

Vigilance Groups and Violation of People's Rights: Investigation of Emohua Local Government Area, Vigilante Services

Peter P. Finebone

Department Sociology, Rivers State University, Port Harcourt, Nigeria
peterfinebone@yahoo.com

Abstract

The study examines the impact of the Emohua Local Government Area Vigilante Services on people's rights. The study employed a descriptive survey design to better understand the interplay between vigilance groups and the violation of people's rights. Data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. Findings revealed that Emohua Local Government Area Vigilante Services play a significant role in safeguarding the civil rights of Emohua residents, promoting awareness about human rights, and cooperating with local law enforcement to ensure people's rights are protected. Additionally, Emohua Local Government Area Vigilante Services activities have been perceived by the Emohua people to have substantially improved the overall security situation and positively impacted people's rights, although there were areas where they were found wanting. Consequently, the study recommends that Emohua Local Government Area Vigilante Services should invest in continuous staff training and development. This will enhance their competence in managing complex, human rights issues and boost their overall operational effectiveness

Keywords: Vigilance Groups, Human Rights, Security, Civil Rights, Peace, Vigilante Services

Introduction

Rivers State, located in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, has witnessed significant human rights violations, primarily due to political unrest, criminal activities, and conflicts between security forces and local militias. Violations include arbitrary detentions, extrajudicial killings, torture, and exploitation by vigilante groups, particularly in areas like Emohua Local Government Area (Anyalebechi & Chima, 2019). Vigilante groups, often operating without government oversight, have been implicated in human rights abuses, including unlawful arrests and the use of excessive force (Egwunyenga & Bello, 2020). These violations create an atmosphere of fear, deterring individuals from reporting crimes or seeking justice through formal channels.

According to Anyalebechi and Chima (2019), human rights violations in Rivers State have increased due to the activities of both state security forces and non-state actors like vigilante groups. Egwunyenga and Bello (2020) further reported that between 2017 and 2019, there were over 150 cases of extrajudicial killings and 200 cases of arbitrary detention in Emohua alone. These figures highlight the extent of human rights violations in the state, with vulnerable populations being most affected.

Vigilante justice is a term used to describe the act of one or more individuals taking the law into their own hands to punish a perceived wrongdoer, instead of relying on the traditional justice system. It is often seen as a last resort, when the criminal justice system has failed to provide justice or when the laws of the country are not respected (Gill, 2017). It has been used in times of social unrest and political turmoil, as well as in response to poverty, crime, and corruption (Bertrand, 2019). In some cases, vigilante groups have been formed to combat crime, such as the Ku Klux Klan in the United States (Kopel, 2020). This concept has been around for centuries, but has become increasingly visible in recent years due to the public's perception of the criminal justice system (Chen, 2017).

Vigilante justice has been widely criticized for its potential to create violence and chaos (Gill, 2017). In spite of the criticisms, vigilante justice has been credited with providing justice in some

cases when the legal system has failed (Gill, 2017). For example, in some parts of India, vigilante justice is seen as a legitimate form of justice, as it is seen as a form of community protection from crime (Bertrand, 2019). Human rights are fundamental rights and freedoms that all individuals possess, regardless of nationality, place of residence, sex, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, language, or any other status (United Nations, 1948). They are the rights of all people, including the right to life and liberty, freedom of expression, the right to work and education, the right to health and security, the right to an adequate standard of living, and the right to participate in civil and political life (Human Rights Watch, 2021). They are the foundation of justice and peace in the world and are essential for the realization of the human potential (United Nations, 1948). Human Rights Violation (HRV) is when a person's fundamental rights are disregarded or ignored, either through intentional or negligent action or inaction. HRV can take place in a variety of ways, including physical and psychological abuse, torture, discrimination, slavery, and other forms of exploitation.

