

A Study on Complementary Role of Villante Groups in Combating Kidnapping: A Study of Doguwa Local Government Area, Kano State

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Abstract

One of the main problems endangering the safety and well-being of people in various parts of Nigeria is the abduction phenomena. The issue continues to pose a security danger in Nigeria despite the government's efforts to address it and the perception of poor performance by security forces. As a result, Doguwa communities are turning to vigilante organizations to help traditional security services fight the kidnapping threat. The study assessed the achievements made by vigilante groups in their complementary role in combatting kidnapping in Doguwa Local Government Area (DLGA) Kano State, Nigeria. The ideas of routine activity and rational choice were examined and chosen as the study's theoretical framework. The study design that was chosen was a survey. Out of the entire population, 420 people responded in total. Stratified, snowballing, availability, purposive, and multi-stage cluster sampling methods were applied. To collect data, a structured questionnaire, In-Depth Interview (IDI), and Key Informant Interview (KII) instructions were employed. To examine the quantitative data, descriptive statistics like percentage tables and frequencies were employed. The study found that vigilante groups use a range of strategies, such as neighborhood watch, surveillance, foot patrols, community involvement, and road barricades for stop and search. Furthermore, it is shown that vigilante groups have reduced attacks, reacted promptly to emergency calls, and supported official security forces' efforts by apprehending over 20 alleged kidnapers in the fight against abduction. Effort shall be made by the government, law enforcement agencies, parents, religious and traditional leaders on confidence busiding strategies to volunteers on their role to complement the efforts of formal responsibilities of conventional law enforcement agencies, such as the Nigerian Police Force, NSCDS, DSS and Military personnel in the fight against armed banditry in Jibia LGA of Katsina state and Nigeria at large.

Keywords: Neighborhood watch. Kidnapping, Vigilantism, Sober, Sticks.

Introduction

One of the main problems endangering people's safety and well-being in various places of Nigeria is the occurrence of abduction. The issue has existed for many decades, making it as old as human history. Due to several aspects of armed conflicts, including farmers-herders disputes, ethnic-religious conflicts, and the Boko Haram insurgency, among others, kidnapping, which was once more common in the southern portions of the country, is now highly common in the northern sections of the country. Conflict entrepreneurs, or political actors that profit directly or indirectly from the conflicts, are mostly responsible for the majority of conflicts that have led to the horror known as kidnapping in Nigeria (Shuaibu, 2015).

Given how common it is throughout the nation, the term "kidnapping" has now become a catch-all in both public and private speech. Because everyone is impacted, it has become a source for fear and has escalated insecurity in Nigeria. This threat affects homes, marketplaces, schools, churches, mosques, and the roadway, leaving society open to danger and dread. Today, hostage-taking and kidnapping have expanded from the Niger Delta to other regions of the nation. The northern region of the country, which is home to thousands of young people who are physically fit but unemployed, is where the monster has expanded and established itself.

The country's current security issue is better understood in light of the evidence that even traditional monarchs and government leaders are not immune. Despite the strict protection available to them, the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government, as well as their families, are the targets of kidnappings. Davidson (2010) states that the majority of kidnappings are carried out by a gang of criminals with guns and cell phones who capture an innocent person, take them to a remote location, start calling their relatives, and demand a ransom. Kidnapping as a variant of armed robbery is infinitely more disturbing as it often occurs in the open among persons going about their normal business.

Given that everyone is impacted by the threat, Nigeria's growing level of insecurity is concerning. The experience of kidnapping traumatizes victims and their relatives. Nigeria has scared off foreign investment. Nigerians are suffering as a result of bad leadership and governance. Davidson (2010) goes on to say that the general level of insecurity in various areas of the nation has undoubtedly increased to the point where almost everyone is concerned about the direction the northwest region is taking. Nowadays, people's dread of robbery or kidnapping keeps them from sleeping.

Entrepreneurs have fled their companies out of fear of being abducted. As a result, Kano State is currently one of the states where kidnapping activities are occurring. According to Abati (2009), the overall level of insecurity in various regions of the nation has undoubtedly increased to the point that almost everyone is concerned about the country's future. Vigilante groups emerged in an attempt to supplement law enforcement efforts and enhance the safety of people's lives and property in their neighborhood because of the apparent incapacity of the official security agencies to adequately handle the kidnapping threat in Doguwa.

