



Exploring the Role of Vigilante Group of Nigeria (VGN) in the Mitigation Crop Farmers-Herders Conflict in Barkin-Ladi Local Government Area, Plateau State Nigeria, 2019-2024

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Abstract

The rising insecurity and the ineffectiveness observed in the state security agencies efforts to curb conflict and criminals activities necessitated the formation of informal security agencies, commonly known as vigilante groups. The study is an assessment of the role of Vigilante Group of Nigeria (VGN) as one of non-state actors in mitigating crop farmers-herders conflict in Barkin-Ladi Local Government Area of Plateau State-Nigeria. The study is anchored on broken window theory as a theoretical framework. A descriptive survey research design was employed. Krejcie and Morgan table was used to determine the sample size of the study. The data of the study were generated from array of both primary and secondary sources. The primary data utilized 384 structured questionnaires than was administered to the respondents out of which 376 were retrieved. Simple sampling technique was adopted. Therefore, the multiple regression statistical method, facilitated by the statistical package for social sciences version 27(SPSS) was employed to test the hypotheses. The results revealed that $(0.000) > (0.05)$. This means that the formation of vigilante group had a significant effect on curbing crop farmer-herders conflict, also in the test of second hypothesis, the result revealed that p-value $(0.000) > (0.05)$ which means that the strategies employed by the vigilante group had significant effect on curbing crop farmers-herders conflict. The study concluded that the persistent conflict between herders and farmers is as result of lack of trust on formal security agencies to protect lives and property. The study recommended that there should be an arrangement of constant periodic interactions between the state security forces in every particular area with the local vigilantes. This meeting will avail them the opportunities to share intelligence, create forum for training the locals on how to go about the task of enforcing laws, and provide complementary security in their domain.

Key words: Vigilante, Crop Farmers, Herders, conflict, Barkin Ladi, Plateau State

Introduction

One major problem confronting world peace today is the manifestation of conflicts in different dimensions across the globe from Europe to America, Africa to Asia. Nigeria being the focus point has dealt

with a variety of security threats since its return to democratic rule in 1999, over the last few years. The outbreak of violence, which has primarily occurred in many parts of Nigeria, has been attributed to conflicts between herders and farmers. This violence has cause an upsurge of insecurity in the

regions causing unnecessary death and lateral displacement of thousands of people. According to UNICEF (2024), the heightened tensions between farmers and herders resulted in the series of attacks against civilians in Plateau state in the North-Central region, affecting Bokkos, Barkin-Ladi, and Mangu Local Government Areas. By mid-February, health authorities in Plateau State reported that 865 people were killed, including 160. This sudden surge has thereby drawn many people attention with different responses and reports on the crises, especially focusing on the reasons why these clashes occur and the causes of the conflict.

Onwughalu (2016) noted that previous governments and the present government are contending with waves of security challenges in the country that have assumed shapes of violence, assassination, kidnapping, ethnic and religious crises, cattle-rustling, organized crimes, violent agitation for self-determination, attacks by insurgents and terrorists with varying degrees of casualties. Amongst these challenges, the herders and farmers conflict have assumed alarming dimensions in the country. Agbase (2017) argue that these killings are spreading and have gone beyond the four states of Plateau, Nasarawa, Kaduna and Benue to Taraba and parts of Adamawa States and even in the Southern parts of the country. The escalation of conflicts between rampaging herders and crop farmers irrespective of the proliferation of security agencies charged with specialized roles in the maintenance of law, order and security calls their existence and functions to questions. This may be attributed to the inefficiency or

excesses of state security operatives (Military, Police, civil defence etc) in ensuring objective application of public law (Okoli, 2015).

Vigilante groups are very common in Nigeria society and they are dedicated to their duty because they are primarily residents of that area in which they operate, and to ensure their lives and that of their families are protected. They are answerable to the state governments and communities have proven to even be far more effective in combating crime than the state law enforcement agencies. For instance, in the NorthEast, according to the international crises Group (2022), in Adamawa State, hunters played a major role in blocking Boko Haram's advance in 2013 and taking back the cities of Gombi and Mubi that had fallen to the Militants. To recall in the South East, Ajeli (2020) had stated that there is the famous Bakassi Boys, a vigilante group that had the objective of fighting crime in Aba, Onitsha and other cities in the region. More recently, in the South West, Governors and citizens have hailed the two years old Amotekun as having reduced crime especially kidnapping for ransom by gangs based in the vast forests (ICG, 2023). In the South-South, today, security and safety is everyone concern and evidences has shown that most successful interventions against crime were those made by vigilantes groups and neighbourhood watch groups, and in collaboration with the policy.

In Barkin-Ladi Local Government Area, it is often a conflict between the crop farmers and Herders, which degenerate easily into a sectarian disputes resulting in a cycle of violence. On 10th April, 2010, a group of

unknown gunmen attacked the central area of Kassa village, this attack result to the death of five (5) persons and twenty-one (21) houses were razed down (Stephenson, 2016). The gunmen were said to be dressed as soldiers. This thus created a room for hostile confrontation between the two groups in the area. The violence was characterized by destruction of houses, cattle and denial of access to communities of the warring groups. In another development, on the 29th August, 2018, there was also an attack in Abonong village and Dorowa of BarkinLadi Local Government Area, in the attack, a pastor and his wife and other three persons were killed. A church was set ablaze and three persons were missed (Cinjel & Akende, 2015). It is against this backdrop that this study examined the role of vigilante group in mitigating crop farmer-herder conflict in Barkin-Ladi Local Government Area of Plateau State.

