VIGILANTISM AND PROPERTY CRIMES IN CALABAR SOUTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF CROSS RIVER STATE NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study examined vigilantism and property crimes- Armed robbery, vandalism and burglary in Calabar South Local government area of Cross River state, Nigeria. Relevant literature was reviewed and the theory of partnership policing was adopted as the theoretical framework for the study. The research deployed the correlational-survey design with the convenience sampling technique. Through a self-designed questionnaire, data were generated from 150 respondents. Generated data were statistically tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that vigilantism has a significant negative correlation with all property crime highlighted by the study namely; armed robbery, burglary, and vandalism. Based on these findings, it was recommended among others that in addition to the official security service provided by the state, individual streets and community leaders should patronise the services of vigilante groups to prevent property crimes in their neighbourhoods.

Key words: *Vigilantism, Vigilante Groups, Armed Robbery, Burglary, Vandalism, Partnership Policing, Crime.*

Introduction

While it the duty of the state through its formal security agent especially the police to ensure that citizens are protected and crimes prevented(Ariche & Awurimbe, 2017), the capacity of the police to maintain law and order has continued to be undermined by the rapidly growing increase of violent crimes (Ambali 2020). In a similar direction of thought, some scholars (Ikoh, 2017; Akinlabi, & Ihemeje 2021) have noted that the continuous increase in criminal activities with its overwhelming burden and the inability of the police to satisfactorily stem it has resulted in community members resorting to establishing informal policing structures (IPS) to control crime. This is apparently because the compromise of security stifles the human capacity to develop

and scuttles the dignity and quality of life of both individuals and society in general (Adejoh, 2013).These self-help measures go by similar names like neighbourhood watch groups, vigilante groups, citizen patrol community policing among others. Vigilante groups refers to some formal and informal groups within a community that keep watch in partnership with the police basically for the purpose of preventing crimes. Peter, Ahmed and Abdulqadir (2023) indicated that vigilante is traced backed to early 1970s in the united states of America. At this period, more people started to accept that individuals and neighbourhood groups had the capacity to contribute to their own security. Vigilante practices is also an old practice in most African societies but may come under different names (see Yusuf, 2024). However, according to Fourchard (2008:17) "effectively, vigilante in Nigeria is a term initially proposed by the police in the mid-1980s as a substitute for an older practice present since the colonial period and referred to as hunter guard or night guard" system. In Kaduna where vigilante is widespread across the entire Local Government Areas for instance, vigilante activities dates back to 1982 when it provided voluntary surveillance to the Tudun Wada community which at the time was a safe haven for criminals (Peter, Ahmed & Abdulqadir, 2023). The Vigilante Groups of Nigeria (VGN) became a full-fledged organisation in 1999 when they registered with the Corporate Affairs Commission as an NGO. In contemporary vigilante practice the communities that directly benefit from vigilante services pay some charges in return. According to Alemika and Chukwuma (2003) the remuneration for vigilante services are generally meagre and this constitutes a challenge. There has been a steady growth of vigilante groups especially since the mid 2010 following youth unemployment, increased criminality, lower confidence in the state machinery, insurgency and terrorism among others (International Crises Group 2022).

Vigilante groups are normally answerable to the community where they operate and so far, they appear to be more effective in combating crime than the state law enforcement agencies (Elechi, 2003). For instance, in the Northwest, according to the International Crises Group (ICG) (2022), in Adamawa state, hunters played a major role in blocking Boko Haram's advance in 2013 and taking back the cities of Gombi and Mubi that had fallen to the militants. To recall in the South East, Ajeli (2020) had stated that there is the famous Bakassi Boys; a vigilante group which had the objective of fighting crime in Bakassi, and other cities in the region. More recently, in the South west, Governors and citizens have hailed the two-year old Amotekun as having reduced crime especially kidnapping for ransom by gangs based in the vast forests (ICG, 2022).