Many Nigerian communities practice vigilantism on a voluntary basis to fulfill their responsibilities and defend the lives of their loved ones. They answer to the community in which they work, and they have so far shown themselves to be significantly more successful than state law enforcement in preventing crime. In the Northwest, for example, hunters were crucial in halting Boko Haram's 2013 progress in Adamawa state and retaking the militant-held cities of Gombi and Mubi, according to the International Crises Group (2022).

The well-known Bakassi Boys are a vigilante group that was founded with the express purpose of combating crime in Aba, Onitsha, and other places in the southeast, according to Ajeli (2020). The issue of kidnapping is one of Nigeria's increasing security concerns. The issue continues to pose a security risk in Nigeria despite the government's efforts to address it. Only foreigners and the

wealthy have been abducted in the last ten years. All people, regardless of socioeconomic or racial background, are at risk of being abducted these days. Numerous people have died as a result of being kidnapped and suffering from psychological and financial abuse. As the study region's physical location, Doguwa local government area has seen a high number of kidnapping cases in the many villages under its authority. When the Nigerian police Kano command's anti-kidnapping team, which is based in Karasa village in Doguwa local government, came across a group of alleged kidnapers in 2016, seventeen (17) of them were taken into custody. Approximately seven individuals, including four nursing moms, were abducted in the region that year, and one of the infants perished during the rescue effort. Numerous security professionals have been killed by highly skilled kidnapers, while the government and its security agents—including police, military people, and other security agencies—have not produced significant results. Therefore, in Nigeria, vigilantes are solely voluntary citizens or groups formed by members of the community to support the official security forces' efforts to prevent crime and social violence. It is impossible to overstate their complimentary role. In order to apprehend the culprits and turn them over to the police for additional investigation, they are assisting the law enforcement. Vigilante groups employed a variety of tactics to reduce crime, such as community surveillance, neighborhood watch, and nighttime foot patrols organized by the community. Examining vigilante groups' complementing roles in preventing kidnapping in Doguwa Local Government Area, Kano State, is the goal of this study.

Significance of the Study

In many Nigerian communities, the kidnapping phenomena is concerning; therefore, raising community awareness is essential to combating the threat. Even though there have been a lot of studies on vigilante group efforts, this one will be very important because it will further both theoretical and practical knowledge of the complementing role that vigilante groups play in preventing kidnapping in Doguwa.

Scope of the Study

Examining how vigilante organizations fight kidnapping in Kano state's Doguwa local government region is the study's main goal. The study will focus on the regions where the local administration of Doguwa used vigilante groups as a result of ongoing kidnappings. Markets, traditional authority, schools, religious institutions, government organizations, the Nigerian police force, the NSCDC, vigilante groups, community leaders, and the general people would all be included in the study.

Research Questions

The following research questions will serve as the basis for this investigation:

1. What are the Strategies used by vigilante groups in their complementary role in combating kidnapping in Doguwa Local Government Area, Kano State, Nigeria?
2. What are the achievements made by vigilante groups in their complementary role in combatting kidnapping in Doguwa Local Government Area, Kano State, Nigeria?

Methodology

The study's focus is descriptive. For this investigation, a survey research design was chosen. Along with conducting in-depth interviews (IDI) and key informant interviews (KII) with stakeholders, this entails distributing a structured questionnaire to the general public, both male and female, aged 18 and up. The rationale behind the selection of both genders is to ensure complete population representation and, more importantly, to produce accurate data regarding the phenomenon of kidnapping and the function of vigilante groups in thwarting the threat of kidnapping within the study area. The Nigeria Police, Nigerian Security and Civil Defense Corps (NSCDC), Hisbah staff, religious and traditional leaders of the impacted communities in the study area (Doguwa Local Government), vigilante group leaders, and other stakeholders participated in both In-Depth

Interviews (IDI) and Key Informants Interviews (KII). These particular respondent categories were chosen because they are thought to be pertinent to offer trustworthy first-hand information on community efforts for preventing kidnapping in Kano state's Doguwa local government region.

Results

Research Question One: Whether the Respondents are Aware of Vigilante Groups in their Complementary Role in Combating Kidnapping Doguwa LGA?