Statement of the Problem

In recent years, many communities in Nigeria have witnessed the persistent farmers-herders conflict and other crimes of various descriptions. Barkin-Ladi in Plateau State is not an exception. According to Lomang (2013) cited in Cinjel, Ugwoke et al (2019), in 2012, BarkinLadi witnessed another outbreak of hostility in Kakuruk village and Matse, a border area of Riyom Local Government, and on the 9th July, 2012 Kakuruk, a village under Gashish District witnessed farmers-herders violence in which sixty-three (63) persons were killed along with the then senator representing the constituency (GyangDantong) and the then

member serving Barkin-Ladi at the State House of Assembly (Gyang Fulani) Longman (2013), asserted further that a day after the hostilities, one hundred and fifty (150) dead bodies were discovered linked to the church of Christ in Nations (COCIN) building and the victims died in an ensuing inferno as the attackers were said to have stood by to shoot anybody that tried to escape.

The violence was characterized by the destruction of houses, cattle and denial of access to communities of the warring groups (Cinjel&Akende, 2015). The increase in the crop-farmers-Herder conflict wave and the inability of Nigerian Police and Armed Forces to deal with the situation effectively with the use of their sophisticated weapons has given rise to the emergency of vigilante groups in its form. The limited state capacity to provide safety and security to the public has led to self-help responses on the part of citizens including vigilante activity and in addition to vigilantism is a rapid growth in commercial security.

The public yearning for vigilantism could be considered as a response to wide spread negative perception that the police, the courts and other institutions of the state were unresponsive weak to curtail the level of crime, the vigilante groups, ethnic militias are seen as better alternative to the police in maintaining law and order in the community. The vigilante groups in Barkin-Ladi Local Government Area are dedicated to protecting their own lives and properties and the lives and properties of the members of communities, they have arrested suspected bandits, and other crime related to farmers-

Herders conflict. The vigilante group use state approved light weapons to contain crop-farmer-Herders conflict and have recorded a tremendous success in their operation in the study area.

Research Question

The following research questions are put in place to guide the study:-

- i. What are the reasons for the formation of vigilante groups to mitigate crop-farmers-Herders conflict in Barkin-Ladi LGA?
- ii. What are the strategies employed by the vigilante groups to mitigate crop farmer-Herders conflict in Barkin-Ladi LGA?
- iii. What are the comparative experiences and challenges encountered by the vigilante group in mitigation of the crop farmers-Herders conflict in Barkin-Ladi LGA?

Objectives of the Study

The major objective of this study is to assess the role of vigilante group in mitigating crop farmers-Herders conflict in Barkin-Ladi Local Government Area in Plateau State. The specific objectives are to:

- i. To examine the reasons for the formation of vigilante group to mitigating crop farmer-Herders conflict in Barkin-Ladi LGA.
- ii. To ascertain the strategies employed by the vigilante group to mitigating crop farmers-Herders conflict in Barkin-Ladi LGA.
- iii. To examine the comparative experiences and the challenges encountered by the vigilante group in

combating crop farmers-Herders conflict in Barkin-Ladi LGA.

Hypotheses of the Study

For the purpose of this study, the following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study.

Ho: The formation of vigilante group has no significant effect to crop farmers-herders conflict in Barkin-Ladi L. G. A.

Ho: The strategies employed by the vigilante group have significant effect in the mitigation of crop farmers-herders conflict in BarkinLadi L.G.A.

Conceptual clarifications

Concept of Herders

According to Stevenson (2016), a herder in Nigeria is someone who herds livestock and from the Fulfulde speaking ethnic group. Sanni (2015) sees a herder in Nigeria as any individual who own a large collection of livestock such as sheep, cows, goats, horse, donkey, Carmel and lots of others. The two definitions above attempted to point out that the word herder in Nigeria parlance is a generic name for any individuals who keep cattle and failed to incorporate others keepers of animal such as, sheep, goats, dogs, pigs and other domestic animals (Cinjel et al 2019).

The term Fulani herders on the other hand is seen as any person from the Fulani ethnic group or Fulfulde speaking language of the Nilo-Sahara family who keeps livestock or domesticated animals such as cows, sheep, goats, Carmel, donkeys and lot of others.

Stevenson (2016) advocated that a Fulani herder is livestock keeper and may be either transhumance or living a sedentary lifestyle. The scholar went further to stress that the Fulani herders must not necessarily be from Nigeria. He or she can be from other countries. The Fulfulde speaking ethnic groups are also in countries such as Mauritania, Senegal, Mali, Chadi, Cameroon, Niger and a lot of other.

