily moved to other cities and towns for security reasons.

However, in 2017, the ONELGA Security Planning and Advisory Committee (OSPAC), a militia security agency, was inaugurated comprising people from the communities and prominent cult groups that make up ONELGA (Mackintosh & Emmanuel, 2021). OSPAC was legally empowered with arms for security action two years later to fight insurgency and general crime in the area. Like the OPC of the southwest, OSPAC also delved into religious mysteries like charms and juju for protection and to identify culprits with ease. They were also assisted with useful intelligence (Raimi & Ene, 2019) on the where about of miscreants and locations of illegal and criminal activities in the region. With these,

OSPAC was able to guarantee peace and security of lives and properties in the area and residents and citizens who fled the area began to return to their homes having heard about the impact of OSPAC in submerging the hitherto rising level of crime in the region.

Theoretical Framework

A theory is an all-encompassing, abstract analysis of a phenomenon. It is the systematic use of propositions, hypotheses, ideas, and concepts in elucidating events or a particular subject matter. Theories present a foundation for chronicling discrepant investigation results to each other and advancing clarifications (Akikibofori, 2014). To sociologically explore the nexus between vigilantism and crime control in Bayelsa State, the study used the Situational Crime Prevention (SCP) theory as its theoretical perspective.

Situational Crime Prevention (SCP) is a deterrence-based social science theoretical viewpoint that is predicated on the idea that crime results from an interaction between disposition and situation. To put it differently, criminals decide to commit crimes based on how they see the possibilities that present themselves. The object of situational crime prevention (SCP) is to "make crime more difficult and riskier by heightening the potential consequences and hurdles while diminishing the gains" (Clarke, 1995 cited in Auzeen & Rob, 2017). The idea is to make it physically harder and less satisfying for someone to commit a crime. By emphasizing the environment or the criminal's surroundings rather than the individual's motivation, this focus shifts the police effort away from the individual. Instead of emphasizing the traits of criminals, it concentrates on the contexts of criminal conduct. SCP aimed to change circumstances that foster criminal conduct to render them less conducive to offense. It challenges criminological inferences on offenders' proclivity for mischief and proposes a practical strategy for improving safety. In a nutshell, the goal of this strategy and practice is to

Reduce the appeal of crime by:

- i. Reducing targets such as readily stolen goods;
- ii. Identifying property such that the re-sale of stolen items becomes more difficult.
- iii. Disrupt markets by keeping an eye on sales channels such as pawn shops, etc.

Increase the risk of criminal activity by:

- i. Extending guardianship through formal and informal networks such as a neighbourhood watch;
- ii. Assisting natural surveillance by allowing nearby neighbours to help monitor an area; and
- iii. Reducing anonymity by requiring thieves to identify with the area, recognize victims, and so on.

Minimizing the potential to conduct crimes.

- i. Target hardening, which entails making it more difficult to successfully reach things of interest
- ii. Restrict entry to the facility

- iii. Screen exits with a security guard
- iv. Control tools/ weapons by prohibiting them, etc.

Considering this, certain social and environmental factors can encourage crime, and addressing them can help to dwindle crime rates in that social environment. In contrast to previous criminological techniques, to forecast criminal behavior, the SCP method focuses on the distal causes of crime in the environments where they occur rather than capturing and prosecuting offenders. (Clarke 1997, cited in Auzeen & Rob, 2017). Instead of making an effort to address the so-called "root causes" of criminal actions, such as socioeconomic inequities, it aims to prevent crime by reducing the possibility that it will happen.

This study aligns itself with SCP theory. This is because environmental situation sometimes predisposes individuals to commit a crime. Most Nigerian neighborhoods, especially in the rural areas are porously guarded, thereby increasing the opportunity for criminal miscreants to have their way. That is to say, the environmental setting does not provide enough deterrence to criminality (Ogadi, Raimi & Nwachukwu, 2012). From the SCP theory, crime will be watered down if appropriate measures are taken to reduce the opportunity to commit a crime, increase the risks of criminal activities, and make crime less rewarding. Using the SCP theory, this study contends that it is the increased opportunity from the environmental setting to commit crime arising from shortage of security personnel, especially at night, the increased anonymity thereby making it difficult for the area to identify thieves, the easy migration of tools/weapons and in a certain area and the relative ease to market stolen items that sustains criminalities in the society. Drawing from the SCP theory, we are more likely to have fewer records of crime in environments that make concerted efforts to make crime less rewarding to criminals, increase the risks of criminalities, and reduce the opportunity to commit a crime. In this sense, the establishment of an informal security structure (vigilante groups) to address these challenges provides enough deterrence where the tenets of Situational Crime Prevention theory are manifested.