Table 1: Whether the Respondents are Aware of Vigilante Groups in their Complementary Role in Combating Kidnapping Doguwa LGA

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	312	80.4
No	76	19.5
Total	388	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

According to Table 1, the majority of respondents (80.4%) are aware of the activities of vigilante groups in their complementary role in combating kidnapping in Doguwa LGA, while 19.5% are not. This indicates that there are vigilante groups in Doguwa LGA, Kano State. In an interview with a 77-year-old community leader, the individual stated, "Yes, I am fully aware about the activities of vigilante in combating kidnapping in Doguwa LGA" (IDI with male Village Head in Doguwa, 2024).

Research Question two: What is the Level of Awareness on the Activities of Vigilante Groups in their Complementary Role in Combating Kidnapping in Doguwa LGA

Table 2: Level of Awareness on the Activities of Vigilante Groups in their Complementary Role in Combating Kidnapping in Doguwa LGA

Level of Awareness	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very high	133	42.6
High	117	37.5
Medium	52	16.6
I don't know	10	3.2
Total	312	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The degree of awareness regarding the actions of vigilante organizations in their supplementary role in preventing kidnapping in Doguwa is shown in Table 2 above. Vigilante group activities are stated to be extremely high up to 42.6%, high up to 37.5%, medium up to 16.6%, and minority up to 3.2%. I'm not sure. This suggests that vigilante organizations are actively participating in their complementary role in the fight against kidnapping in Doguwa.

Discussion of Findings

On the tactics employed by vigilante organizations in Doguwa LGA as part of their supplementary role in the fight against kidnapping. According to the study, the majority of participants thought that the rate had decreased. Additionally, it is thought that the members of vigilante groups work in tandem with traditional security forces in order to battle the threat of kidnapping. Qualitative research also showed that vigilante groups' actions have assisted Doguwa local government in lessening the threat of kidnapping in some regions where the problem has been. Since the vigilante group's services are beneficial and motivating, this study supports Okoru *et al.* (2023) emphasis on the influence of vigilantes on crime control in the Kano metropolitan area of Nigeria. The vigilante group's ability to complete tasks is aided by the fact that its members live in the area and are better familiar with the locals. Compared to the police and other law enforcement organizations, vigilante members are typically in a better position to catch criminals operating in

their areas more quickly. Regarding the accomplishments, the majority thought that vigilante groups had complemented the official security agencies' role in fighting kidnapping in Doguwa LGA by promptly responding to emergency calls on crime prevention and attack reduction, stopping kidnapper attacks, and apprehending suspected kidnappers. Similar to the findings from qualitative data, vigilante groups are credited with helping to keep law and order in Doguwa LGA, especially in areas where kidnapping is a threat. They are also commended for their efforts to provide timely and pertinent information about suspicious acts and trends that are within their reach. In light of this, Mu'azu (2011) confirmed that the implementation of community-based security strategies has been crucial in preventing and lowering the level of insurgency in Borno. This is because volunteer citizens' actions improve security in the local communities by encouraging residents to report any suspicious activity in their immediate neighborhoods.

Conclusion

Kidnapping is one of the major security risks that Doguwa LGA faces, and security services by themselves are unable to effectively combat the problem, according to the available data and the existing circumstances. Therefore, vigilantism must be used to successfully supplement traditional security forces in their efforts to reduce the threat of kidnapping.

Recommendations

The study's conclusions led to the following policy-making recommendations and ideas for additional research.

- a. Community leaders—both religious and traditional—must be fully involved in promoting the activities of vigilante groups by educating the public about the value of community involvement in enhancing the safety of residents' lives and property.
- b. To combat the threat of crime and kidnapping, the State Ministry for Justice, law enforcement agencies, local and state governments, and non-governmental organizations must come up with ways to train and retrain vigilante groups in the operational, strategic, and legal knowledge of security operations. This can be achieved by holding regular lectures and workshops for members of vigilante groups.
- c. Effective community policing should be implemented by law enforcement agencies in the kidnapping states and throughout Nigeria to provide a pathway for building a friendly relationship with the host community.
- d. In order to help vigilante groups fight crimes, including kidnapping, educational institutions must conduct more research on the effects of community members and law enforcement.
- e. Examine the value of unofficial security systems in preventing crimes that plague communities and the nation as a whole.
- f. To improve the relationship between the police and host communities, further research is required on the function of the community policing method.

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