



## Anambra State Vigilante Services and Crime Reduction in Anambra State Nigeria (2014-2022)

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
<p><b>Corresponding Author:</b> Nonso Sunday Okoye E-mail: <a href="mailto:chinonsookeoye41@yahoo.com">chinonsookeoye41@yahoo.com</a></p>	<p>Crime remains a significant challenge to human security and development in Nigeria, including Anambra State. To address this issue, the Anambra State government established the Anambra State Vigilante Services (AVS) to complement the efforts of the Nigeria Police Force and other security agencies. This study examined the Anambra State Vigilante Services and crime reduction in Anambra State, for the period, 2014 - 2022. Specifically, the study sought to analyze the effect of collaboration between Anambra State Vigilante Services and other security agencies has reduced armed robbery and kidnapping in Anambra State. In line with the objectives of the study, one research question and hypothesis were formulated. The work is anchored on Broken Windom Theory by James Wilson and George Kelling (1982). The study adopted descriptive research design for the study. A sample of 340 drawn from a population of 340 because the population is small and manageable. Judgmental sampling techniques was used for the study. A structured Likert-type questionnaire was developed for data collection, and found reliable at Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.80. A structured Likert-type questionnaire was developed for data collection. The econometric technique including Descriptive statistics, Pearson Product – Moment Correlation analysis was used to test the hypotheses. The findings confirms that the collaboration between Anambra State Vigilante Service and security agencies has significant effect on reduction of the rate of armed robbery and kidnapping in Anambra State, which is a crucial factor in reducing armed robbery and kidnapping in Anambra State. Based on the findings, the study concludes that Anambra State vigilante services have played a significant role in reducing crime in Anambra State. Through their community-based approach, intelligence gathering and collaboration with other security agencies. Amongst the recommendations is that Anambra State Government and security agencies should further strengthen and sustain the collaboration with Vigilante Services to leverage their community-based intelligence and enhance crime reduction efforts.</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> Anambra State Vigilante Services, crime reduction, armed robbery, community security, Nigeria.</p>

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## INTRODUCTION

Provision of adequate security is a social pre-requisite for the survival of any society. Every society takes appropriate measures to protect the lives and property of people living within its boundaries. Business and social activities may not go on freely without adequate security. This fundamental essence of security may be the reason why societies from time immemorial made efforts to police their neighbourhoods in order to secure them from criminal victimization. Security has to do with the act of preventing and protecting in order to ensure that certain facilities, equipment, persons or activities are safe from damage, pilferage, destruction, murder or disruption.

The emergence and growth of community policing has thrived on the inadequacies, shortcomings and several immunities attributed to formal policing systems in Nigeria. The establishment of a central police force had been more of a weakness than strength to policing in Nigeria; hence, the emergence of community policing. To make matters worse, the corruption perception of the Nigerian police by the Nigerian people over the years heightened consequently the Nigerian police is perceived as the most corrupt government institution both locally and internationally worsening community-police relation. Under this state of affairs, the Nigerian police have been unable to fight crime let alone prevent it (Ikuteyijo and Rotimi, 2012).

In Nigeria, night guards and vigilante groups have emerged in response to theft and armed robbery. Vigilante groups existed in Nigeria for decades not only under civilian rule, but also during the previous military regimes of Generals Babangida, Abacha and Abubakar. They have traditionally been seen as an extension to the work of law enforcement officers in a country with high level of delinquency and lack of police training, equipment and personnel. Thus, the traditional concept of vigilante in Nigeria exclusively refers to un-armed voluntary citizen or group created in local communities to help the security forces confront common criminality and social violence by arresting suspected delinquents and handing them over to the police. The Nigerian law recognizes the lawfulness of vigilante groups arresting suspected criminals provided that they are unarmed and that the suspect is immediately handed over to the police (Aniche, 2018).

Following the rise in security challenges in the country, different security agencies in the form of quasi police outfits began to re-emerge in different parts of the country as communities started resorting to traditional policing by rational choice; and with time, informal policing received a strong backing and support from the local people. In fact, some of these quasi-police outfits, at some point, became well recognized by the government as they complement the efforts of the Police. Although later plagued and bugged down by a lot of illegalities and shoddy businesses, the initial support given to the Bakkasi Boys by the government and the people, showed the efficacy of this security outfit in its early days. Currently, the vigilante group in Anambra state is a very vibrant example of the quasi-police outfits in Nigeria with success stories in the security sector of the state.