Methodology

For this study, a survey research design was chosen. This is because a survey design allows for correlational research. According to NBS, the study's population included 2,277,961 people in Bayelsa state (2017). The sample size of this study is 400 household heads drawn using the Taro Yamane statistical technique as represented thus $n = N \div (1 + Ne^2)$ where n is the expected sample size, ' N ' is the total population which is equal to 2,277,961 and ' e ' is the level of significance which in this case is 0.05. A hybrid of probability and non-probability sampling strategies was used in the investigation. These sampling techniques include cluster, snowballing and convenient sampling techniques. The cluster sampling was used to partition Bayelsa based on the existing three senatorial districts (i.e., Bayelsa Central, Bayelsa East, and Bayelsa West), and four communities/settlements that have vigilante established were snowballed from each of these clusters. Following that, the convenience sample technique was used to choose household residents who were

easy to contact or reach. To make up 400 respondents, 135 respondents were chosen from each of the two clusters (Bayelsa Central and Bayelsa West) and 130 from the Bayelsa Eastern cluster. The study's primary data was gathered through a questionnaire, while secondary data was obtained from published sources. The respondents were fully informed about the study's goal and their other rights as participants, including anonymity. The descriptive-analytical technique was utilized to interpret the data in this study. The data were summarized using frequencies and central tendency metrics. The data collected from the questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistics and the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). To examine the various hypotheses, the Chi-square (2) statistical method was used.

Results

Substantive Data

In this section, the objectives are restated, and the related data are presented in charts to enable a pictorial understanding of the results derived. This is followed by the presentation of the test of the hypotheses and interpretation of the results. Not all respondents responded to all of the questions; therefore, the percentages reported correspond to the total number of respondents who responded to the individual questions.

Evaluation of Objectives

Objective 1: To examine the rate of crime in Bayelsa state before the formation of the present vigilante groups.