The above evidence and other similar ones suggest that in some cases that most successful interventions against crime were those made by vigilante groups and neighbourhood watch groups, especially in collaboration with the police. In this regard, there are chances that in considering strategies to effectively and legitimately curb

crimes in communities, some may opt for hybridizing the police and vigilante groups just as the theory of partnership policing advocates (see Oppler, 1997; Rosenbaum, 2002; Sedgwick, Callahan & Hawdon, 2021). Nevertheless, there are growing concerns as to records in some places where vigilantes have rather become threats to security of life and property in their communities as they allegedly take the law into their hands, extort community members of their resources, committing human rights abuses and even partaking in crimes (Amnesty International Worldwide 2013; Akinlabi&Ihemeje, 2021; ICG, 2022).Akinlabi and Ihemeje (2021) noted that elders in Ile-Ife community control activities of vigilantes in conjunction with age grade. By this control, some of the excesses of the groups are kept in checked. Odekunle, (2014) argued that there is no need to prove the non-performance of the vigilante groups due to some conditions facing them. Rather, what is needed is the identification of the major inadequacies, problems and obstacles that are responsible for the situation. Notwithstanding some of the general complains about vigilante groups as indicated above, and the financial burden of maintaining them, some neighbourhoods in Calabar South Local Government Area of Cross River State have maintained the services of vigilante groups especially at Night for the purpose of security. This decision could be due to the discontent in the police services and growing concerns of security risk in the area. Also, some neighbourhoods have decided to keep their services apparently due to the fact that they seek to secure accountability which they may not easily secure from the police regarding their lives and properties.

Previous researches on vigilante groups and have focused on banditry in Northern Nigeria (Peter, Ahmed &Abdulqadir 2023,Tukur 2013; Olaniyi 2012) Also, there have been studies on vigilantism focusing on the South Western (Fourchard 2008; Akinlabi, & Ihemeje, 2021) and the South East of Nigeria (Elechi, 2003; Onwuegbusi, 2017). However, published researches on the issue within South South Nigeria in general and Calabar South in particular are almost none existent to the best of the knowledge of the authors. To this end, it became germane to examine residents' perception on vigilantism and property crimes in Calabar South Local Government of Cross River State, Nigeria.

Objectives

The paper is set out to examine the relationship between vigilantism and property crimes specifically armed robbery, vandalism and burglary. To achieve these objectives, the researchers set out the following hypotheses to be tested:

1. There is no significant relationship between vigilantism and armed-robbery in Calabar South Local Government Area of Cross Rivers State.

2. Vigilantism does not significantly relate with burglary in Calabar South Local Government Area of Cross Rivers State.

3. Vigilantism has no significant relationship with vandalism in Calabar South local Government Area of Cross Rivers State.

Conceptual Review

Vigilantism

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 (Akinlabi & Ihemeje, 2021). Chukwuma, (2002) noted that four typologies of vigilantism have been identified in Africa. These are, religious vigilantism, ethnic vigilantism, state sponsored vigilantism, and neighbourhood or community vigilantism .Johnston (1996) contended that six essential characteristics of vigilantism- that it involves planning and premeditation by the people involved in it, participation is private and voluntary, it is a form of autonomous citizenship, it involves the use of force, it arises when a threat of transgression arises against the established order, finally, it aims to control crime by offering assurance of security to the parties involved. For Akinlabi and Ihemeji (2021) common factors which led to the formation of vigilante groups in Ile-Ife are 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. Musa (2016) stated that the vigilante group is charged with the responsibility of rendering all lawful help and assistance to the police in times of emergencies and other threats to public safety, including the protection of lives and properties in the various nooks and crannies in their communities. Obeagu (2014) states that functions of vigilante groups include: the prevention of crime by safeguarding lives and properties and improving security through joint patrols with the police, reducing opportunities for crime by increasing crime prevention awareness campaigns, developing neighbourhood crime prevention programs, assisting the police in identifying criminals and finding solutions to crime such as vandalism.

Property Crimes

Any behaviour that seeks to acquire valuables or wealth using illegal means is referred to as property crime (Ayuk, Okpa & Eshitse, 2024). Ayuk et al further identified shoplifting, larceny/theft, burglary and arson as variants of property crimes. Among the

list of property crimes, arson appears to be one of the most destructive and non-utilitarian although with a huge financial burden. Mallett and McGregor (2023) noted that as at 2011 statistics indicate that the total cost of arson was $2.3 billion in Australia. Arsons could be carried out for profit, for self-excitement, for crime concealment, for revenge, as a way of expressing extremism, and for the sake of vandalism, (Mallett & McGregor, 2023; Ayuk 2024). Property or economic crimes appear to be one of the commonest category of offences committed in Nigeria today apparently because, both professional criminals and occasional criminals are involved in it (Ayuk et al 2024). Quinnan (2019) contended that theft burglary and robbery are the most common types of property crime Similarly, Akinlabi and Ihemeje (2021) argued that property crimes, specifically burglary, theft and housebreaking were the commonest types of crimes in Ile Ife. The role of reliable security system in checking property crime cannot be overemphasized.

