

VIGILANTISM AND CRIME CONTROL: A STUDY OF MARARABA, KARU LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF NASARAWA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examines the efficacy and usefulness of vigilante groups or vigilantism in selected communities within Mararaba in Karu Local Government Area (LGA) of Nasarawa State, Nigeria. Primary data were derived from questionnaires and in-depth interviews with members of vigilante groups, other stake holders such as the Nigeria Police, community leaders and some residents who were purposively selected. The communitarian theory was adopted to explain people's perception of vigilantism. It was revealed that vigilante groups and variants of neighborhood watch groups who manned gates and streets were preferred methods of crime prevention and control in the communities studied. This was due to their dependability and the deterrent effects such arrangements have on offenders or prospective law breakers. Vigilante groups also provide a form of local intelligence and a platform for community policing. It is believed that the presence of vigilante groups reduced the fear of crime and creates safer communities. However, in spite of the positive effects, there were few incidents of abuse of human rights, torturing of suspects, bullying and intimidation of residents by vigilante groups. Vigilante or neighborhood watch groups were formed as a result of community and citizens concern for security and the fear of crime. Thus, the paper recommends that within Mararaba communities, the Nigeria Police working with relevant Non-Governmental Organizations should create a vetting and training platforms for vigilante or neighborhood watch groups (similar to that of the private security industry) to ensure that the rule of law is not breached and to enhance the synergy between the Nigeria police and informal security organizations.

Keywords: *Crime Control, Crime Prevention, Perception, Vigilante Groups.*