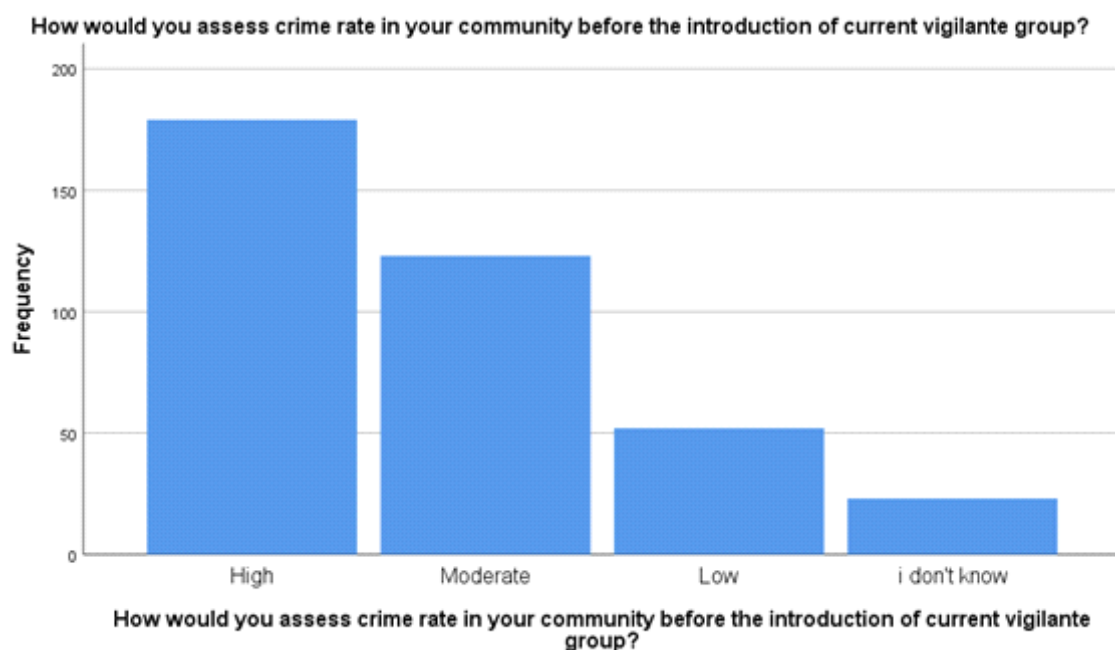


Figure 1 above is a distribution chart showing how respondents assess the rate of crime in their residence prior to the formation of the vigilante group in Bayelsa State. From the

information presented in the figure, it is easy to see that 179(47.5%) reported that the crime rate was high, 123(32.6%) reported that it was moderate, 52(13.8%) said it was low while 23(6.1%) had no idea about the crime rate prior to the introduction of the community vigilante.

Objective 2: To examine the rate of crime in Bayelsa state after the formation of the present vigilante groups.

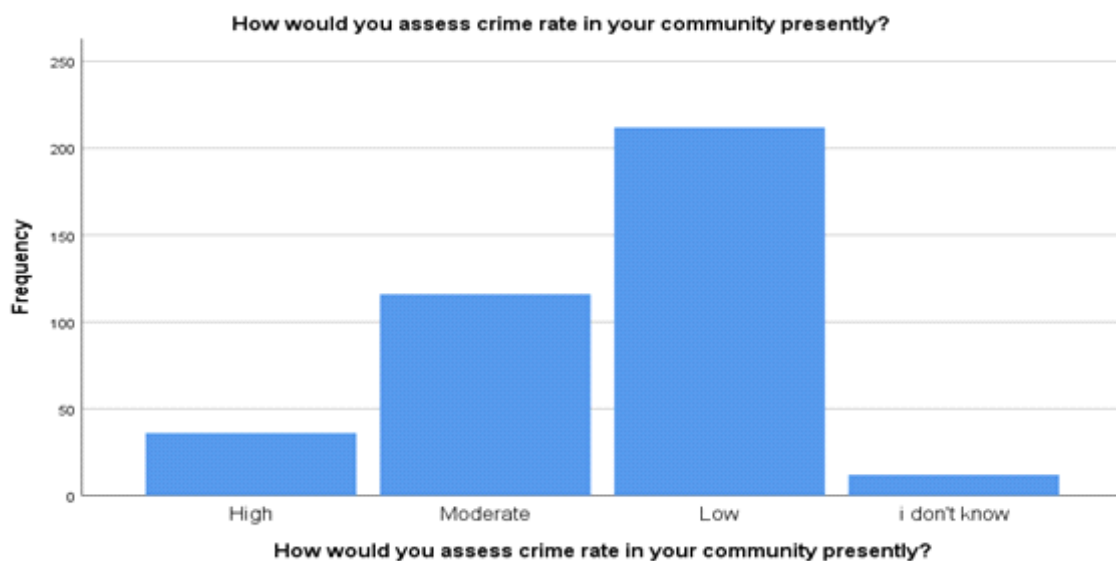


Figure 2 above is a distribution chart showing how respondents' assessments on the rate of crime in their residence after the formation of the vigilante group in Bayelsa State. The information presented in the figure depicts that 36(9.6%) reported that the crime rate is high currently, 116(30.9%) reported that it is moderate, 212(56.4%) said it was low while 12(3.2%) are clueless about the current crime rate after the introduction of the community vigilante.

Objective 3: To examine the nature of crime in Bayelsa state.