Sanni (2015) also stressed that a Nigeria Fulani herder is different from a Fulani herder that comes from other countries or neighboring countries. He attempt to draw an analogy by stressing that the Nigerian Fulani herders poses certain attribute such as acculturation, friendliness, sociability and that differentiate them from Fulani herders from other countries. Johnson (2016) in the same direction states that the loose border in the northern part of the country created grounds for the infiltration of other Fulani herders of other countries into the shore of the country, Johnson further states that there is variation in languages they speak. This can be seen in their stress pattern, intonation and usages of vocabulary. The Nigeria Fulani ethnic group speaks Hausa language fluently and conflates with the Hausa people while those penetrating through the border have no knowledge of the Hausa language. In Nigeria, most of the Fulani herders are members of the Meyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN), a group that seek to protect, organize and defend cater for the needs of Fulani herders in Nigeria. The Nigerian Fulani herders are not mostly transhumance

as compare to their compatriot in Cameroon, Chad and Niger.

Concept of Farmers

Herders are largely from the same ethnic nationality (Fulani), while most farmers are from indigenous groups such as the Berom, Tiv, Jukun, Chemba, among other tribes, who have a long history of living in fixed geographical locations. Over 70% of Nigerians engage in agriculture, primarily as smallholders farmers at subsistence level (Adeniyi, 2019) argue that 80% of Nigerians farmers are smallholder farmers, accounting for 90% of the country agricultural produce. These farmers grow varieties of crops, such as maize, cassava, sorghum, yam, beans, millet, and rice. Agriculture remains the largest sector in Nigeria. Over the past seven years (2013-2019), the sector has contributed on an average of 24% to the nations GDP. In the first quarter of 2020, the agricultural sector contributed approximately 22% to Nigeria's GDP, and as of 2023, it accounts for 23.78% of the country's GDP, according to the immediate minister of Agriculture. Crop production is the largest segment within agriculture, accounting for about 87.6% of the sector total output and contributing nearly 19% to the GDP in 2023, while livestock, fishing, and forestry make up the remaining contribution to GDP from the agricultural sector at 8.1%, 3.2% and 1.1%, respectively (Mercy Corps, 2022).

The Concept of Conflict

Humans, as social beings in daily interface and interaction with other members of society, engage in social activities, which

often generate tension, and dispute as conflict is seen by the positive school of thought to be a part of the social structure in society. Conflict is the interaction of independent people who perceive incompatible goals and interference from each other in achieving those goals (Hocker & Wilmot, 1985). Conflict is an inevitable and necessary feature of our lives, and the challenge facing us is not the elimination of conflict but rather, how to effectively address conflict when it arises (Musingafi, Mafumbate and Khumalo, 2019). Conflict is a framework or mechanism in a society through which goals and aspirations of individuals and groups are articulated; it is a channel for a definition of creative solutions to human problems and a means to the development of a collective identity (Albert, 2001 cited in Ajayi and Buhari, 2014

On the negative side, Coser (2010) defined conflict as a struggle over values or claims to status, power, and scarce resources, in which the aim of the conflicting parties are not only to gain the desired values but to neutralize, injure, or eliminate their rival. Such conflict may take place between individuals, between collectivities, or between individuals and collectivities. Conflict is designed to resolve divergent dualism and achieve some kind of unity, even if it is through the annihilation of one of the conflicting parties (Park and Burgess cited in Abdu, 2010). Conflict is a particular relationship between states or rival factions within a state, which implies subjective hostilities or tension manifested in subversive economic or military hostilities (Quincy, 1971).

According to Shittu (2020), conflict is a form of friction, discord or strong disagreement arising within a group when the behaviour or action of one or some members of the groups are expected or restricted by some or other members of the group, especially in fierce or bloodily manner. Paluku (2013). Sees conflict as the presence of discord that occurs when the goals, interest, or values of different individuals or groups are incompatible and frustrate each other's attempting to achieve objectives. Heywood (2002) further conceived conflict as competition between two opposing forces, reflecting a diversity of opinions, preferences, needs, and interest.

Concept of Vigilante Group

The word "vigilante" is of Spanish origin and means "watchman" or "guard", but its Latin root is vigil, which means, "awake" or "observant". Vigilante or vigilantism is a contested concept without a consensus definition. Unya (2022) remarked that to be sure, vigilante groups are in numerous shapes and sizes; some belong to organized nationwide structures while others are made up of dozens or so unemployed locals. 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 work the researcher is concerned with the community vigilante. According to Erhurhu (2017), vigilante group 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.

The international crises group report (2022) in a different parlance use the term vigilante broadly to encompass all arrangements whereby subnational or informal groups are mandated to maintain law and order, curb crime and enforce norms, ranging from those formed by citizen volunteers to others established by government. In another different direction, Brainard & Derrik-Mills (2011) view vigilante group as a belief or intention held by the police that they should consult with and take account of the wishes of the public in determining and evaluating operational policing and practice and collaborate with the public whenever possible in solving local problems. Alemika (2007), argued in simple terms that vigilante group refers to cooperation between the police and the host community to fight crimes and ensure safety of lives and properties. Collaborating the above views, Adamu et al (2003) defined vigilante group as an act of policing based on the concept that police and citizens working together in creative ways to solve contemporary community problems related to crime, fear of crime, social and physical disorder and general neighborhood conditions.

