



Received: 06-02-2023
Accepted: 16-03-2023

International Journal of Advanced Multidisciplinary Research and Studies

ISSN: 2583-049X

The Role of Local Vigilante in Intelligent Gathering in Combating Insurgency in Suleja, Niger State Nigeria

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Abstract

This study is an investigation of the role of local vigilante outfit in intelligent gathering in combating insurgency in Nigeria using Suleja Local Government Area of Niger state as a case study. The purpose of this study is to ascertain the importance and role played by various local vigilante groups in combating crime and insurgency in Nigeria with keen focus on Suleja Local Government Area of Niger state via their contribution to its community as a voluntary security outfit known as Suleja Emirate Civil Security Corps. Survey research design was employed, cluster sampling was used and a sample size of 150 was selected using close and open ended questionnaire and interview with members of the SECSC balanced the findings. The study explored the outfit, the relationship of the informal group with their community, community heads and security agencies. The study showed that local vigilante outfit in Suleja has considerable made positive impact such as manning market and other social gathering, providing neighbourhood security, keeping watch

at night, keeping watch at day time in communities where people hardly be at home during the day, providing tips to formal security agencies, securing people who are under threat, helping during emergency such as accidents, flood, fire disaster among others. Also, it uncovered challenges such as high illiteracy, poor equipment etc. faced by local vigilante outfit and suggested possible means to enhance their duties. Considering the contribution and challenges of the outfit in combating crime and insurgency in Nigeria, the study recommended that government should employ adult education system to reduce illiteracy among members of the outfit. The study also recommended among others that members of local vigilante outfit and other informal security agencies such as the Nigeria Peace Corps can be defused into federal security agencies such as the police and military instead of making the outfit another federal government agency to avoid clash in job jurisdiction and strengthen the existing agencies.

Keywords: Local Vigilante, Government Agency, Combating, Crime and Insurgency

Introduction

Crime: is an act, default, or conduct prejudicial to the community, the commission of which by law renders the person responsible liable to punishment by fine or imprisonment in special proceedings, normally instituted by officers in service of the crown Osbori's Concise Dictionary (1993) quoted by Okau *et al* (2003:102)^[4]. In his view Curzon, view crime as any act or omission resulting from human conduct which is considered in itself or in its outcome to be harmful and which the state wishes to prevent which renders the person responsible to some kind of punishment as the result of the proceedings which are usually initiated on behalf of the state and which are designed to ascertain the nature, extent and legal consequences of that person's responsibility (Curzon, 1973; cited in Okau *et al*, 2003:102)^[4].

Findings on the relevance of the outfit in term of intelligence gathering can serve in creating crone relationship between the outfit and the government security agencies. Information gathered by this group could be properly used to ensure maximum security and peace.

The knowledge on the relationship between inhabitants of the community and members of the outfit proves whether the outfit is needed or not by the people they claim to secure. A firm relationship between inhabitants of communities and those trying to secure them will improve the achievement in making the society safe.

Though there are various agencies including well formidable security outfit such as the armed forces and the police, who are bestowed with the responsibility of fighting crimes and curtailing crisis in order to ensure peace and security, there are as well civilian entities and individuals be it government or non-governmental who also assume such or similar roles. In view of understanding the impact of those fighting against crime and conflict, this research is focused on the contribution of local

vigilante outfit within Suleja LGA to represent other parts of Niger state and Nigeria at large. Suleja is a Local Government Area with thirty-five (35) district and ten (10) Wards.

Research Methods

This includes research design, population of study, sampling and sample size, data collection and validation and techniques of data analysis.

Research Design

Social Survey research design was adopted in this study. Survey method is employed to ensure effective investigation and collection of data in order to present the findings or result in a clear manner for easy understanding and comprehensive analysis. This technique ensures clear link for others who may want to undertake study in this area or similar areas of study (Rabo, 2015:19) ^[5].

Survey research is a method in which a population or a portion thereof is questioned in order to reveal specific facts about it (Tischler, 1999; cited in Daudu, 2014:47) ^[2].

Population of the Study

Inhabitants of Suleja LGA and local vigilante members within this LGA constituted the population of the study. According to a report by citypopulation.de the population development of Suleja by 1991, 2006 census and 2011 projection, is as follow:

Population Census	Population Census	Population Projection
1991-11-26	2006-03-21	2011-03-21
151,300	215,075	254,930

Source: National Population Commission of Nigeria (Brinkhoff, 2017) ^[1].

Explanation

The 2011 population projection assumes the same rate of growth for all LGAs within a state. The undercount of the 1991 census is estimated to be about 25 million.