Similar success stories have been obtained in other areas where “many urban poor depend on a wide range of informal policing structures (Neighbourhood Watches, Community Guards, and Vigilantes) for the delivery of a measure of safety and security”. The case of Kaduna has not been far from impressive since the Kaduna State House of Assembly passed the State Vigilante Service Law on the 6th of June 2016. In areas such as the Calabar Metropolis where vigilantes operate, and Lagos, where the Neighbourhood Crime Watch

Operated, there was an observed healthy co-operation between these informal policing structures and the Nigeria Police Force. These quasi-police outfits reportedly caught criminals, handed them over to the police, and shared vital security information with the police. In fact, the involvement of the O'odua People's Congress (OPC) in the policing of some parts of Lagos State was said to have improved commercial activity in Oshodi and its environs.

Again, despite the controversies confronting its establishment, the gradual rise of the South-West Security outfit known as Amotekun is also another example of the sprouting of such quasi-police outfits in Nigeria. Presently, a similar security outfit is taking shape in the South-South region of Nigeria to provide security for the people of the South-South region. A similar development is seen in to be gradually unfolding in the South-East of Nigeria with an unconventional security outfit called the Eastern Security Network, formed by the controversial Biafran Leader, Mazi Nnamdi Kanu. Also, some like the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) in the North Eastern part even have the full recognition and backing of the Federal government.

All these are only a consequence of the rise in insecurity in Nigeria which has made some Nigerians to begin to clamor for state police while others oppose it. What one may ask is why some of these quasi-police outfits, which almost function as state police, would get the backing of not just the state governments, but also that of the Federal government, yet state owned police remain unrecognized in Nigeria. It is against this background that this study seeks to examine the effect of Anambra State vigilante services and Crime reduction, 2014-2022.

### **Objective of the Study**

The broad objective of the study is to examine the effect of Anambra State vigilante services on crime reduction in Anambra State, for the period, 2014-2022. Specifically, the study seeks: To analyze the effect of collaboration between Anambra State Vigilante Services and other security agencies has reduced armed robbery and kidnapping in Anambra State.

### **Research Question**

The following research questions are posed to direct the study were: How has collaboration between Anambra State Vigilante Services and other security agencies helped in the fight and control of armed robbery and kidnapping in Anambra State?

### **Hypothesis**

The following null and alternate hypotheses would guide this study:

- Hi: Collaboration between Anambra State Vigilante Service and security agencies has significant effect on reduction of the rate of armed robbery and kidnapping in Anambra State
- Ho: Collaboration between Anambra State Vigilante Service and security agencies has significant effect on reduction of the rate of armed robbery and kidnapping in Anambra State

### **Literature Review**

#### **Conceptual Clarifications**

#### **Anambra State Vigilante Services (AVS)**

The term vigilante or vigilante groups denote a range of different groups having different reasons. It could refer to persons or groups who consider the security of their communities as their responsibility to uphold the law in their neighbourhood. The main

purpose of vigilante groups is to assist in protecting the communities as well as fighting crimes without associating the group to political gain. Vigilante or any self -defense group having various nomenclatures could be locally, ethnic, state or religiously based (Agbu 2004). Similarly, Okechukwu (2015) described vigilante groups as youth-based ethnic militia formed for the purpose of protecting and advancing the selfish interest of their own people. In the attainment of their objectives, such a vigilante group always applies violence in discharging their duties. Examples of such groups are the Bakassi Boys, O’odua People’s Congress and Egbesu Boys.

However, Alemika and Chukwuma (2004) identified four types of vigilante groups that operate in Nigeria. They are: religious vigilante, ethnic vigilante, state-sponsored vigilante, neighbourhood or community vigilante. In this paper we are concerned with the community vigilante. According to Erhurhu (2017), vigilante groups refer to groups formed and funded by members of a particular community to fight against crimes and protect lives and property of individuals. They can be found in both rural and urban areas and are not armed with guns or ammunitions but rather armed with whistles, big sticks and machetes; they often carry out foot patrols at night to reassure the community of their security.