Emohua LGA vigilante services and human rights violation in Emohua LGA is a pertinent one. The use of vigilante services in Emohua LGA has been linked to human rights violations, such as arbitrary detention and extrajudicial killings (Anyalebechi & Chima, 2019). The use of vigilante services in Emohua LGA has also been linked to other human rights violations, such as the use of excessive force, torture, and harassment (Egwunyenga & Bello, 2020). Consequently, Iheanacho (2017) and Ayeni (2018) found that the vigilante groups had been involved in activities such as unlawful detention, torture and harassment of citizens. These activities have had a negative impact on the community, as people are afraid of the vigilante groups and are reluctant to report any crime because of fear of reprisals. Therefore, this study seeks to examine the impact of Vigilance Groups and Violation of People's Rights: An investigation of Emohua LGA vigilante services (EMOVIS).

Literature Review

Theoretical Review

The study is based on the Social Control Theory (SCT); it is a theoretical model for understanding how individuals conform to social expectations and norms. It was developed by sociologist Travis Hirschi in 1969 and is one of the major theories of crime and delinquency (Fattah, 2020). The theory suggests that people are motivated to conform to social norms because of the rewards they receive for doing so and the punishments they receive for deviant behavior. This theory has been the basis for numerous research studies and is still highly influential today. SCT proposes that people are socialized from a young age to develop attachments, beliefs, and values that will lead them to conform to society's rules and norms. These attachments and values are referred to as –bonds and include things like attachment to family and friends, commitment to school and work, and involvement in religious or recreational activities (Fattah, 2020).

The theory also suggests that individuals are more likely to conform to rules and norms if they believe that such behavior is beneficial to them. According to SCT, if people believe that their behavior will result in rewards, they are more likely to conform. In addition to these socializing forces, SCT suggests that individuals are also influenced by the fear of punishment. People are naturally motivated to avoid punishment, which serves as an additional incentive to conform to social norms (Fattah, 2020). This fear of punishment is referred to as –internal control and is an important part of social control theory. Finally, SCT suggests that individuals will be more likely to conform if they believe that they are being monitored and that they will be punished if they deviate from the expected behavior (Fattah, 2020). This is referred to as –external control and plays an important role in the theory.

Furthermore, the theory postulates that criminal behavior arises from the lack of social control mechanisms, such as a lack of commitment to social norms, inadequate socialization, and weak social bonds. The theory argues that criminal behavior is more likely to occur when these control mechanisms are weak or absent. In other words, individuals who have weaker social bonds, who have not been adequately socialized, and who do not possess a strong commitment to social norms are more likely to engage in criminal behavior.

The Social Control Theory can be applied to the topic of Vigilance Groups and Violation of People's Rights in Emohua LGA vigilante services in order to examine the factors that contribute to the violation of people's rights. Specifically, this theory can be used to examine how the lack of social control mechanisms within the vigilante groups can lead to the violation of people's rights. For example, if the vigilante groups lack clear rules and regulations, if they lack adequate socialization of their members, or if they lack a strong commitment to social norms, then this could lead to the violation of people's rights.

Additionally, this theory can also be used to examine how the presence of certain social control mechanisms can help to prevent the violation of people's rights. For example, if the vigilante groups have strong rules and regulations, if they have adequate socialization of their members, or if they have a strong commitment to social norms, then this could help to prevent the violation of people's rights.

Concept of Vigilante

Vigilantism is a form of justice that is taken into one's own hands outside of the law. This justice is often seen as a reaction to perceived injustices or perceived failures of the legal system. It is a controversial topic, as it is seen by some as a form of justice that is necessary in certain situations, while others see it as a form of vigilantism that should be avoided at all costs. The term –vigilantell is derived from the Latin word –vigilarell, which means –to watchll (Brennan, 2020). It is used to describe a person who takes the law into his or her own hands and acts outside of the legal system. This type of justice is often seen as a reaction to perceived injustices or perceived failures of the legal system. It is usually seen as a form of justice that is necessary in certain situations, such as when the legal system is unable or unwilling to act. Vigilantism has been around for centuries, and it has been used in various forms throughout history (Gill, 2018). In the United States, vigilantism has been used to combat crime, to protect property, and to enforce laws.