Theoretical Review

Theory of Partnership Policing Theory

The theory of partnership policing is a human safety need theory that began to feature in the writings of Denis R. Rosenbaum in the year 1986 (Rosenbaum, 2002). Partnership policing theory holds that the criminal justice system cannot, by itself, solve the complex problems of crime, disorder and insecurity including terrorism that bedevils society. The theory advocates that resources from outside the criminal justice system are needed, as a means of solving diverse problems of insecurity. Rosenbaum (2002) further maintained that this can be achieved through the creation of partnerships between the police (Formal policing) and the vigilante (Informal policing).“The partnership approach is seen as a co-operative effort to facilitate a process of problem-solving, as well as to determine community needs and policing priorities through consultation”(Oppler, 1997: 6).According to Inyang and Abraham (2013), the creation of partnership between the police and vigilante will bring distinctive and complementary skills and resources that can produce coordinated and targeted responses to public safety problems. Similarly, for Stenstrom (2024), the partnership approach has become the ‘right way’ to do police business because its underlying values – building linkages between the ‘responsibilised’ good forces of society (Garland, 2001). The embrace and sustenance of vigilante group services in some areas of Calabar South Local Government Area despite the extra financial and sometimes time implications may justify the assumptions of the partnership policing theory. This is because as rational beings the 21st century, if the engagement of vigilante groups in the area is not beneficial to them they should have discarded them. However, instead of discarding them, the groups seem to be having increased patronage from other nearby communities. This theory is therefore adopted as the theoretical framework for the

study.

Empirical Review

Vigilantism and Property Crimes

Property crime as the name implies are directly targeted against the valuable assets of individuals, organization and the state. Examples include armed robbery, shoplifting, larceny, arson, burglary, pickpocketing etc. (Okpa, Eshiotse, Ofem, Sylvester and Andrew 2021; Ayuk, Okpa & Eshitse, 2024). Sheriff Deputies (2016) indicated that 7 out of 10 Nigerians are afraid of becoming the victim of crime. They also revealed that security in the home remained a key challenge as 36% of the robberies occurred in the homes and another 26% occurred near the home. In addition, the report showed increase in rape, kidnapping, physical assaults, attempted murder, mobile phone theft, and car theft. Andrew, Ebiekpi, Effiom and Udo (2022) contended that lots of Nigerians are losing faith in the police and some do not even want to have anything to do with the institution. To this end, some especially those in highly crime prone areas like some communities in the middle belt where the herders are doing lots of mayhem (Enyia, Ayuk, Otu, Andrew, Njong, Ebagu Nwanade, & Okpa, 2023), Eastern, Northern, and some parts of South-South Nigeria where so much terroristic attacks are experienced (Andrew & Odum, 2024) may tend to patronizing vigilantes and other informal police structure since they may not really be able to do without security. Yusuf (2024) found that vigilantes' operations are based on government laws allowing them to operate in communities for surveillance, arresting and handing over suspects to authorities. In the same vein, some other scholars noted that the Kaduna law establishing vigilante groups in Kaduna provides that vigilante services are registered services of people in a community that have agreed to render assistance on crime detection, prevention and promotion of security consciousness in the community (Peter, Ahmed & Abdulqadir, 2023).

Fourchard, (2008)'s observation that vigilantism has a very long history in Kaduna because of the high degree of armed robbery and cattle rustling the region was notorious for. For vigilante group to have remained and spread since its inception till date in Kaduna, it may mean that they have been effective in keeping up with the reason they were first resorted to. Similarly, it is believed that the police institutional pressure to work across organisational boundaries can, in part, be traced to the growing dissatisfaction with the police and the criminal justice system that swept over Western countries in the 1970s. This pressure was a response to the persistently rising crime levels of the 1960s and the 1970s and served to create a consensus that crime was to be managed via a conglomerate of diverse measures, including (1) risk-based practices, (2) repression, (3) and community and joint partnership approaches (Garland, 2001; Crawford and Cunningham, 2015; Sedgwick et al., 2021).