Further Population Figures:

Males Females 47.9% 52.1%

Gender Persons

Males 112,030

Females 103,045

Source: (Brinkhoff, 2017:2-4) ^[1]

Sampling and Sample Size

With the population density of Suleja LGA, it is impossible for the researcher to involve the entire inhabitants of the LGA; therefore, a sample size of one hundred and fifty (150) was selected to represent the whole.

Considering the distribution of people in the area of study, cluster/area sampling technique was employed to reach out to the sample size. The reason for adopting this technique is that it offers the chance to take multi stage samples in each level. This makes the technique more suitable for this study, since the population distribution is within a geographical area demarcated in form of wards which make up the Local Government Area. Thus, randomly, three (3) out of ten (10) wards were selected, wards selected are Bagama A Hushimi B and Wambai. With the aid of quota system, fifty (50) were

apportioned to each ward. The fifty (50) respondents were drawn by simple random sampling technique.

Data Collection Instrument and Validation

Though the researcher interviewed some individuals to gather information about local vigilante outfit in Suleja LGA, the basic instrument that was used to elicit primary data for analysis of the sample respondents is a semi structured questionnaire, while secondary data were sourced from various literatures reviewed.

These instruments are acceptable standard base on the fact that it offers greater chance to link much information in survey research. Very importantly, a semi structured questionnaire, helped the researcher to guide the respondents to work within the area of interest in gathering information. The instrument also offers a better chance for both quantitative and qualitative measure. With the help of secondary data acquired from other people's work, it offers the avenue to compare findings from the result gotten at the end of the study.

Techniques of Data Analysis

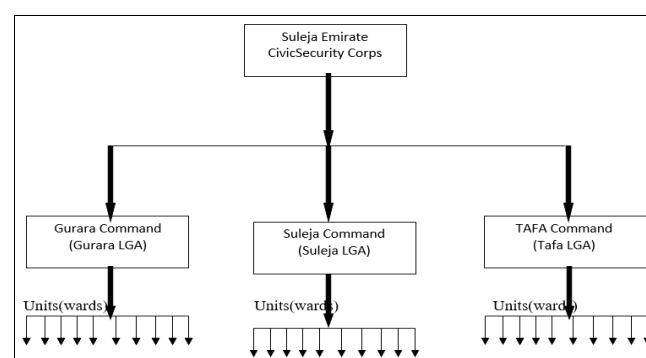
Frequency tables and percentages were used to represent data generated from the field and discussion was based on the outcomes as obtained.

Limitation of Methodology

No doubt survey method is a popular method used by arts, management and social sciences, because of its relevance in dealing with people and large geographical area and population. However, the quantitative emphasis in this study limits the result and findings to favour the view of respondents who are more in number.

By quantitative analysis, it means the view that supersedes in numerical value takes the stand even if the respondents may not be honest in their response. Also using simple random sampling to select respondents the technique is not free from the tendency of selecting respondents who have very little awareness about local vigilante outfit.

Therefore, though the research design and sampling technique adopted may prove to be the best for this study, it is not with zero error or weaknesses.

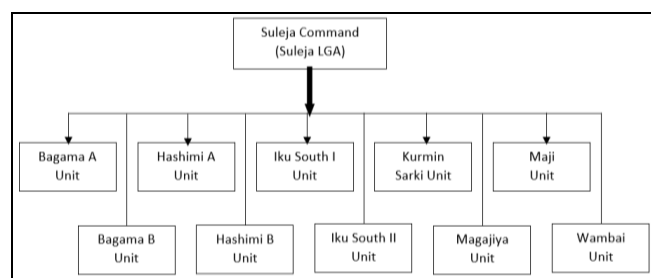


Source: Field Survey August 2017. (Daudu *et al.*, 2022) ^[3]

Fig 1: Organogram of Suleja Emirate Civil Security Corps

Fig 1 above is a representation of the Suleja local vigilante outfit known as Suleja Emirate Civil Security Corps (SECSC). The SECSC comprises of Gurara, Suleja and Tata Local Government Area, which are known by the formation of the outfit as Commands and are headed each

by a Commandant. The three Commands is headed by a Chairman, who as at the time of this report is Alhaji Adamu.



Source: Field Survey, August 2017. (Daudu *et al.*, 2022) ^[3]

Fig 2: Organogram of Suleja LGA Command of Suleja Emirate Civil Security Corps

Fig 2 above shows the formation of SECSC in Suleja LGA. As stated earlier, it is headed by a Commandant who is answerable to the Chairman incharge of Gurara, Suleja and Tafa LGA Each of the Unit, which is made up of a ward is headed by a Unit Commandant The note Commandant of Suleja SECSC as at the time of this report is Muhammad. It

is important to note that the Commandant and the Chairman did not disclose their other names to the researcher.