Vigilantism refers to the act of individuals or groups taking the law into their own hands to enforce order, seek justice, or address perceived wrongs outside the established legal system (Breckenridge, 2019). Vigilantes often emerge in situations where there is a perceived lack of effective law enforcement, breakdown of social order, or deep-seated grievances. While vigilantism can arise from a sense of civic duty or a desire to restore justice, it poses significant challenges to the rule of law and can lead to violence, human rights abuses, and social instability. Vigilantism can take various forms, ranging from informal neighbourhood patrols to organized armed groups. In some cases, vigilante groups may arise as a response to specific security challenges or criminal activities, aiming to fill perceived gaps in law enforcement capacity (Chapkis, 2019). However, the actions of vigilantes are often characterized by extrajudicial violence, lack of accountability, and a disregard for due process.

Vigilantism presents complex legal and ethical challenges. It undermines the authority and legitimacy of the formal justice system, which is designed to ensure fairness, due process, and accountability (Hughes & Edwards, 2018). The actions of vigilantes can lead to human rights violations, create social divisions, and perpetuate cycles of violence. Efforts to address vigilantism require a multifaceted approach. Strengthening the rule of law, enhancing law enforcement capacity, and promoting access to justice are crucial in addressing the root causes that drive individuals to take justice into their own hands (Nadarajah & Sriskandarajah, 2020). Vigilante groups are organized collectives of individuals who take law enforcement or security matters into their own hands, often operating outside the formal legal system (Zárate, 2019). These groups typically emerge in response to perceived failures of law enforcement agencies or a lack of trust in the criminal justice system. While some vigilante groups claim to protect their communities from crime and violence, their actions often raise significant legal, ethical, and human rights concerns.

Vigilante groups can take various forms, ranging from community-based neighbourhood watch groups to more organized and armed militias. In some cases, these groups may arise as a result of specific security challenges or as a response to criminal activities that the community perceives as unchecked by the authorities (Bjelopera & Randol, 2020). However, the activities of vigilante groups often involve extrajudicial actions, including

violence, intimidation, and vigilantism. The rise of social media and online platforms has also influenced the dynamics of vigilante groups. Vigilante groups is referred to as “cyber-mobs,” use digital platforms to identify and expose alleged wrongdoers, engage in public shaming, and even administer punishments (Sharma & Sharma, 2020). While some online vigilantism efforts may be driven by a desire for social justice, they can also lead to cyber bullying, doxing, and the spreading of false information. Hence, the existence of vigilante groups raises significant challenges in terms of rule of law, due process, and human rights. The actions of these groups can result in violence, human rights abuses, and the erosion of trust in formal justice systems (Bayley, 2019). In sum, while vigilantism may emerge in response to real or perceived gaps in law enforcement, it poses significant challenges to the rule of law, human rights, and social cohesion.

According to Dahrendorf, (2018), this is given as a strong word bearing a symbolic image of 21 bigger firing ammunition to hunt on criminals. Vigilantes are believed to be with no moral obligations ruthless and with full criminal mindset (Turner, 2014). The image has been magnified in the entertainment and media industry through acts in television shows, comic books and films. In these works of arts, assigned roles to antagonists or main characters including Batman, Punisher and Rambo are seen to paint notions portrayed by vigilante groups. However, their acts and the symbolic definition presented in those actors do not reflect the modern day’s vigilantism based on their English definition. The formulation of the definition given does not provide an actual scholarly component rather an imagery of individual views. Initial definitions paint vigilante groups to be social misfit on the other hand current definition creates a notion of them being heroes (Scott, 2011).

Scott, (2011) argues that definitions earlier stated were not reflective on scholarly arguments rather individual opinions. Vigilantism is explored in several scenarios and the characterization of the vigilante depends on who builds the image. This construction is contingent upon the constructor's nature (that is., his or her views on justice, morality, ethics, and politics), the vigilante's actions, the constructor's relationship to the vigilante's actions, and the cultural norms and preferences regarding criminal justice in that location and time (Scott, 2011). Vigilantes, by definition, operate outside of institutional structures. According to Miller (2018), Each vigilante or vigilante organization, in the resolution of a specific social problem, considers the current social structure ineffective. In addition, the vigilantes believed that the social problem was simply resolved. The failure of the system was not due to the fact that the problem was not recognized but due to the lack of action.

