

## Vigilante Security Service and Crime Control in Keana Local Government Area of Nasarawa State, Nigeria

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### Abstract

*Crimes have remained a clog in the wheel of progress that has derailed many communities from making meaningful development despite the efforts of Police to control crime in Nigeria. The study examines the relationship between vigilante security service at community level and crime control in Keana LGA. This was to properly document various initiatives adopted by the organisations in reducing criminal activities in rural areas. The study identified the reason for the formation of community vigilante security groups as recognised outfits of crime control in Keana LGA and strategies deployed by community vigilante security groups to fight and control criminal activities, as well as examined the effectiveness of community vigilante security groups in crime prevention and control. Quantitative method, applied using questionnaires instrument, was used to collect data from 381 respondents. The data were collected from residents of Keana LGA and were selected through multistage technique. The study concluded that vigilante security service played a critical role in crime control at the community level which complement the statutory function of the Nigeria Police Force and other law enforcement operatives.*

**Keywords:** Crime control, Nigeria Police Force, community and vigilante security service.

### Introduction

The use of personal or private security guards, vigilante groups or any form of neighborhood watch has developed over the years as a result of the interest of citizens to enhance their personal security and that of their communities by complimenting the police force (Adejoh, 2014). The security of lives and properties is the most fundamental need of every human society, without which life is meaningless. This is why every responsible society strives to provide security for her citizens.

Historically, provision of security or control of crime was chiefly a concern of each family and community among people. The term “neighbourhood watch” was used more amply to refer to any group involved in the defence of the community at night apart from the Police (Akinlabi & Ihemeje, 2021). 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 societies has led to the emergence of community vigilante groups, especially when the Nigeria Police Force has been alleged of inefficiency in crime control, largely because of inadequate personnel (Ogye, 2014; Smah, 2020 and Obi & Osiogu, 2020)

Crime control refers to methods taken by the government to reduce crime in a society. For instance, a theory of criminal justice system 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.

Smah (2020) 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 Smah (2020) 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 (Okeke, 2013).

The Nigerian Police Force 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 services 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. It is becoming a common knowledge that some communities in Keana LGA are now engaging vigilante services for security purposes and as an important outfit to complement the public law enforcement agencies. This strategy necessitated the formation of vigilante groups at community levels. Notwithstanding the significance and contributions of vigilante groups in crime control have not been well researched, therefore this study explores the roles of vigilante security service in controlling crime in Keana LGA of Nasarawa state, Nigeria.

## **Literature Review**

The traditional concept of vigilante security groups in Africa, 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, 2001). 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 Federation and directed Commissioners of Police to urgently revitalize vigilante groups to enable the Police and public to interact regularly in the fight against crime (Olaniyi, 2012 and Ogye, 2014).

During colonial era the 'night guard' (hunter) system was used in Nigerian communities, while some communities used community guard as complementary efforts to Police force in crime

control at community level. In the mid-1980, community vigilante security groups emerged in various cities to replace the system (hunter guard) to complement efforts of the Police in crime control and prevention at local level (Akinlabi & Ihemeje, 2021). it becomes important to register all the vigilante groups in each State to harmonize operations under the supervision of the Police (Adejoh, 2014). As a result of this effort, vigilante groups came to be popularized by some Military Governors, particularly in Nigeria.

In recent times, 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, Ndinche (community guard or guards) in Enugu State and Landlords Associations Ushongo LGA (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2003 and Akinlabi & Ihemeje, 2021).

The emergence of Sociology and Criminology in late 18th century as a discipline, has been said and written by various scholars on the 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 to devise and implement strategies that 'reduce crime opportunities and social conditions, which motivate criminal deviance in the neighbourhoods (Ogye, 2014; Oyagi, 2016 and Obi & Osisiogu, 2020).

Effective crime control is achieved when programmes target the opportunities for crime and criminal behaviour, using a two basic approach: crime prevention through social development and environmental design. Other notable scholars have suggested various ways of controlling crime in our societies. Okeke (2013) 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 dwellers, social harmonization and social restructuring (Obateru, 2014 and Ajayi & Adefolaje, 2013).