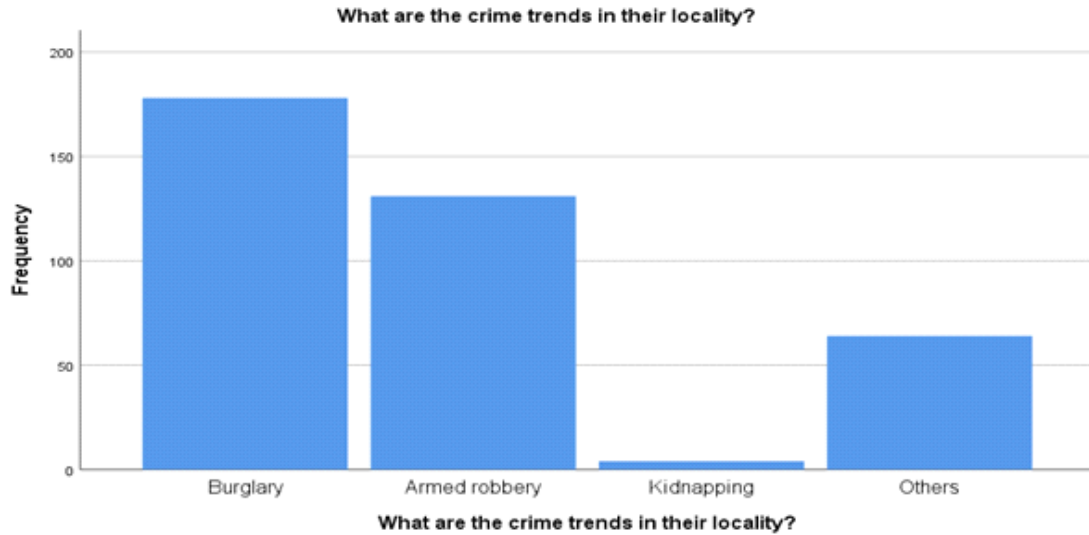


Figure 3 above is a distribution chart showing the crime trends in Bayelsa State. The information presented in the figure shows that 178(47.2%) reported that burglary crimes are seriously trending in the state, 131(34.7%) said armed robbery is the trend, 4(1.1%) said kidnapping and 64(17%) said others.

Objective 4: To ascertain the causes of crime in Bayelsa state.

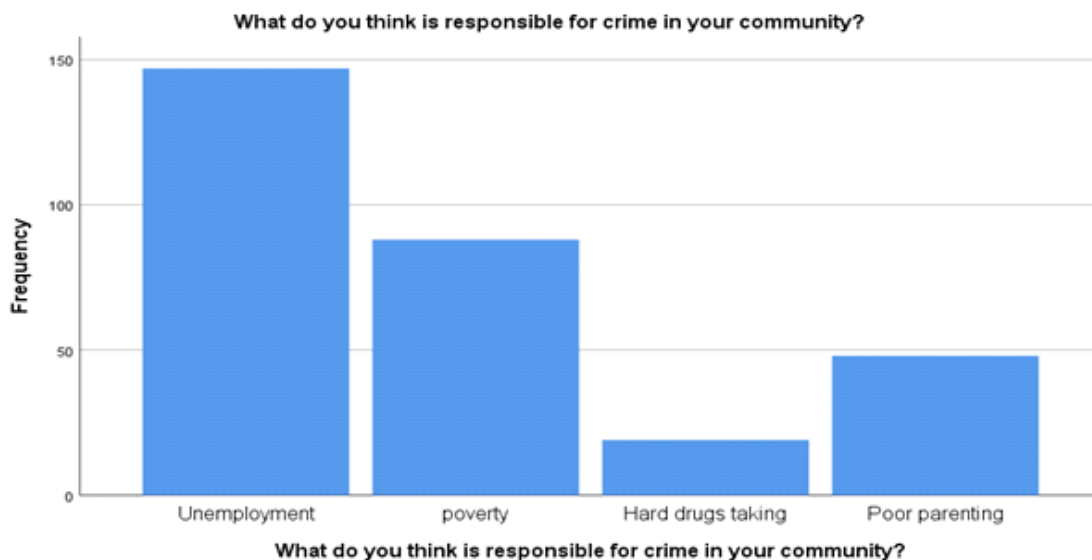


Figure 4 above is a distribution chart showing the perception of respondent on the cause of crime in Bayelsa State. The information presented in the figure shows that 147(48.7%) said unemployment, 88(29.1%) said poverty, 19(6.3%) said Hard drugs while 48(15.9%) said poor parenting.