According to Inyang and Abraham (2013), any comprehensive strategy to reduce crime must not only include the contribution of the police and the criminal Justice system, but should include other factors such as environmental, social, economic, deterrent variables in form of police force, vigilante security group, severity of prison and jail conditions, which affect the likelihood of crime. Sedgwick et al., (2021) noted that community safety and crime prevention should not be seen as the sole duty of the police, but a shared responsibility between the vigilante, community members and police. One of the major roles of the vigilante security group is to work cooperatively with community members, traditional rulers, town union executives and police to develop solutions that will enhance a secured environment. This cooperation and support help to foster synergy between the police and the vigilante security group, where everybody is seen as a stakeholder in the act of community policing (Akaayar, 2019).

Improving home security is a community policing function that involves community members working in partnership with the vigilante security group to make their home security condition safer and a better place to live in. In order to improve home security and avoid burglary, the community is reliant upon the vigilante to curb crime and help in times of emergency. The vigilantes on the other hand, rely on the community to report crime and provide vital information that is necessary for them to solve crime and address community concerns. This cooperation and support provide an avenue for vigilante to establish a working relationship with the community where they operate (Okeke, 2018). In recognition of the importance of improving home security in communities in Nigeria and the need for vigilante security group to be closer to the community, the vigilante security group establishes vigilante units in some communities. According to Musa (2016), the essence of establishing the vigilante unit in some communities was to involve community members in policing, because they know each other and are better placed to fight crime. Furthermore, the vigilante plays the role of security surveillance in the protection of lives and properties of community members. According to Onwuegbusi (2017), increase in vigilante surveillance will not only prevent crime such as burglary, but will make the vigilante to always be in contact with the community members. This allows the vigilante to gain knowledge about the problems or issues plaguing a community. Moreso, Alemika and Chukwuma (2003) stated that the emergence of the vigilante security group is in response to community members‟ quest for safety and security of their properties. This quest and the vesting of communities' trust in the vigilante groups appears to be paying off as some studies claim that vigilante activities especially at night are effective and efficient (Yusuf, 2024). Also, Peter, Ahmed and Abdulqadir (2023), found that vigilante groups help in reducing banditry, protect lives and property and arrest and hand over bandits to the police for prosecution in Birnin Gwari Local Government Area from 2012-2018. Specifically, 68% of their respondents hold this view.

To maintain safety and security in the rural and urban communities, the vigilante security group help to arrest criminals in their hideouts. Alemika and Chukwuma (2003), believe that vigilante groups are committed to their duty and this level of commitment and effectiveness lay primarily in the fact that the members are from within the communities in which they operate; also, for the fact that they are determined to ensuring security, have interest in curbing crime and are under the control of, and are accountable to the community. Alemika and Chukwuma (2003) in addition noted that 50 percent of Nigerians patronise vigilante groups services as a shield against criminal attack. The fact that most of the vigilante groups members in most places rely heavily on charms and voodoo (Adejoh, 2013) could be why they are dreaded by criminals. Adejoh further contended that the vigilante security group arrest criminals, hand them over to the police and furnish the police with information about crime and criminals that are beyond their ability to deal with. In other to keep the police abreast of their activities and progress, the vigilante security group submits monthly progress reports to the police units nearest to them. The police then evaluate the extent of the vigilante's supplementary security services and makes its observation available to the State Police Headquarters (Akaayar, 2016).

Akinlabi and Ihemeje (2021) found that vigilante stakeholders in Ile-Ife had investments in the community where they operated and as such, they go all out to ensure the vigilante groups ensure the safety of the area. Also, they found that vigilante groups assisted in preventing crimes through the useful information they share with the police from time to time and by so, have foiled many burglary cases and theft. Furthermore, Akinlabi and Ihemeji established through their in-depth interview that vigilante groups employed various strategies to prevent and control crimes in Ile-Ife- The strategies included night patrol, surveillance on uncompleted buildings in the area of their coverage, clearing of bush sites on land, mounting of road blocks at strategic places at night, use of children as spies on suspected criminal hideout, provision of education to residents, ban on the use of commercial motorcycle in the community at night from 10:00pm and canvassing for the closure of drinking outlets and restaurants by 10:00pm. Obeagu (2014) stressed the need for the involvement of vigilante groups in the increasing rate of vandalism. According to Inyang & Abraham (2013), informal and formal policing tactics are combined to help formal policing institutions when they face challenges in detecting perpetrators of specific crimes.