Brown (2021) conceptualised 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, Prattern (2008) 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. Akinlabi & Ihemeje (2021) 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. Okeke (2013) contended that the communities, 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 (Smith, cited in Pattavina et al, 2006). These views were supported by Shaw (2002), 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.

The era of pre-colonial, the community or village council was the highest court of justice. Also, the traditional rulers 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 (Akinlabi, *et al.* 2021).

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 (Oyagi, 2016), 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 (Montchos, 2005; Jemibewon, 2001; Smith, 2007 and Huggins, 2019). 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.

### **Vigilante Security Service and Crime Control in Nigeria**

Vigilantes' security service is considered as the security 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. To this article, community vigilante security groups are therefore conceptualised loosely, in line with Alemika 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 Southeastern part, as well as the Oodua People's Congress (OPC) of South-western geopolitical zone (Brown, 2021).

Vigilante security groups have proven to be effective in the fight against crime in Nigeria. With proper understanding of the terrains of counter insurgency, the vigilante groups have assisted in identifying and overriding important structures of the insurgents through local intelligence. They have facilitated arrests of high-profile Boko haram suspects as well as the rescue of some of their

abductors. Smah, (2020) argues that the relative success of the vigilantes in counter insurgency in Nigeria affirms the underlying thinking in societal/human security literature that security is best provided by the people and not for the people. Ogye (2014) maintains that vigilante groups are still functioning effectively, and people consult them on security issues probably because of the perceived ineffectiveness of the police. This is similar to the view of Tonwe & Osemwota (2013) who had the view that people repose confidence on vigilante services for the fear they have on crime and for the loss of faith in the state's ability to protect them.

Alemika & Chukwuma (2004) are of the view that vigilante groups were committed to their duty and this level of commitment and effectiveness lay primarily on the fact that members are from within the communities in which they operate and also for the fact that they have a determination to ensure security, the interest in curbing crime and are under the control of and accountable to the community. Oyagi (2016) observes that in many regions, vigilante groups have proven to be effective in combating crime than the state law enforcement agencies. In addition, Oyagi (2016) remark that in several cases the communities trust vigilante groups more than the police because of their effective, reliable and prompt ways to tackle crime issues.

However, the facts that vigilante groups have not been able to bring lasting solution to criminality in their various areas and communities due to their own setbacks in getting the total support they needed both from government and willing individuals and because of their own shortcomings of not being completely committed to their duty the people they serve still patronize them. Olaniyi (2013) upheld this view that despite the weaknesses in the commitment and effectiveness of vigilante groups they still have the support and mandate of the people to ensure their security and safety through preventing and detecting crime as well as dealing with minor criminals.

## **Methods**

The study used survey research design which involves collection of cross-sectional data from large respondents. Questionnaire was used to generate relatively response from respondents. The study was conducted in Keana Government Area of Nasarawa State, among the public because they represents general opinion in their domain which provides security information and represented their community in security affairs with government functionaries (law enforcement and civil society). The study population consists of all residents in ten electoral wards made of Keana LGA. Multi-stage sampling technique was adopted; the first stage involved purposeful selection of three electoral wards out of the ten existing electoral wards. The second stage involved purposive selection of five communities from each of the three selected electoral wards. These include Anum, Kadarko, Gidanrai, Srkinoma, and Kwara (Kadarko ward), Giza, Azere, Takos, Kalachi and Otese (Giza ward) and Alosi, Agaza, Tukun, Temrin and Kuduku (Agaza ward). The criterion for the selection of the fifteen communities is based on simple random techniques. The third stages involved simple random selection of five streets from each of the fifteen communities. The sample size for this study was then 385 respondents, who were randomly selected for study comprising the general public opinion was adopted to collect quantitative data from respondents. Descriptive statistics analysis was used to analyse the data collected from the respondents through questionnaire using percentages and mean & standard deviation to present the results.