Roles of Vigilante Group in Mitigating Crop-Farmers-Herders Conflict

Aina and Odiyi (2019) postulated that there are numerous functions performed by the vigilante groups of Nigeria. These include the following:

- **Vigilante Group Protects Lives and Properties:** Due to the insufficient police force in Nigerian society to carry out their functions, the Nigerian vigilante group was introduced to assist in meeting this demand, and one of such demands has been the protection of lives and properties. This function on the part of the Nigerian vigilante group is very necessary, given the importance attached to human lives, and much more important too, their properties must be protected; the Nigerian vigilante group has been functioning in protecting the lives of Nigerian and their properties.
- **Vigilante Group Maintains Peace and Order:** This aspect of function has been attached to the vigilante group. It is expected of it to maintain peace and order within society. For instance, anytime there are social functions or public functions, the services of the vigilante group can best be employed to assist in ensuring that, peace and order are maintained in order to guarantee the success of such event particularly, those recruited by the government.
- **Vigilante Group Assist in Combating Crimes:** This is another function of the vigilante group, they

assist in fighting crimes in the Nigerian society, particularly, in the night. During the night hours, the vigilante group will organize itself and go for patrolling for ensuring that any robbery attempt is averted. By so doing villagers, whose family members of the vigilante group are among are being protected from robbery attack.

- **Vigilante Group Arrests Crime Offenders:** The vigilante groups do not only prevent crimes, they can go as well as arresting any individual caught committing crime, because crime commission is invariably the same thing as encroaching or infringing the rights of the members of the public, and when you are caught, you are going to be arrested by the members of the Nigerian vigilante group, and once you got arrested by the Nigerian vigilante group, they will immediately hand you over to police for prosecution.
- **Vigilante Group Handovers Everything Recovered During Operation to The Relevant Authority:** Anything recovered during operations by the Nigerian vigilante group is returned to the appropriate quarters, nothing recovered is expected to remain in the custody of the vigilante groups. Therefore, it is one of the major functions of the Nigerian vigilante group to return all exhibits to help in further investigation purposes.
- **Traffic Control:** The vigilante group in urban areas control traffic

congestion and assist in accident or any other occurrence of natural disasters.

- **Settlement of Disputes:** The vigilante groups plays a key role in maintaining law and order and settle local disputes in their various communities.

Empirical Review

Murtala (2018) carried out a research on “vigilante Groups and Rural Banditry in Zamfara State: Excesses and contradictions”. The aim of the study is to assess the role of vigilante members in the fight against rural banditry in Zamfara State and also trace the genesis of the division amongst the vigilante and how it further worsened the conflict between the vigilante groups on one hand and the bandits on the other. The work employed the qualitative method in data collection. the major findings of the paper is that the members of vigilante group were partly responsible for the prolongation of the conflict in Zamfara State and no meaningful peace talk and lasting solution to this conflict will be achieved without disbanding of both vigilante group of Nigeria (VGN) and members of vigilante groups in the state. The paper concluded that the problem of cattle rustling and rural armed banditry was under rated at its inception about a decade ago in Zamfara. The study recommended that there should be no division among the vigilante groups in fighting against banditry in the state.

In their study titled “Role of Vigilante Groups in Battle against Terrorism in North-

Eastern Nigeria” Aina&Odiji (2019) discovered that the Civilian Joint Taskforce (JTF), as a vigilante group has favorably contributed to the Federal Republic of Nigeria” continuing war against terrorism. They concluded that one cannot but congratulate them for their varied counter-insurgency measures, which are responsible for the earlier feats recorded by the Nigeria side. They were responsible for the identification, apprehension, and killings of the Boko Haram terrorist.

In a study conducted by Aina & Ocheja (2020) in a study entitled “the role of vigilante security groups in crime prevention and control in Yagba East, Kogi West, Nigeria” the major objective of the study was to examined the role of vigilante security groups in crime prevention and control in Yagba East LGA, of Kogi West. This is because the Nigeria security agencies like police and others have also declared war against crime several times but to no avail. A cross sectional survey design was adopted in the study, quantitative and qualitative methods were used in data collection. The findings of the study indicate that the current level of crime reduced due to the intervention of vigilante security group. A result further shows that poverty, unemployment, inequality, hopelessness are the factors responsible for the high levels of crime rate. The study recommended that crime and criminal activities should be effectively tackled through the cooperation and collaboration of vigilante security service groups and the Nigeria police.

Adamu, Buba & Tukur (2023), January in a study entitled “the role of vigilante groups in curbing Banditry in BirninGwari Local Government Area from 2012-2018” The major objective of the study is to assess the role of vigilante groups to curb banditry in BirninGwari Local Government Area in Kaduna State. the methods adopted for data collection are primary and secondary sources. The paper posits that banditry constitutes a serious threat to Nigeria’s public safety and by extension to national security. The paper recommended that the vigilante group should be given basic security training that will equip them to identify and combat the security challenges that are associated with activity of banditry. The vigilante group should be given adequate compensation by the Nigerian State and also light weapons should be given to them and they should be accountable for every end of the week to the closest police stations in their communities.