Methodology

The research adopted the survey-correlational design following the fact that data were collected from respondents and the data were correlated to establish relationship between the identified variables for the study. The research setting is Calabar South Local Government Area with an area of 1,057km^2.The local Government Headquarter is in Anantigha and is situated in an urban settlement. It is located in the Southern senatorial district of Cross River State. It is bounded in the North by Calabar Municipality Local Government and in the South by Akpabuyo Local Government Area. There are 11 wards in the Local Government with an estimate population of about 110,324 people as at 2006 census who are involved in various works such as Trading, Businesses, Welding, Teaching etc. The culture within this area is the Efik culture which is one of the dominated cultures in the southern part of Nigeria. (Andrew, Egbe & Ayuk 2024).

The population of the study involved the entire neighbourhoods in Calabar South LGA that were under the coverage of vigilante groups. Hence because there existed no place where the exact census of these neighbourhood could be gotten from the actual statistic is not provided here. Hence the sample of 150 adults was purposively selected for the study. Data for the study was primarily gathered through the use of self-constructed questionnaire titled Residents' Perception on Vigilantism and Property Crime in Calabar South Questionnaire (RPVPCCSQ). To ensure the face and content validity of the items on the instrument measuring the different variables in the study, the questionnaire was submitted to two experts in research and statistics and one expert in test and measurement, to ascertain whether the items measured what they purported to measure. These experts made some suggested that helped improve the instrument. To ascertain the reliability of the research instrument, a test-retest approach was employed. Some respondents in Ekorinim, Calabar Municipal LGA were given the same questionnaire twice at a space of two (2) weeks interval. The result obtained on the two occasions were tested using the Pearson correlation and the result was .722 indicating a significant positive correlation. Thus, indicating consistency. The data obtained was analysed using SPSS 23.0 and hypotheses study is the Pearson correlation coefficient because the study was set to find relationship between variables.

Analysis and Discussion of Findings

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One

Ho: There is no significant relationship between vigilantism and armed-robbery in Calabar South local Government Area of Cross Rivers State.

Table 1: Correlation table for the relationship between vigilantism and armed-robbery in Calabar South local Government Area of Cross Rivers State.

Vigilantism		**Vigilantism**	**Armed Robbery**
	Pearson correlation	1	-0.536
	P-value		0.00
	Level of significance	0.05 or (5%)	0.05 or (5%)
	No. of respondents	150	150
Armed Robbery	Pearson correlation	-0.536	1
	P-value	0.00	
	level of Significance	0.05 or (5%)	0.05 or (5%)
	No. of respondents	150	150

The above table shows that the P value of 0.00 is less than the value of significance level (0.05). With this, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis. Implying that, there is a significant relationship between vigilantism and armed-robbery in Calabar South local Government Area of Cross Rivers State, Nigeria. Also, the r (-0.536) is negative, indicating that the is an inverse relationship between vigilantism and armed-robbery in Calabar South local Government Area of Cross Rivers State, Nigeria.

Hypothesis Two

Ho: Vigilantism does not significantly relate with burglary in Calabar South Local Government Area of Cross Rivers State

Table 2: Correlation table for the relationship between vigilantism and burglary in Calabar South local Government Area of Cross Rivers State.

Vigilantism		**Vigilantism**	**Burglary**
	Pearson correlation	1	-0.835
	P-value		0.00
	Level of significance	0.05 or (5%)	0.05 or (5%)
	No. of respondents	150	150
Burglary	Pearson correlation	-0.835	1
	P-value	0.00	
	level of Significance	0.05 or (5%)	0.05 or (5%)
	No. of respondents	150	150

The above table shows that the P value of 0.00 is less than the value of significance level (0.05). With this, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis. Therefore, there is a significant relationship between burglary and vigilante groups activities in Calabar South local Government Area of Cross Rivers State, Nigeria. Also, the r (-0.835) is highly negative, indicating that the is an inverse relationship between vigilantism and urglary in Calabar South local Government Area of Cross Rivers State, Nigeria

Hypothesis Three

Ho: Vigilantism has no significant relationship with vandalism in Calabar South local Government Area of Cross Rivers State.

Table 3 Correlation table for the relationship between vigilantism and vandalism in Calabar South local Government Area of Cross Rivers State.