## **Results**

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

**Table 1: Percentage distribution of respondent by socio-demographic characteristics**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>Sex</b>	N = 381	%
Male	367	96.3
Female	14	3.7
Total	381	100
<b>Age Groups</b>		
21 - 30 years	45	11.8
31- 40years	125	32.8
41-50years	82	21.5
51- 60years	71	18.6
61 and above	58	15.3
Total	381	100
<b>Marital Status:</b>		
Single	132	34.6
Married	213	55.9
Widowed/ Divorced/separated	36	9.5
Total	381	100
<b>Level of Educational</b>		
No formal education	26	6.9
Primary school	76	19.9
Secondary	175	45.9
Post-secondary school	104	27.3
Total	381	100
<b>Occupation</b>		
Schooling	10	2.6
Farming	173	45.4
Petty trading	28	7.3
Private business	34	8.9
Civil service	37	9.7
Artisan	99	26.1
Total	381	100
<b>Average Monthly Income</b>		
10,000 - 50,000	137	25.2
60,000 – 100,000	83	21.8
110,000 – 150,000	32	36
160,000 – 200,000	96	8.4
210,000 and above	33	8.6
Total	381	100
<b>Religion</b>		
Christianity	241	63.3
Islam	138	36.2
Traditional	2	0.5
Total	381	100
<b>Ethnic Group</b>		
Hausa	85	22.3
Alago	291	76.4
Tiv	5	1.3
Eggon	15	14.2
Total	381	100

**Source: Fieldwork, 2025**

Socio demographic characteristics of the respondents are presented in table 1 which revealed the predominance of male over female. Male vigilante members constituted a little above 75 percent while the female counterparts accounted for only about 25 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 in the community.

Age groups revealed that the ages of respondents' range between 31 and 70years, with mean age of 47.5. Age group 30 -40years was in the majority accounting for (32.8%) of the total respondents. This was followed by those between the ages of 41 and 50 years (21.5%). Respondents who were older than 61years constituted about 15.3% 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. Data on marital status of the respondents showed that the majority (55.9%) of them were married. The deduction here is that most of the respondents were married.

On the level of education, findings revealed that 45.9% of the respondents had basic education up to secondary school, followed by 27.3% who had post-secondary education and 19.9% who had primary education level, while 6.9% did not have any formal education or basic education. This finding implied that at least 9 out of 10 of the respondents 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. In relation to the occupational status of the respondents, significant (31%) of the respondents were farmers, 26.1% were artisans, and 9.7% were civil servants. Petty traders and private businessperson constituted 7.3% and 8.9% 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.

The Christians in the study area were 63.3% while Moslems constituted 36.2% and 0.5% were traditional worshipers. This finding showed that Christianity (63.3%) 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 Keana LGA; and this is evident in 0.5% 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.

On the income earned by the respondents, significant percentages (56.4%) earned less than N30,000 per month. Therefore, the study area constituted economically active people who are socially engaged in urban activities for sustenance. This could be due to available business opportunities in the study areas, since the selected communities are the most populated in the Local Government area where all kinds of drugs are used and abused. Data on the ethnic origins of the respondents showed that 89.7% were Alago which constituted the majority of ethnic group in Keana LGA. This could be attributed to the fact that the survey was conducted in Alago-speaking areas. However, the presence of other ethnic groups was a strong indication of the cosmopolitan nature of the area.

Findings on socio-demographic characteristics of the interviewees reflected that youth-adult were the ones performing responsibility of security affairs of the community. The respondents had a mean age of 45.5years, showing that the respondents were young adults controlling security affairs of the community. Most of the respondents had formal education while most 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: Reasons for Formation of Vigilante Security Service N = 381**

S/N	Reasons	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Lack of adequate Police personnel	3.38	1.347	Accept
2	Lack of police presence in rural community	3.48	1.447	Accept
3	Increase in crime rates in neighbourhood	3.02	1.258	Accept
4	Inability of anti-crime patrol to reach some inner parts of the rural community to curb crime	3.04	1.402	Accept
5	Presence of vigilante members to the people to control crime	3.35	1.303	Accept
6	Issue of bureaucracy and corruption among Police personnel	3.50	1.511	Accept