A total of one hundred and fifty (150) respondents were sampled, the researcher ensured a hundred percent (100%) response of 150 questionnaires, because questionnaires that could not be retrieved were replaced immediately. Therefore, the researcher did not count on questionnaires that were not retrieved as depicted on the table below.

Table 1: Summary of number of sample studied

Option	Response	Percentage
Number of respondents studied	150	100
Number of questionnaire not retrieved	0	0
Total	150	100

The questionnaire was divided into two sections, part A and B. Part A gathered information regarding respondents' bio data while Part B with the aid of questions carrying yes, no and no idea options and open-ended questions consist of respondents opinions on impact of local vigilante outfit in Suleja Local Government Area. The results of findings are represented in table 2 and 3 below.

Table 2: Opinions of respondents

Part B: Opinions of Respondents					
	Question	Yes	No	No Idea	Remark
5	Do you have vigilante in your area or close to your area?	124(83%)	17(11%)	9(6%)	"Yes" Dominant view
6	Are vigilante effective in preventing crime and maintaining peace?	66(44%)	58(39%)	26(17%)	"Yes" Dominant view
7	Do you think you need vigilante in your area?	114(76%)	2(1%)	34(23%)	"Yes" Dominant view
8	Does the presence of vigilante scare away criminals?	122(81%)	7(5%)	21(14%)	"Yes" Dominant view
9	Are you aware of any incident where vigilantes repel criminal operation or made arrest over an offence?	81(54%)	61(41%)	8(5%)	"No" Dominant view
10	Do you think vigilantes are quick and effective in responding to incident of crime compare to police	118(79%)	3(2%)	29(19%)	"Yes" Dominant view
11	Do vigilantes have sufficient information about criminals in their localities?	58(39%)	27(18%)	65(43%)	"Yes" Dominant view
12	Do vigilantes work with other (especially government) security agencies?	62(41%)	25(17%)	63(42%)	"Yes" Dominant view
13	Do vigilantes work with people of their localities?	81(54%)	11(7%)	58(59%)	"Yes" Dominant view
14	Are traditional rulers and other community leaders involved in matters concerning local vigilantes?	78(52%)	53(35%)	19(13%)	"Yes" Dominant view
15	Are vigilantes well equipped?	8(5%)	109(73%)	33(22%)	"No" Dominant view
16	Will vigilante perform better if they are well armed?	96(64%)	3(2%)	51(34%)	"Yes" Dominant view
17	Are vigilantes well trained?	4(3%)	110(73%)	36(24%)	"No" Dominant view
18	Will vigilante perform better if given more and better training?	107(71%)	1(1%)	42(28%)	"Yes" Dominant view
19	Are vigilantes educated?	14(9%)	61(41%)	75(50%)	"No" Dominant view
20	Do you think their level of education affect their performance?	111(74%)	10(7%)	29(19%)	"Yes" Dominant view
21	Does vigilante pose a threat to you, your community or the society (local government, state or country) at large?	54(36%)	65(43%)	31(21%)	"No" Dominant view

Source: Field Survey, August 2017. (Daudu *et al.*, 2022) ^[3]

Discussion

Another credit to the impact of local vigilante is the fact that they are more prompt in answering to distress call than the police. Inhabitants of Suleja LGA believe that the local vigilante is faster in attending to their situations compare to the police. Credits mentioned above is corresponding with the assertion of the Commandant SECSC that the SECSC have achieved greatly in reducing crime rate and creating a peaceful and conducive society for businesses to flourish in Suleja. (Daudu *et al.*, 2022) ^[3].

Considering the distribution of data on aspect of information on criminals within localities it shows that more people throw weight on local vigilante having information on criminals more than those who disagreed. This shows that local vigilante is a good source of intelligence gathering

which could be harnessed by other security agencies to aid them in discharging their own duties. This point is in line with the view of Olaniyi as earlier cited where he stated that "the police would be well advised to see how the efforts of various vigilante groups can be harnessed in combating the intolerably high level of crime in the country". However, this view of other security agencies tapping from the local vigilante outfit, is already taking place in Suleja LGA, since large number of the sample agreed that local vigilante and other security agencies work hand in hand. Some noted seeing vigilantes and military, police etc on joint patrol. While some stated that local vigilantes serve as informants to security personnel or agencies. It means there is an existing collaboration between various formal security body and local vigilante in Suleja. Furthermore, the relationship

between the local vigilante outfit and traditional and other community leaders shows that the outfit maintains a good collaboration with various segments of the society which could be a source for successful discharge of their duties. This serves as support to input of traditional and community leaders mentioned in chapter of one and two.