Objective 5: To investigate the extent vigilante groups have helped in controlling crime.

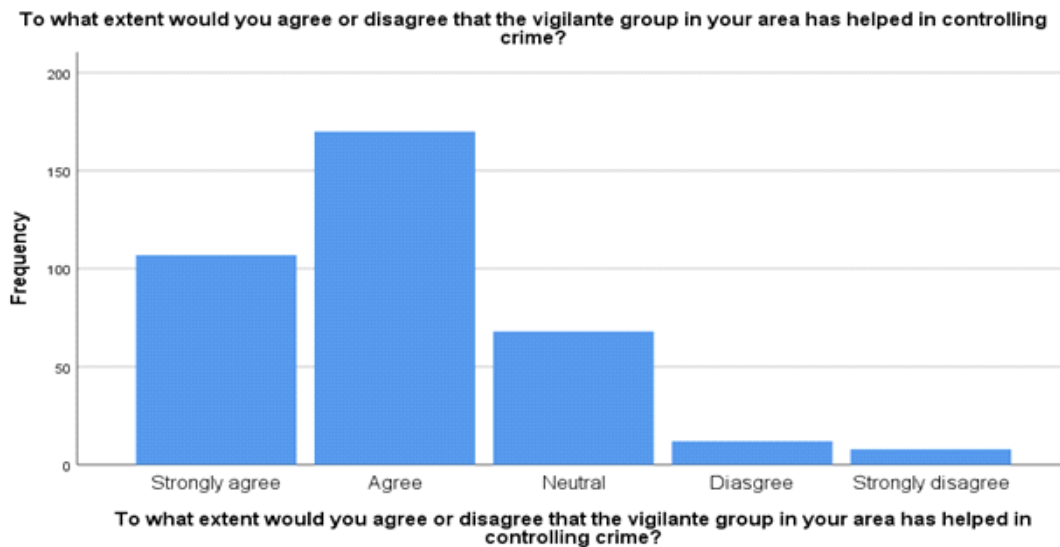


Figure 5 above is a distribution chart showing the extent respondent agreed or disagreed that the vigilante group in their area has helped in controlling crime. The information presented in the figure shows that 107(29.3%) strongly agreed, 170(46.6%) agreed, 68(18.6%) said neutral, 12(3.3%) disagreed and 8(2.2%) strongly disagreed.

Test of Hypothesis

1. The more vigilante groups are motivated to work; the more crime will be reduced in Bayelsa state.

Table 1: To what extent would you agree or disagree that the more the vigilante groups are motivated to work, the more crime will be reduced in Bayelsa state?

			Gender		
			Male	Female	Total
To what extent would you agree or disagree that the more the vigilante groups are motivated to work, the more crime will be reduced in Bayelsa state?	Strongly agree	Count	101	53	154
		Expected Count	96.8	57.2	154.0
	Agree	Count	64	48	112
		Expected Count	70.4	41.6	112.0
	Neutral	Count	19	9	28
		Expected Count	17.6	10.4	28.0
	Disagree	Count	0	12	12
		Expected Count	7.5	4.5	12.0
	Strongly disagree	Count	48	15	63
		Expected Count	39.6	23.4	63.0
	Total	Count	232	137	369
		Expected Count	232.0	137.0	369.0

Source: Data derived from Table 1 above & computed using SPSS 25

The data in Table 1 above shows the degree to which participants agreed or disagreed that the more vigilante groups are motivated to work, the more crime will be decreased in Bayelsa state. The information presented in the figure shows that 154(41.7%) strongly agreed, 112(30.4%) agreed, 28(7.6%) said neutral, 12(3.3%) disagreed and 63(17.1%) strongly disagreed.

Table 2: Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	27.466 ^a	4	.001
Likelihood Ratio	31.237	4	.001
Linear-by-Linear Association	.293	1	.588
N of Valid Cases	369		

a. 1 cells (10.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 4.46.