Oba & Ene (2023) conducted a research on “vigilantism and crime control in Bayelsa State. The aim of the work was to investigate the intricate relationship between vigilantism and the management and control of crime in modern Nigeria, focusing specifically on Bayelsa State. To accomplish the study’s objectives, a survey approach was employed, utilizing a questionnaire as the primary research method. The research employed the descriptive statistics and the chi-square statistical method. The study outcomes indicated that vigilantism has had a significantly positive impact on reducing crime rates in the research area. In the light of its findings, it is recommended that

vigilantism should be promoted and carried out by dedicated and well-trained individuals to complement the traditional police force's security responsibilities. Vigilante groups should receive adequate resources, funding, equipment, and the support of robust enabling legislation of security duties. Maintaining high levels of motivation among vigilante groups is crucial to enhance their determination to combat and minimize crime in Bayelsa State.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on broken window theory. Journey back to 1982, the world was evolving, but within the pages of a landmark article, a model emerged, intertwining urban decay with burgeoning crime. This revolutionary idea, coined as the "broken window theory," was the brainchild of James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling (1982). Their collaborative exploration painted a tapestry of urban narratives wherein unchecked minor disorders snowballed into major criminal activities. But rewind a little further. Before Wilson and Kelling's elucidation, Philip Zimbardo (1969), a prominent psychologist, had already sown the concept's first seeds.

The broken window theory was used to explain the place of informal policing structures. The theory focuses on the control and prevention of crime from within the community as against from outside the community. It explains how effective and efficient informal policing structures are in controlling crimes compared to the formal policing structure that is made up of

'strangers'. The theory holds that only the community members can safeguard themselves from crimes. This is because they live in the community and can work and watch at all times. They also know who those potential criminals are and how best they can be contained. The core principle of informal policing structures is the constant maintenance of law and order in the various communities by members of that community. This is in line with the core notion of broken window theory, which asserts that the constant presence of police structures makes a community less conducive for crime and criminals. Increased police presence and enforcements of informal rules of conduct and laws can make a community seem less chaotic and safer, thereby, increasing the presence and involvement of residents in their community and lowering crime rates (Palmiotto,2000).

The BWT can be incorporated into the concept of informal policing in the sense that collective efforts by both the police and community dwellers can help alleviate the rate of crime in the community as the police see residents as partners in development and vice versa. The broken window theory asserts that if there is a crack anywhere in the community and no one is available or observant enough to take care of it, overtime it becomes a deep ditch that would pose a serious security risk to members of the society. The theory assumes that most neighborhood crimes are more often than not perpetrated by offenders who reside near the victims; this makes crime primarily a local problem which can best be solved locally.

Tenets of the Theory

The following are the tenets of the theory:

- **Disorder Breeds Crime:** The theory posits that visible signs of disorder, such as broken windows, graffiti, and litter, signal that an area is not monitored or cared for, creating an environment conducive to criminal behavior.
- **Importance of Social Norms:** It emphasizes the role of social norms in maintaining order. When minor instances of disorder are left unaddressed, it can lead to a breakdown of social norms, further encouraging criminal activity.
- **Police Role:** The theory advocates for proactive policing to address minor signs of disorder, as it can prevent the escalation of criminal behavior. This approach aims to create an atmosphere of order and lawfulness.
- **Community Engagement:** It highlights the importance of community involvement in maintaining neighborhood order. When residents take pride in their community and actively work to address disorder, it can deter criminal activity.

Relevance of the Window Theory

The broken window theory is relevant in this study because the theory can be incorporated into the concept of vigilantism in the sense that collective efforts by both the policies community dwellers can help curb the persistent attacks between crop farmers and herders. The core principle of vigilantism is constant maintenance of law and order in

the various communities by members of the community.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopted descriptive survey research design. A descriptive research design enables a study to take a sample from a subset of a population. The samples from this study were carefully selected to represent the characteristics of the larger population and the sample size was chosen using appropriate tools. This provides the study with the opportunity to generalize the findings of the study for the whole population.

Area and population of the study

This study was carried out at Barkin-Ladi, Barkin-Ladi Local Government Area of Plateau State was created in 1976 by the Gen. Murtala Mohammed regime. It has five districts (Fan, Foron, Gashish, Heipang and Ropp) for administrative convenience and a landmass of about 41sqkm. The area is located in the Northern Senatorial Zone of the State, which coordinates Lat 9°34'N, and long. 8°54'E (Barkin-Ladi Local Government Information Unit, 2024). Barkin-Ladi has a population of 179,605 (NPC, 2006). The population of this study comprised both gender. The ethnic compositions of the local government include mainly Berom, Mwahavul, Ron, Gashish, Angas, Fulani, Hausa and Fiyam. Farming is the major occupation of the people of Barkin-Ladi Local Government Area.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The total sample size used in this study was determined by Krejcie and Morgan table for determining sample size of a given population. According to Krejcie and Morgan (1970) a population of 179,605 has a corresponding sample size of 384 at 95 percent confidence level and five (5%)

percent margin of error. Therefore, the sample size for this study is 384. The proportionate random sampling procedure was utilized to allocate the sample size of 179,605 to the five groups. The simple random sampling technique was employed in drawing individual subjects from each category of the population for the purpose of the of questionnaire administration.