According to Miller (2018), discussing the issue of vigilantism should also focus on motives and counter motives of why breaking laws are justified or unjustified. The very root of the watchdog agency can be their socially built identity. The fact that the actions of the watchman are carried out outside of institutional social structures does not mean that they cannot be included or at least treated as acceptable by the institution. Vigilantes have most recently been casted in the works of art as heroes with decency in their actions and behaviors. Miller (2018) describes how Benjamin Fodor started clothing a Seattle citizen as a superhero, who called himself Phoenix Jones, and patrolled the streets to fight the crime. From the video, the police were happy to have someone like him to assist in creating order. Little did they know that he would turn up into a monster and spray people with pepper. Miller uses this analogy to demonstrate that having a group run without laid institutional policies can be very dangerous.

## **Crime Reduction**

Crime has been defined in various ways by different scholars. In ordinary language, the term crime denotes an unlawful act punishable by a state. According to The Law Dictionary, crime is an act committed or omitted, in violation of a public law, either forbidding or commanding it; a breach or violation of some public right or duty due to a whole community, considered as a community in its social aggregate capacity, as distinguished from a civil injury. In other words, Attenborough (2010) sees crime or offence (or criminal offence) is an act harmful not only to some individual or individuals but also to a community, society (“a public wrong”), and such acts are forbidden and punishable by law as Aquinas (2008) and Blythe (2009).

Furthermore, Onoge (2010) defined crime as an act or omission which renders the person doing the act or making the omission liable to punishment under any order in council, ordinance, law or statute. Clinard (2011) sees crime as those activities that break the law of the land and are subject to official punishment. Adler et al (2014) crime is any human conduct that violates criminal laws and is subject to punishment. Schmalleger, (2004) view crime as a conduct violating the criminal laws of a state, the federal government, or a local jurisdiction, for which there is no legally acceptable justification or excuse. While Territo et al, (2011) defined crime as acts that violate laws (formal, official, written statements of norms). According to them, no matter how reprehensible an act or the omission of an act may be, a crime has not been committed unless a specific law has been violated. Moreover, the violation must be either intentional or negligent. However, in spite of the differences in the definitions given by those authors the fact remains that a crime is an act or omission proscribed by the state; and has a punishment for its occurrence.

Crime is one of the major problems facing Nigeria today. The manifestation of this is evident in that no day passes without the national dailies carrying reports of one form of crime or another ranging from banditry's, corruption, conspiracy, piracy, murder, forcible rape, aggravated assault, kidnapping, robbery, burglary, motor vehicle theft, to arson (Daniel, 2021). The menace of criminal gangs is on the increase and their deadly exploits in recent times have sent many homes wailing and gnashing their teeth. Crime wave has blown to an alarming proportion and every citizen endeavors to safeguard the properties of his own seat. In the process, efforts are made by the Police and the vigilante groups to provide services that in effect cement over some of the cracks in the structure of the crime prevention and the strategies employed to achieve same may vary from one society to another, but the fact as research has proven, is that preventing a crime from occurring is a lot cheaper than the cost of arrest and prosecution. Crime prevention is an important activity that law enforcement agencies can carry out within the society generally, which if successfully and justly done, would reduce the societal costs (economic and social) and suffering associated with the effects of crime (RAND, 2013).

Crime prevention is defined in paragraph 3 of the Guidelines for the Prevention of Crime as comprising: strategies and measures that seek to reduce the risk of crimes occurring, and their potential harmful effects on individuals and society, including fear of crime, by intervening to influence their multiple causes (United Nations Office on Drug and Crime [UNODC], 2010). Crime Prevention refers to the range of strategies that are implemented by individuals, communities, business, non-governmental organizations and all levels of government to target the various social and environmental factors that increase the risk of

crime, disorder and victimization (ECOSOC, 2002; AIC, 2003; IPC, 2008). Sherman et al. (1997) noted that from general society perspective, the best and most useful activity that law enforcement agencies can carry out is crime prevention; and that most crime prevention emanates from informal and formal practices and programmes found in such institutional settings as communities, families, schools, labour markets, places, police, and criminal justice.

The ASVS was set up to make prompt report of suspicious and criminal activities to the police, keep effective and prompt surveillance of the communities, provide intelligence information to the police and alert community members on prevalent and emerging crimes. However, these roles of the ASVS are found effective when community members work closely with the Group, provide them with information and assistance needed to detect, identify and arrest criminals in their hide outs. In corroboration with this view, Bello (2018) affirmed that community policing is more effective when it is carried out as a collaborative and collective responsibility among stakeholders. The entire community share ownership, responsibility and accountability for reducing incidents of crime and violence in their neighborhood. Community policing promotes partnership of all stakeholders for proactive problem solving, crime prevention and control, improved safety, neighborhood revitalization and confidence. Mohammed, (2015) equally observed that close liaison or networking among vigilante, police and community members is quite effective especially with intelligence sharing, security planning and operations. Okafor, (2014) equally noted that the vigilante security group in close liaison with the police arrests persons whose activities are considered suspicious and hand them over to police. Furthermore, they supply critical, timely information, pertinent intelligence, which is considered a very effective strategy in reduction of crime.