Vigilantism		**Vigilantism**	**Vandalism**
	Pearson correlation	1	-0.673
	P-value		0.00
	Level of significance	0.05 or (5%)	0.05 or (5%)
	No. of respondents	150	150
Vandalism	Pearson correlation	-0.673	1
	P-value	0.00	
	level of Significance	0.05 or (5%)	0.05 or (5%)
	No. of respondents	150	150

The above table shows that the P value of 0.00 is less than the value of significance level (0.05). With this, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis. Therefore, there is a significant relationship between vandalism and vigilante groups activities in Calabar South local Government Area of Cross Rivers State, Nigeria. Also, the r (-0.873) is negative, indicating an inverse relationship between vandalism and vigilante groups activities in Calabar South local Government Area of Cross Rivers State, Nigeria.

Discussion of findings

Vigilantism and Armed Robbery

The result in table 1 shows that the p value of 0.000 is less than 0.05. To this end, the null hypothesis which state that there is no significant relationship between vigilantism and armed robbery in Calabar South local government area of Cross River State, Nigeria was rejected and the alternate retained. Also, the r (-0.536) is negative indicating an inverse relationship between vigilantism and armed robbery in Calabar South Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria. This result implies that the higher the rate of vigilantism the lower armed robbery is experienced in the area. Thus, this finding agrees with Inyang and Abraham (2013), who contended that any comprehensive strategy to reduce crime must not only include the contribution of the police and the criminal justice system, but should include other factors such vigilante security group among others. It also agrees with the finding of Peter, Ahmed and Abdulqadir (2023), which revealed that vigilante groups help in reducing banditry in Birnin Gwari Local Government Area.

Vigilantism and Burglary

The result in table 2 shows that the p value of 0.000 is less than 0.05. To this end, the null hypothesis which state that there is no significant relationship between armed robbery and vigilante group activities Calabar South local government area of Cross River State, Nigeria was rejected and the alternate retained. Also, the r (-0.835) is negative indicating a negative relationship between vigilantism and burglay in Calabar South Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria. This result implies that the rate of vigilantism, the lower the rate of burglary in the area. Thus, this finding agrees with Onwuegbusi (2017), who contended that increase in vigilante surveillance will among other things prevent crime such as burglary. Also, the findings agree with the finding Akinlabi and Ihemje (2021) who concluded that by relaying useful information to the police, vigilante groups foil many burglary cases in Ile-Ife.

Vigilantism and Vandalism

The result in table 3 shows that the p value of 0.000 is less than 0.05. To this end, the null hypothesis which state that there is no significant relationship between armed robbery and vigilante group activities Calabar South local government area of Cross River State, Nigeria was rejected and the alternate retained. Also, the r (-0.673) is negative indicating an inverse relationship between vigilantism and vandalism in Calabar South Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria. This result implies that the higher the rate of vigilantism the lower the rate of vandalism in the area.

This contention is in consonance with Obeagu (2014)'s who stated that the functions of vigilante group to include: the prevention of crime by safeguarding lives and properties and improving security through joint patrols with the police, and finding solutions to crime such as vandalism. It aligns also with Peter, Ahmed and Abdulqadir (2023), which revealed that vigilante groups protect lives and property and arrest and hand over bandits to the police for prosecution

Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

This study assessed the residents' perception on vigilantism and property crime- Armed robbery, burglary and vandalism in Calabar South Local Government Area, of Cross River State, Nigeria. Relevant literature was reviewed with most appreciating and commending the role of vigilante groups in crime prevention and a few others emphasising the promotion of criminal activities and insecurity by vigilante groups. The partnership policing theory was adopted for the study and the survey-correlational design was deployed. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to analyse the data and result show that a negative and significant correlation exist between vigilantism and property crime. Following the findings of the study, it was therefore concluded that vigilantism is a venture worth patronising for the improvement of security of property and safer neighbourhood irrespective of some of the legitimate or illegitimate negative reservation some may have against them. It was thus recommended that:

1. The neighbourhoods already patronizing the services of vigilante groups should do all they can to maintain and if possible improve on the relationship to enjoy increased safety for their properties.

2. The neighbourhoods that is yet to engage the services of vigilante groups should as a matter of urgency engage the services of vigilante groups because property crimes might continue to increase following the rising rate of economic hardship in the country.

3. The police should strengthen their synergy with vigilante groups in the community by displaying transparency in dealing with criminals. This will help build trust and discourage extrajudicial killings and bribery that some of the vigilante groups are sometimes accused of. A good synergy between the police and vigilante groups will also give the police an opportunity to educate the vigilante group members on issues pertaining to the human right and how to avoid its abuse in the course of securing the neighbourhood.

4. Vigilante group members to engage for security services in communities should be

those who have a stake in the community and not strangers to secure their strong commitment to service provision.

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