Frankly speaking, local vigilantes are poorly equipped and have little or no training compare to the task of securing lives and properties in modern age, where technology is highly invoked. The outfit is majorly occupied with people of low or no educational background; this can be confirmed with the category of people Olaniyi and the International Crisis Group revealed that the outfit recruits as its member or the Civilian Joint Task Force in the earlier chapters. Most of the members are hunters, traders and other rural/community dwellers that most times have no job (however this point contradicts the statement of the Commandant of SECSC who stated that the outfit employs only people who are engaged with job), training or formal education and most times aged too. The passion actually to do the job may not be their problem, but their capacity is the problem.

Though the larger number of people do not see local vigilante as a threat to them or their community, but a good number see the outfit as a threat with several reasons. Some people reported that vigilante members harass people indiscriminately during hours and in places of their operations. And sometimes people who they may encounter at the cause of their duty mostly especially at their major hours of operation which is at night may not be criminals. Another view is that people who are recruited may be criminally minded people; they may be people of questionable character, drug addicts, ex-convicts etc. Another point of concern is their level of illiteracy, lack of training, which may lead to havoc. A good example is the case of the vigilante who shot students at Suleja as stated in chapter one. Without training they may end up harming people who they want to protect and without education they may not be able to communicate with people they are protecting and this may cause aggression which may cause havoc. These set of people who parade themselves as vigilantes are sometimes used by politicians for selfish purposes and oppression. Sometimes, vigilante members who work at nights are not always at alert, they sleep while on duty, because they might have been exhausted at day time in trying to meet their daily needs since the vigilante job is not a paid or a well-paid job. As earlier stated in chapter one and two that most are volunteers, who are not paid or been paid little, they will need always source for other means of survival in the day time and this makes them inactive at night. Also, since people rely on them much beyond their capabilities in terms of weapon and training compare to criminals, they may fail their communities. Another critical point is that, since they are not under any control and most are community dwellers, they may be dangerous in incidence of community clashes or ethnic conflicts and religious bigotry.

On the models of operation of local vigilante outfit opinions from the open-ended questions reveals high relevance. They operate in local traditional ancient mode of crime control, just as described by Olaniyi in chapter two "crude (what Baker referred to reactive, ad hoc and often violent) form of crime control", it is a poor form of crime control. It is observed that local vigilantes operate mostly at night

between 9pm to 6am, though with the quest of Vigilante Group of Nigerian, their presence is noticed recently during the day too. There activities are gross noticed in the rural areas, though they are sometimes on patrol with other security agencies like the army and police in cities and rural areas since they are much familiar with their environs as home based. They secure places such as markets, schools, hotels and various social gathering among others. They use equipment such as clubs, knives/daggers, machetes, swords, catapult, bow and arrows, den guns, charms, voodooos and talisman. However, with the idea of Vigilante Group of Nigeria and involvement of some state governments, vigilantes in some states use sophisticated arms especially in the case of North eastern Nigeria. In Suleja, mode of identifying them and method of operation employed the use of maroon red uniform, ringing of bells at night during their duty hours, organizing and creating barricades for communities to monitor movements particularly vehicles. Their recruitments are usually in collaboration with community dwellers, traditional and leaders of other facets of the community such as market association, youth association, farmers association etc.

On the collaboration between community heads and vigilante, some people are of the opinion that their relationship is poor, while some categorically pointed out local leaders as helpful to providing information to vigilantes. The palace most times serves as their station or office and court. In incidents they take their case first to the traditional or community leaders before forwarding to appropriate authorities. Traditional rulers, other community groups provide them with equipment such as torch lights and weapons. Except for the advent of Vigilante Group of Nigeria and even with that, community leaders still largely control their recruitments and, in most cases, serve more like administrative heads of vigilante groups within their localities. The points here affirmed the statement by Commandant SECSC that the outfit works with information from community members and community leaders, and his view that criteria for recruitment of vigilante members include attestation of community leaders.

Several scholars and prominent Nigeria leaders as noted in chapter two have encouraged and even warned the government to do something about the increasing activities of vigilante. While some suggest that government should recognize them, others suggest that the government should be cautious about recognizing them. It will be helpful if the government aid them with accessories instead of the crude equipment they often use, take responsibility of training them, provide stations, encourage educated people to join in the call for community security, but the issue of placing them on payment by federal government as suggested by some people is something that deserve reconsideration.

Conclusion

Local vigilante outfit in Suleja LGA play crucial roles in intelligent gathering in combating insurgency.

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