Table 1: Sample Size Distribution

S/NO	Name of District	Population	Sample Size
1	Fan	32,213	68
2	Foron	35,210	76
3	Gashish	42,234	90
4	Heipang	48,234	103
5	Ropp	21,800	47
	Total	179,605	384

Source: National Bureau of Statistics, 2024

Method of Data Collection

The study utilized both the primary and secondary sources of data. The major instrument for data collection in this study is structured questionnaire. Statistical techniques used in data analysis were descriptive and inferential statistics types. The multiple regression statistical tool was employed in testing the hypothesis.

Method of Data Presentation and Analysis

The method of data analysis Multiple involved both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistic tools such as frequencies, tables, and percentages were utilized to present the data generated from the field for easy understanding. In interpreting the data, the relationship between vigilant group and Farmers-herders

was established at both theoretical and empirical levels. Empirically the study used more of the quantitative data that are critical and analytical in providing descriptive and inferential details.

Data Presentation and Analysis

The socio-demographic data of the respondents show table that 247 of the respondents representing 66% were from the male folk, while 129 representing 34% were from the female folk. This means that majority of the respondent were involve in the study indicates that both genders were involve in the study. 41 of the respondents representing 11% of the respondent falls within the age bracket of 18-30 years, 189 of the respondents representing 50% were within the age bracket of 31-40 years, another 146 of the respondents representing 39% were within the age bracket of 41 and above.

Thus, the studies showed that majority of respondents involved in the study were aged between 41 years and above. The study further involved respondents from all age brackets. In table showed that 32 (9%) of the respondents were singles, 158 (42%) of the respondents were married, 21 (6%) of the respondents divorced while 165 (44%) of the respondents were divorced.

This means that majority of the respondents were widowed. In the study, 60 of the respondents representing 16% were the holders of SSCE, 55 representing 15% were holders of Diploma and NCE, 82 representing 22% were holders of first degree and HND, 102 (27%) of the respondents

were the holders of postgraduate qualifications (Postgraduate Diplomas, Master's Degree & PhD), while 71 (19%) of the respondents were FSLC holders. This means that majority of the respondents were postgraduates. Also in the study, 94 of the respondents representing 25% of the respondents were vigilantes, 177 (47%) of the respondents were farmers, while 105 (28%) of the respondents were herders. This means that majority of the respondents were farmers.

Research Question One: What are the reasons for the formation vigilante group in Barkin-Ladi L.G.A.

Table 4.3: Respondents Opinion on Reasons for the Formation of Vigilante Group

Issues Relating to Formation of Vigilante Group	SA	A	U	D	SD	Total
Rising Insecurity	167 (44.4%)	289 (23.7%)	55 (14.7%)	50 (13.3%)	15 (3.9%)	376 (100%)
Inability of the formal security agencies to curb crime	105 (27.9%)	111 (29.5%)	58 (15.4%)	61 (16.3%)	41 (10.9%)	376 (100%)
Justice system's deficiencies	191 (50.7%)	116 (30.8%)	37 (9.8%)	20 (5.3%)	12 (3.4%)	376 (100%)
High youth unemployment	161 (42.9%)	171 (45.6%)	30 (7.9%)	7 (1.8%)	7 (1.8%)	376 (100%)
Lack of trust in the fed. Govt. to protect all ethnic groups equally and impartially	163 (43.3%)	99 (26.3%)	75 (19.9%)	30 (7.9%)	9 (2.3%)	376 (100%)

Source: Field Work, 2024

The table above shows that 167 (44.4%) strongly agreed that there was rising insecurity which led to the formation of vigilante group, another 89 (23.7%) also subscribed the view, 55 (14.7%) of the respondents were indecisive, 50 (13.3%) of the respondents disagreed and another 15 (3.9%) of the respondents strongly rejected the view, 105 (27.9%) of the respondents strongly acknowledged the view that the

inability of the formal security agencies to curb crime, 111 (29.5%) of the respondents also acknowledged the view, 58 (15.4%) of the respondents were uncertain, 61 (16.3%) of the respondents opposed the view and another 4 (10.9%) of the respondents strongly rejected the view. In the study, 191 (50.7%) of the respondents strongly subscribed to the view that justice system deficiencies is another reason for the formation of vigilante group, 116 (30.8%) of the respondents also

subscribed to the view, 37(9.8%) of the respondents rejected the view, in the study, 161 (42.9%) of the respondents strongly subscribed to the view that there were high rate of youth unemployment, 171(45.6%) of the respondents consented to the view, 30(7.9%) of the respondents are not sure of their view, 7(1.8%) rejected the view and another 7(1.8%) strongly opposed the view.

In the study, 163(43.3%) of the respondents strongly agreed with the view

that lack of trust in the Federal Government to protect all ethnic groups equally and impartially, 99(26.3%) of the respondents supported it, 75(19.9%) were not sure of their view, 30(7.9%) of the respondents disagreed with the view while 9(2.3%) strongly opposed the view.

Research Question Two: What are the strategies employed by the vigilante group to curb crop farmer-herders conflict in Barkin-Ladi L.G.A?