Since the p-value (0.001) is less than the significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$), we can reject the null hypothesis, and conclude that there is an association between vigilante group motivation and crime reduction in Bayelsa state.

Discussion: The discussion of findings is done in line with the research objectives and respective hypotheses. Several things were discerned during this study. The first finding in this study dealt with objective 1 and the relevant data were presented in Figure 1 above. The result captured that an average of 47.5% of the respondents reported that the crime rates in their respective settlements in Bayelsa State were high hitherto. This finding supports that of Nwaeze Richard, (2010) who established in their study that the rate of crime was high before the formation of vigilante groups. This they attributed to the poor performance of the Nigeria Police Force.

The second finding from the study dealt with objective 2 and the relevant data were presented in Figure 2 above. The result captured that an average of 56.4% of the respondents reported that the crime rates in their respective settlements in Bayelsa State became low after the establishment of the vigilante group. This finding supports that of Nwaeze Richard, (2010) who established in their study that the rate became low after the formation of vigilante groups.

The third finding from the study dealt with objective 3 and the relevant data were presented in Figure 3 above. The result captured that the crime trends in Bayelsa state are burglary and armed robbery with an average of 47.2% and 34.7% respectively.

The fourth finding from the study dealt with objective 4 and the relevant data were presented in figure 4 above. The result captured that unemployment and poverty are responsible for criminalities in the various settlements in the state with an average of 48.7% and 29.1% respectively.

The fifth finding from the study dealt with objective 3 and the relevant data were presented in figure 5 above. The result captured that an aggregate of 75.9% either strongly agreed or agreed that the activities of vigilantism in the different localities and settlements in Bayelsa state have helped in controlling the crime rates.

Conclusion

The study examined the issue of vigilantism and crime control in Bayelsa state to highlight the significance of the former to the latter in the state and country at large. Based on the findings, it concludes that the task of engendering peace via the protection of lives and property of residents in the state and more especially the variant local settlements within it is too enormous for the conventional policing system to perform independently effectively and efficiently as the society keeps growing and becoming more complex each passing day. The validity of this claim lies in the fact that the Nigerian Police Force is faced with a series of problems that have over time, contributed to their abysmal output. These challenges amongst others include inadequate manpower, a repugnant public image, and a relative paucity of the much-needed useful (local) intelligence. This makes vigilantism relatively indispensable as it can ameliorate these shortcomings. The study, therefore, concludes that the role of vigilantism in crime control is critical if sustained success and progress must be recorded about peace, safety, and security. Vigilantism thus needs to be

encouraged and incentivized to perform optimality in the reduction of crime in their respective localities as justified by the test of hypothesis (see table 2 above). There is a need to also create a synergy relationship between the Nigerian Police and vigilante group(s) so they can begin to see themselves as complementing each other and not as competitors in ensuring peace, safety, and security in the society. Finally, the blueprints for achieving and ensuring peace, safety, and security in society are presented below.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the paper recommends the following:

1. The investigation clearly shows that the police cannot effectively and efficiently police society on their own. As a result, the study proposes that vigilante groups be given the pride of place in society and that they should be well equipped through the adequate supply of funds, equipment, and strong enabling legislation that ensures their independence and unbiased performance of their security tasks.
2. Vigilante group members should be regularly trained to equip them with an understanding of modern crime-fighting techniques, particularly at the community level.
3. Vigilante members' motivation is critical, and it can never be overstated. It should be treated seriously since it will encourage dedication in the performance of their security duties. To enhance the morale of other officers, outstanding members should be recognized.
4. In consonance with the political maxim which states that "power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely", several pieces of literature abound that depicts that the vigilante group's actions are not always as innocuous as they appear. Sections 33(1) and 34 of the Nigerian Federal Constitution, as amended, ensure that people's rights to life and human dignity are not violated. As a result, it is illegal for any vigilante group to take the law into its own hands to define and carry out justice on criminals without following due process. As a result, this study suggests that the government educate citizens about the bounds and limitations of the vigilante group, as well as unleash appropriate punitive measures on any member of the vigilante who in the cause of delivering their security duties in their respective neighborhood transgress the rule of law and (or) contravenes the supreme constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

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