Human safety and security are indeed human rights having a value of their own and serving an instrumental function in the construction of human contentment and prosperity (Odinkalu, 2011), but unfortunately, social life in 44 Nigeria has remained largely characterized by fear and insecurity (Odekunle, 2011; Odinkalu, 2011; Bach, 2004; Alemika and Chukwuma, 2010) and this is due to the high increase in crime and criminal activities. Since other formal crime control apparatus is inadequate to provide the needed security, hence, the importance of vigilante groups.

According to Alemika and Chukwuma (2010) there are four types of vigilante group. These are: religious vigilante group, ethnic vigilante group, state-sponsored vigilante group neighborhood or community 'vigilante group. As their names suggest, religious vigilante group exists to enforce religious laws and doctrines while its ethnic counterpart is organized along ethnic or tribal lines to defend narrow ethnic interests and sometimes carry out crime control functions (Chukwuma,2013). Good examples of state sponsored vigilantes in Nigeria are the Bakassi Boys, Bakassi Boys that were active in the three eastern states of Abia, Anambra and Imo States, and the Lagos State Neighbourhood Watchers. All these typologies of vigilante groups be it ethnic, religious, state or community, were formed as with the aim of containing the increasing rates of crimes. For instance, the Bakassi Boys began as a sincere response by traders in Aba, the commercial city of Abia State, to stem the high rate of violent property crimes in their markets. The groups were however, later hijacked and transformed into state vigilantes by the state governments. The one in Lagos State was established in the days of Brigadier General Buba Marwa as governor to assist with intelligence gathering and surveillance.

## **Collaboration between Anambra State Vigilante Services and other security agencies has reduced armed robbery and kidnapping in Anambra State**

Vigilante groups have increasingly become pivotal actors in Nigeria's security landscape due to persistent failures of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) in guaranteeing safety and justice. Vigilantism, as a concept, revolves around preventing and regulating crime through civilian-led efforts. These groups are local security structures formed by civilians sharing a common goal of protecting their communities. While their roles often resemble those of the formal police, vigilante groups primarily function to support state law enforcement agencies, especially in areas where the presence or effectiveness of the NPF is lacking. According to Danbazau (2007), policing fundamentally involves ensuring the security of individuals within a geographical location who share a mutual interest in defending lives and property. Policing also encompasses protecting residents from harm and enforcing community rules, the violation of which invites social sanctions. Traditionally, Nigerian communities had indigenous security mechanisms long before the formal police. However, the advent of technological advancement, urbanization, population diversification, and specialization diminished the relevance of these local systems, prompting the emergence of formal police forces globally in the 19th century, particularly in 1829 in Europe and America.

In Nigeria, the police were instituted under British colonial administration, primarily to protect colonial interests rather than serve indigenous needs (Chukwuma cited in Danbazau, 2007). As such, the colonial police operated with brutality, subduing local resistance through coercion. This repressive legacy has continued into modern policing, as noted by Innocent (2000), who highlighted how force and violence remain embedded in Nigeria's law enforcement operations. Despite transitioning to democratic rule after decades of military dictatorship, the Nigerian police still exhibit brutality, corruption, and rights violations (Olujinmi, 2005; Raimi & Balogun, 2022). An example is the extrajudicial killing of the Apo Six in 2005, which remains unresolved. Public perception of the police is largely negative, with many citizens viewing them as corrupt and untrustworthy. Alemika et al. (2000) emphasize this widespread distrust, attributing it to the police's subculture of violence and injustice, further amplified by media exposure. This lack of public trust undermines cooperation with the police, prompting citizens to form and rely on vigilante groups.

Vigilante groups perform several critical functions in Nigeria. First, they support crime intelligence efforts by monitoring their localities and passing information to the police. Their embeddedness within communities ensures timely and reliable data for crime detection and prosecution. Second, they aid in crowd control at public and religious events, compensating for manpower shortages in agencies like the NPF and NSCDC. Third, they are effective in combating crimes like theft, rape, armed robbery, and murder through both traditional and modern methods. Some communities even employ charms and initiate local trials as part of their security practices.