Table 4.4: Respondents Opinion on Strategies Employed by the Vigilante Group

Issues Relating to Strategies Employed by Vigilante Group	SA	A	U	D	SD	Total
Effective surveillance method using modern technology	169 (44.9%)	155 (41.2%)	21 (5.5%)	16 (4.2%)	15 (3.9%)	376 (100%)
Effective intelligence information on attackers	125 (33.2%)	145 (38.5%)	45 (11.9%)	34 (9.1%)	27 (7.4%)	376 (100%)
Identification of black spots	102 (27%)	82 (22%)	55 (15%)	60 (16%)	77 (20%)	376 (100%)
Physical presence in strategic location due to the knowledge of terrain	161 (42.9%)	171 (45.6%)	30 (7.9%)	7 (1.8%)	7 (1.8%)	376 (100%)
Severe punishment method	167 (44.4%)	89 (23.7%)	55 (14.7%)	50 (13.3%)	15 (3.9%)	376 (100%)

Source: Field Work, 2024

The table above shows that 169 of the respondents representing 44.9% strongly acknowledged the fact that effective surveillance method by using modern technology is a strategy employed by the vigilante group, 155 of the respondents representing 41.2% supported the view, 21 (5.5%) of the respondents were not sure of their view, 16(4.2%) rejected the view and another 15(3.9%) strongly rejected the view. In the study, 125 of the respondents representing 33.2% acknowledge the view, 45(11.9%) were uncertain of the view, 34(9.1%) of the respondents rejected the view while 27(7.4%) strongly rejected the view. In the study, 102 of the respondents

representing 27% strongly attested to the view that identification of black spots is a strategy employed by the vigilante group, 82(22%) of the respondents supported the view, 55(15%) were not sure of their view, 60(16%) of the respondents rejected the view while 77(20%) strongly opposed the view. In the study 161 of the respondents representing 42.9% strongly suggested the view that physical presence in strategic location due to the knowledge terrain as a strategy employed by the vigilante group, 171 (45.6%) of the respondents subscribed to the view, 30(7.9%) of the respondents were not certain of their view, 7(1.8%) of the respondents rejected the view and another 7(1.8%) of the respondents strongly opposed the view.

In the study also, 167 of the respondents representing 44.4% strongly consented to the view that severe punishment method is one of the strategy employed by the vigilante group, 89 (23.7%) of the respondents also subscribed to the view, 55(14.7%) of the respondents were not certain of their view, 50(13.3%) of the

respondents rejected the view and another 15 of the respondents representing 3.9% strongly opposed the view.

Research Question Three: What are the challenges encounter by the vigilante group in combating crop farmers-herders conflict in Barkin-Ladi LGA?

Table 4.5: Respondents Opinion on Challenges Encounter by the Vigilante Group

Issues Relating to Challenges Encounter by Vigilante Group	SA	A	U	D	SD	Total
Inadequate funding	163 (43.3%)	99 (26.3%)	75 (19.9%)	30 (7.9%)	9 (2.3%)	376 (100%)
Lack of professional training and adequate arms	167 (44.4%)	89 (23.7%)	55 (14.7%)	50 (13.3%)	15 (3.9%)	376 (100%)
Bribery and Political interference in criminal justice system	161 (42.9%)	171 (45.6%)	30 (7.9%)	7 (1.8%)	7 (1.8%)	376 (100%)
Presence of 'bad egg' among the vigilante members	191 (50.7%)	116 (30.8%)	37 (9.8%)	20 (5.3%)	12 (3.4%)	376 (100%)
Threats from hoodlums who use sophisticated weapons	105 (27.9%)	111 (29.5%)	58 (15.5%)	61 (16.3%)	41 (10.9%)	376 (100%)

Source: Field Work, 2024

The table above shows that 163 of the respondents representing 43.3% strongly attested to the view that inadequate funds is a challenge encounter by the vigilante group, 99 of the respondents representing 26.3% consented to the view, 75(19.9%) of the respondents were uncertain of their view, 30(7.9%) of the respondents opposed the view while 9(2.3%) of the respondents strongly rejected the view. 167 of the respondents representing 44.4% strongly subscribed to the view that lack of professional training and adequate arms constituted a challenge to encounter by the vigilante group, 89(23.7%) subscribed to the view, 55(14.7%) of the respondents are not sure of their view, 50(13.3%) of the respondents rejected the view and 15(3.9%) of the respondents strongly rejected the view.

Furthermore, in the study 17 of the respondents representing 4.2% strongly attested to the fact that bribery and political interference in criminal justice system is another challenge encountered by the vigilante group, 171 respondents representing 45.6% attested to the view, 30(7.9%) were not sure, 7(1.8%) of the respondents opposed the view and another 7(1.8%) of the respondents strongly rejected the view. In the study, 191 of the respondents representing 50.7% strongly acknowledged the view that the presence of bad 'eggs' among the vigilante members, 116(30.8%) of the respondents consented to the view, 37(9.8%) of the respondents were uncertain, 20(5.3%) of the respondents rejected the view while 12(3.4%) of the respondents strongly rejected to the view. Also, in the study 105 of the respondents

representing 27.9% strongly subscribed to the view that threats from hoodlums who use sophisticated weapons, 111(29.5%) of the respondents subscribed to the view, 58(15.4%) of the respondent were not sure of their view, 61(16.3%) of the respondents opposed the view and 41(10.9%) of the respondents strongly opposed the view.