**Source: Fieldwork, 2025**

The mean scores and standard deviations provide insights into the perceptions of respondents regarding the reason for the formation of vigilante security service. The respondents expressed agreement with the reason why vigilante security service was formed due to inadequate police personnel (Mean=3.38, SD=1.347) and that lack of police presence in rural community (Mean=3.48, SD=1.447). Moreover, respondents agreed that increase in crime rates in neighbourhood led to the formation of vigilante security service (Mean=3.02, SD=1.258) and inability of anti-crime patrol to reach some inner parts of the rural community to curb crime have led to formation of vigilante security service (Mean=3.04, SD=1.402) while the presence and closeness of vigilante members in community to control crime is also the reason for formation of vigilante security service (Mean=3.04, SD=1.402). The results clearly revealed that different reasons have led to formation of vigilante security service. Majority of respondents identified increase in crime rates and lack of adequate personnel as the main cause of vigilante groups. Another reason illustrated by the respondents was issue of bureaucracy of the Police response and corruption among Police personnel which was identified by the respondents as reasons which led to the formation of vigilante security service.

The results showed that virtually all the respondents identified lack of adequate Police personnel, inability of anti-crime patrol to reach some inner parts of the rural community to curb crime, increase in crime rates in neighbourhood and presence of vigilante members to the people to control crime more than Police. The Police force lacked adequate personnel and their incapacity to have adequate insight or knowledge of the local terrain are some of the reasons to the formation of community vigilante service in Keana LGA. Conversely, the increase in crime rates led to the formation of vigilante groups in most communities in Nigeria. The Nigerian Police Force don't have enough personnel that can take care of the population; therefore, the citizens need assistance from people around to help the police in patrolling the inner parts of the area where anti-crime patrol vehicles cannot reach.

**Table 3: Measures Employed by Community Vigilante Groups to Control Crime N=381**

S/N	Measures	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Night patrol of residential areas.	3.27	1.279	Accept
2	Report people with suspicious movement and people with unscrupulous wealth to the Police.	3.32	1.163	Accept
3	Surveillance on uncompleted or dilapidated buildings in any area and clearing of bushy sites or land.	3.02	1.258	Accept
4	Mounting of roadblocks at strategic places at night.	3.27	1.279	Accept
5	Burning of tyres at strategic places.	3.25	1.316	Accept

**Source: Fieldwork, 2025**

The results revealed that different measures and strategies were adopted to fight criminal activities in rural community. Majority of the respondents identified 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 at night, which was identified by the respondents. All these strategies were used to prevent and control criminal activities in Keana LGA. The mean scores and standard deviations showed different measures and strategies used to control crime in Keana LGA.

## **Discussion**

Result showed that young people in the Local Government Area formed vigilante security groups and control criminal activities in collaboration with members of community which played an active role to ensure security of lives and property in their domains. The study also found that the vigilantes' members have 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 Kohen (1966) 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.

The study equally revealed that the main reason 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 security service. 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 to the general population shows one thousand citizens to one Police Officer (1000:1). This figure also indicates the ineffectiveness of the Nigeria Police Force to perform their constitutional roles effectively. This agrees with the findings of Olaniy (2012) and Sekonyane (2002) who stressed that insufficient manpower has affected the Nigeria security agencies in effectively tackling the issue of crime in Nigeria. Also, 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 Chuwkuma (2002) and Adejoh (2014), 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 to fill -in the gaps left by the Nigeria Police and other law enforcement agencies.

## **Conclusion/Recommendations**

The study discovered that many factors led to the formation of community vigilante security service. The prevailing factor was increase in crime rates and 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 security service emerged in Keana LGA to compliment Police efforts in combating and controlling 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 people as spies on criminals' hide- outs and reporting such hiding places to law enforcement agencies were some effective strategies and measures employed in preventing and controlling crime Keana LGA of Nasarawa state.

In Keana LGA, vigilante security members should be regularly trained in various aspects of crime control and prevention in order to function maximally. The Government at all levels should show commitment in terms of financial support to community vigilante security groups to encourage

them perform effectively. Stakeholders in community should be ready to contribute significantly to the funding of vigilante groups in order to sustain the roles played by the vigilante security service. There should be collaboration between community vigilante security groups and the Police to enhance security communications and operations for a robust security strategy. Finally, the Police should endeavour to carry out strict supervision on the vigilante security to ensure strict compliance to regulation of their assignment. To this end, it is established that community vigilante groups in Keana were a self-help or supporting strategy of preventing and controlling crimes at community level. They are 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 security groups play a significant role in crime prevention and control at the community level.

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