Additionally, vigilante groups contribute to counterinsurgency operations, especially in areas like the Northeast and Anambra State, where their involvement has aided military efforts against insurgents. They also safeguard religious and ethnic group interests by providing security at places of worship and events, particularly given the history of terrorist attacks on such locations. In essence, Nigeria's security challenges and the historical mistrust of its police have necessitated alternative mechanisms such as vigilantism. These groups serve as community-based enforcers and peacekeepers, helping to restore order where state

capacity is weak. While they are not substitutes for formal security agencies, their roles underscore the need for structured collaboration, legal backing, and institutional support to optimize their contributions to national security.

### **Empirical Literature**

The rising wave of insecurity across Nigeria has prompted critical reflections on the role of non-state actors, particularly vigilante groups, in complementing formal security systems. A growing body of literature has provided empirical insights into how vigilante groups function in different regions of the country to fill the gap left by under-resourced and often ineffective government security agencies. Across diverse geopolitical zones—from Borno and Kano to Benue, Lagos, Anambra, and Bayelsa—researchers have examined the strategies, challenges, and outcomes associated with vigilante-led community policing initiatives. Aina et al. (2019) explored the role of vigilante groups in combating terrorism in North Eastern Nigeria, with a focus on Borno State's Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF). Their study emphasized the failures of state security agencies in intelligence gathering, which allowed groups like Boko Haram to flourish. The CJTF, formed as a community-based response, demonstrated a capacity for local intelligence and direct action that was crucial in reclaiming territories from insurgents. Aina et al. concluded that local vigilante involvement in security matters enhances state capacity and called for structured collaboration between formal and informal security agents to ensure national security sustainability.

In a similar vein, Jibrin et al. (2019) evaluated the role of vigilante groups in Gezawa Local Government Area of Kano State. The findings underscored a critical gap filled by local vigilante units due to the perceived ineffectiveness of the Nigerian Police Force (NPF). Their mixed-method approach revealed community trust and participation in vigilante structures, which improved grassroots-level security. However, they noted that inadequate funding, absence of operational tools, and lack of legal frameworks constrained these groups. The study recommended community and government support through legal backing and training to legitimize and enhance vigilante operations. Anyo et al. (2020) offered a broader sociological perspective on vigilante activity in Benue State using conflict theory. Their research identified the socioeconomic and systemic triggers for the proliferation of vigilante groups, such as a broken justice system, high poverty levels, and police inefficiency. A key contribution of their study was the class-based analysis, which found that the lower socio-economic class relied more on vigilantes for dispute resolution and crime control. The study strongly recommended better funding, training, and the enactment of legal frameworks to guide vigilante operations while protecting the human rights of suspects.

In the urban context of Lagos State, Akinlotan et al. (2021) studied community policing in Ikeja and found that while crime rates had moderately declined due to community policing, the movement faced institutional and public perception challenges. The study revealed widespread public disillusionment with the NPF, and found that citizens trusted community policing efforts more than formal policing. However, concerns over poor funding, corruption, and lack of institutional support persisted. The authors called for a restructuring of the NPF and greater integration with community policing frameworks to rebuild public trust and effectiveness. Focusing on Anambra State, Umeifekwem (2022) examined the options and challenges faced by the Anambra State Vigilante Services (AVS). His econometric analysis showed that a significant portion of AVS's effectiveness was determined by the structure and support of community-based security systems. The study affirmed that AVS performance

improved when government support and clear operational boundaries were in place. Recommendations emphasized the need for improved coordination between formal and informal agencies, adequate funding, and clear operational guidelines to avoid jurisdictional conflicts. Complementing this, Ochiagha et al. (2023) investigated how community policing has helped curb kidnapping in Anambra State. With a robust sample and validated instrument, the study found that vigilante groups significantly contributed to reducing kidnapping through community mobilization and the "weed and seed" approach. The authors recommended more recruitment, sensitization campaigns, and stronger community-vigilante-government linkages for sustainable security.