Test of Hypotheses

Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	2.091	.987	2.118	.035		
	Formulation	.275	.045	.263	6.050	.784	1.276
	Strategy	.096	.057	.099	1.680	.429	2.329
	Challenges	.469	.060	.439	7.781	.466	2.144

a. Dependent Variable: Curbing Farmers-Herders Conflict

Source: SPSS v. 27

Interpretation

The coefficients in table 4 showed that $CC = 2.091 + 0.275FM + 0.096ST + 469CL$. This means that farmers-herders conflict had increased on average by 27.5% with 1% change in the formation of vigilante group while strategy adopted by the vigilante group is held constant. It also revealed that curbing farmer-herders had increased on average by 9.6% with 1% change in the strategy adopted by the vigilante group while formation of vigilante group is held constant.

Decision Rule

The result revealed that the P-value (0.0000) is less than 0.05. This means that the formation of vigilante group had a significant effect on curbing crop farmers-herders

Test of Hypothesis One

Ho: The formation of vigilante group has no significant effect to crop farmers-herders conflict in Barkin-Ladi L. G. A.

Hoi: The formation of vigilante group has significant effect on crop farmers-herders conflict in Barkin-Ladi L.G.A.

Table 4.8: Coefficients

conflict at 95% confidence level. Based on the foregoing analysis, the study rejects the null hypothesis.

Test of Hypothesis Two

Ho: The strategies employed by the vigilante group have no significant effect on mitigating crop farmers-herders conflict in BarkinLadi L.G.A.

Hoi: The strategies employed by the vigilante group have significant effect on mitigating crop farmers-herders conflict in Barkin-Ladi L.G.A.

Decision Rule

The result revealed that p-value (0.00) is less than 0.05. This means that the strategies employed by the vigilante group

had a significant effect on curbing farmers-herders conflict at 95% confidence level. Based on the foregoing analysis the study rejects the null hypothesis.

Discussion of Findings

In the course of carrying out the study, it was found out that the formation of vigilante group in Barkin-Ladi had a significant effect in curbing crop farmers-herders conflict. This study collaborated with the study conducted by international crises group (2022), found out that vigilante organizations undoubtedly offer important service, supporting the military's counter-insurgency efforts in the North East, fending off bandits in the North West and North Central Zones and helping police fight crime countrywide. In the North East, particularly in Borno State, the Civilian Joint Task Force has won praise for helping the army battle Jihadist insurgents. In Adamawa State, hunters played a major part in blocking Boko Haram's advance in 2013 and taking back the cities of Gombi and Mubi that had fallen to the militants. All these are related to rising insecurity, the inability of the formal security agencies to curb crime, justice system deficiencies, high rate of unemployment and lack of trust in the Federal Government to protect all ethnic groups equally and impartially.

During this research work, the data revealed that the strategy used by vigilante group have a significant positive impact in reducing crop farmer-herders conflict in Barkin-Ladi Local Government Area. This study aligned with the study conducted by

Aina and Ocheja (2020), the finding showed that vigilante service groups use some strategic methods to reduce the activity of criminals such as spiritual strategic, intelligence, covering and combing the nocks and crannies of the community/street which the Nigeria police have been unable to do effectively, maintaining constant presence in the community/street to prevent criminals from operating and rapid response to security threats to prevent breakdown of law and order.

The study also revealed that the vigilante group in militating crop farmers-herders conflict in Barkin-Ladi Local Government Area encounters several challenges. Some of the challenges include: inadequate funding, lack of professional training and adequate arms, bribery and political interference in criminal justice system, presence of bad 'eggs' among the vigilante members and threats from hoodlums who use sophisticated weapons. This study is in tandem with a study conducted by Adamu et al (2023), noted that five outstanding organizational problems which the vigilante groups are facing this include: lack of funding by government, their relationship with the police and legal system, their legitimacy in the eyes of the communities, recruitment and management of personnel, lack of basic operational equipment and poor accountability by the groups.

Conclusion

The study has sought to examine the roles of vigilante group in mitigating crop

farmers-herders conflict in Barkin-Ladi Local Government Area. The study concluded that the persistent conflict between crop farmers and herders is because of lack of trust on state security agencies to protect lives and property. Therefore, the strategies employed by the vigilante group have been effective to mitigate the incessant conflict. However, the vigilante group in Barkin-Ladi Local Government Area encountered several challenges in their operation. These challenges include: inadequate funding, lack of professional training and adequate arms, bribery and political interference in criminal justice system, presence of bad 'eggs' among the vigilante members and threats from hoodlums who use sophisticated weapons.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusion of the study, the following recommendations were proffer:

- The vigilante members live and operate within their local communities, states and local governments should be mandated and empowered constitutionally to operate and remunerate vigilante organizations in all the states in Nigeria. This will help immensely in addressing security problems. The policy will also serve to provide employment to local youths who themselves constitute security threat when not employed.
- There should be an arrangement of constant periodic interactions between the formal security forces in every particular area with the local vigilantes. These meeting will avail

them the opportunities to share intelligence, create a forum for training the locals on how to go about the task of enforcing laws, and provide security in their domain.

- The community members should appreciate their efforts from time to time through praises, donations of food items and monetary gifts, to boost their morale to perform better in protecting the community.
- The vigilante group be given modern and technological equipment's to use in their operation. This will give them added advantage over the criminals in their localities.

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