In Bayelsa State, Oba et al. (2023) investigated the broader link between vigilantism and crime control. Employing a statistical approach, the study concluded that vigilantism was effective in reducing crime and recommended legal backing, training, and support for vigilantes. However, the study warned against excesses and underscored the need for legal and ethical accountability in the discharge of vigilante duties. From a more conceptual angle, Hauwa et al. (2023) emphasized the indispensable role of local mechanisms like the 'Yan-Banga' vigilantes in Kano's Wudil LGA. Their research highlighted the contributions of local actors in intelligence gathering and conflict mediation, reinforcing the idea that sustainable security requires grassroots engagement. While these studies focused on Nigeria, Agbor (2022) introduced a comparative angle by investigating law enforcement accountability in Cameroon. Although the study did not focus on vigilantes, its relevance lies in its critique of selective accountability and the gap in legal protections. It stressed the importance of extending such inquiries into the Nigerian context, especially in states like Anambra, where local policing efforts thrive.

The deteriorating security situation across Nigeria has necessitated the increasing involvement of non-state actors such as vigilante groups and community policing structures in combating crime and ensuring public safety. Recent studies (2023–2024) have collectively highlighted the growing relevance of these alternative security mechanisms in addressing various forms of criminality ranging from banditry to robbery, kidnapping, and communal violence. Adamu et al. (2023) focused on the role of vigilante groups in curbing banditry in Birnin Gwari Local Government Area of Kaduna State between 2015 and 2019. Despite the emergence of vigilante groups as a community response to pervasive bandit attacks, the study found limited success in reducing banditry due to insufficient coordination and lack of resources. Their findings emphasize that while community security outfits are essential, their impact is constrained by weak institutional support and the scale of insecurity in the region. Bashir (2023), examining community participation in crime prevention in Bauchi metropolis, reported more positive results. Using mixed methods, the study found that involving local community members, including household heads and traditional leaders, enhances the effectiveness of crime control efforts. Challenges such as lack of equipment and poor police-community cooperation were noted, but the study recommended sustained sensitization and partnership-building as ways to strengthen collective crime prevention efforts.

In a similar vein, Yisrael et al. (2023) explored the impact of vigilante groups on crime management in Calabar Metropolis, Cross River State. Their qualitative findings confirmed that vigilante groups have played a significant role in crime prevention. However, the study also revealed that these groups face serious operational challenges such as lack of funding and legal recognition. The authors advocated for institutional support, formal recognition, and

capacity building for vigilante organizations. In Anambra State, Igwebuikwe et al. (2023) examined the implications of local policing with a specific focus on the Anambra Vigilante Services (AVS). The study highlighted how local policing has increased community accountability and fostered collaboration with formal security agencies. It called for a security sector reform that accommodates regional concerns, especially in the South-East, and the need to decentralize Nigeria's overly centralized policing structure. Complementary insights were provided by Ivorgba (2024) and Emmanuel (2024), who emphasized the strategic importance of community policing in Nigeria's overall crime prevention framework. Both studies agreed that community policing enhances public trust, improves intelligence gathering, and strengthens social cohesion. They also noted that community safety is not only a government responsibility but one that requires active participation from local actors. The studies stressed the need for capacity building, sustainable funding, and structural support to ensure long-term success.

Nkwede (2024) investigated the effect of community policing in Ivo LGA of Ebonyi State. Employing inferential statistical analysis, the study confirmed that community policing had significantly reduced armed robbery and enhanced protection of lives and property in the area. The findings point to community policing as an effective local solution to the country's broader security challenges, provided there is adequate community engagement and coordination with formal police. In synthesizing these findings, it is evident that vigilante groups have become indispensable in Nigeria's fragmented security landscape. Whether combating insurgency in Borno, curbing crime in Kano, or addressing kidnapping in Anambra, vigilantes offer a community-rooted response to the pervasive failures of the formal security system. However, their effectiveness is often hindered by poor funding, lack of legal recognition, and the absence of regulatory frameworks. The consensus across the literature suggests that integrating vigilante efforts into the national security architecture—while maintaining legal checks, training standards, and oversight—could help reduce crime and foster a safer society

### **Gap in Literature**

The study engaged on extensive review of literature on Anambra State vigilante services and crime reduction in Anambra State. The study looked at various expert opinions on Anambra state vigilante services and crime reduction by different scholars but these studies paid no attention on the effect of collaboration between Anambra State Vigilante Services and other security agencies has reduced armed robbery and kidnapping in Anambra State in selected local government Areas in Anambra State, thereby creating gap in literature. This study bridges that gap in literature.

## **METHOD**

This study employed a descriptive survey research design to examine the effect of collaboration between Anambra State Vigilante Services (ASVS) and formal security agencies on crime reduction, particularly armed robbery and kidnapping, in Anambra State between 2014 and 2022. The study population comprised 340 respondents, including ASVS members, community leaders, and local security stakeholders. Given the small and manageable population size, a census sampling method was adopted, using the entire population as the sample. A structured Likert-scale questionnaire was the main instrument for data collection, focusing on participants' perceptions of ASVS collaboration and its impact

on crime rates. The questionnaire was validated by experts and tested for reliability using the Cronbach Alpha method, which produced a coefficient of 0.80, indicating strong reliability. Data were gathered directly through field administration and analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics, specifically Pearson Product-Moment Correlation, to test the hypothesis. A significance level of 0.05 was used. Ethical considerations such as informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation were upheld throughout the research. The methodological approach provided robust empirical insight into the role of ASVS in enhancing public safety and reducing violent crimes in Anambra State through collaborative security efforts.

## RESULT

Hi: Collaboration between Anambra State Vigilante Service and security agencies has significant effect on reduction of the rate of armed robbery and kidnapping in Anambra State

Ho: Collaboration between Anambra State Vigilante Service and security agencies has no significant effect on reduction of the rate of armed robbery and kidnapping in Anambra State

### Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Collaboration b/t ASVS & security agencies	73.2000	64.8800	5
Armed robbery & kidnapping	73.2000	65.0009	5

### Correlations

		Collaboration b/t ASVS & security agencies	Armed robbery & kidnapping
Collaboration b/t ASVS & Security agencies	Pearson Correlation	1	.084
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.021
	N	5	5
Armed robbery & kidnapping	Pearson Correlation	0.84	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.021	
	N	5	5

From the analysis above, it shows that the probability value (0.021) is less than the alpha value (0.05), the researcher therefore rejects the null hypothesis and conclude that Collaboration between Anambra State Vigilante Service and security agencies has significant effect on reduction of the rate of armed robbery and kidnapping in Anambra State with a correlation value of 0.84.

### Discussion on Finding

The following finding was revealed and discussed from this study. Finding from the research confirms that collaboration between Anambra State Vigilante Service and security agencies has significant effect on reduction of the rate of armed robbery and kidnapping in

Anambra State. The implication is that Anambra State Vigilante Services have helped in no small ways to curb the rate and incidence of armed robbery and kidnapping in the respective communities where they exist. They help to arrest certain categories of criminals and more importantly, furnish the police with information about crime and criminals that are beyond their ability to deal with. This finding is in consistence with Akinlabi et al, (2021) examined the role of vigilante groups in crime reduction and control in Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria. This study provided information on the role of community vigilante organizations in crime reduction and control in Ile-Ife. This was with a view to documenting and appraising various measures adopted in reducing criminal activities. The study concluded that vigilante groups played an important role in crime reduction and control at the community level.

### **Finding**

The study examined Anambra State Vigilante Groups Services and Crime reduction, 2014-2022. Specifically, the study seeks. The study found the following: The study confirms a collaboration between Anambra State Vigilante Service and security agencies has significant effect on reduction of the rate of armed robbery and kidnapping in Anambra State, which is a crucial factor in reducing armed robbery and kidnapping in Anambra State. This underscores the importance of interagency collaboration in crime reduction efforts.

### **CONCLUSION**

An essential prerequisite for the survival of any society is the provision of peace and social order. The police force has the primary responsibility for the maintenance of security. Their duties also include crime prevention, control, planning, coordination and other social services. Due to the obvious ineffectiveness and inefficiencies of the police force, supplementary security networks like the vigilante' groups have emerged obviously to assist the police in their duties. Their emergence therefore, was in response to the rising level of criminal activities. Based on this major finding, the study concludes that rather than dwell on the reported weaknesses and limitations of these vigilante security outfits, any genuine initiative that is committed to improving the human security of the local populations should instead acknowledge the centrality of these outfits in the security landscape of the society and work on their weaknesses with a view to strengthening and improving their performance. In view of the findings, the researcher recommended the following: Strengthen and Sustain Collaboration: Anambra State Government and security agencies should further strengthen and sustain the collaboration with Vigilante Services to leverage their community-based intelligence and enhance crime reduction efforts. This can be achieved through regular meetings, joint training exercise and intelligence sharing. Enhance collaboration between Vigilante Services and formal security agencies to ensure effective coordination and information sharing.

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