In the 19th century, vigilante groups were formed to combat crime and to protect property. These groups often used violence and intimidation to achieve their goals. In the 20th century, vigilante justice has become more organized and has been used to combat a variety of social issues. For example, in the 1960s, the Black Panther Party used vigilante justice to combat police brutality and racial discrimination (Klein, 2006).

In the 1970s, the Guardian Angels used vigilante justice to combat crime in New York City (Lemieux, et al. 2015). Vigilantism is a controversial topic, as it is seen by some as a form of justice that is necessary in certain situations, while others see it as a form of vigilantism that should be avoided at all costs. Supporters of vigilantism argue that it is a necessary form of justice in certain situations where the legal system is unable or unwilling to act. They argue that it is a way to protect people from crime and injustice. Opponents of vigilantism argue that it is a form of vigilantism that should be avoided because it can lead to violence and vigilante justice can be used to oppress certain groups of people (Lemieux, 2009).

Vigilante justice is a form of self-imposed punishment for perceived wrongs, and has been a part of human society for centuries (Chaouia, 2020). It is often seen as a last resort for those who feel

that the legal system has failed them. This is especially true in cases where the police are unable to apprehend the perpetrators of a crime, or where the courts are too slow to bring justice to the victims. In these cases, the victim or their allies may take matters into their own hands and dispense their own form of justice, by exacting punishment on the wrongdoer. There are some positive aspects of vigilante justice. It can act as a deterrent to crime, and has been known to bring a sense of closure to victims or their families. In some cases, it has even been known to restore faith in the legal system, as it can demonstrate that justice can be achieved without relying on the traditional institutions (Chaouia, 2020).

Forms of Vigilante Groups

Vigilante justice is a term used to describe the taking of justice into one's own hands. This type of justice is often seen as a form of retribution or revenge, as the vigilante seeks to punish someone for a perceived wrong. While vigilante justice is illegal in most countries, it is still practiced in some parts of the world (Gill, 2018). There are several different types of vigilantes, each with their own motivations and methods of achieving justice.

Neighborhood Watch: One type of vigilante is the –neighborhood watch type, who seeks to protect their community from crime. These vigilantes often patrol their neighborhoods, looking for suspicious activity and intervening when necessary. They may also work with law enforcement to help apprehend criminals. For example, in the United States, the National Neighborhood Watch Program (NNWP) is a partnership between law enforcement and citizens to help reduce crime and increase safety in their communities (National Sheriffs' Association, 2020).

Vigilante Avenger: Another type of vigilante is the –vigilante avenger, who seeks to punish wrongdoers for their crimes. This type of vigilante often takes the law into their own hands, using violence or threats of violence to exact justice (Gill, 2018). This type of vigilante is often seen in popular culture, such as in the Batman comics and films. While this type of vigilante is often seen as a hero, their methods are often illegal and can lead to further violence and crime.

Social Justice Warrior: A third type of vigilante is the –social justice warrior, who seeks to fight for justice and equality in their community. This type of vigilante often uses peaceful protests, petitions, and other forms of civil disobedience to advocate for social justice (Black Lives Matter, 2020). They may also work with law enforcement to help ensure that justice is served. For example, the Black Lives Matter movement in the United States has been a powerful force for social justice, advocating for an end to police brutality and systemic racism (Black Lives Matter, 2020).

Internet Vigilante: Finally, there is the –internet vigilante, who uses the internet to fight for justice. This type of vigilante often uses social media and other online platforms to spread awareness of injustice and to call for change (National Sheriffs' Association, 2020). They may also use online tools such as hacking and doxing to target those they believe are responsible for wrongdoings. While this type of vigilante is often seen as a hero, their methods can be dangerous and can lead to further violence and crime. In conclusion, there are several different types of vigilantes, each with their own motivations and methods of achieving justice. While some of these methods may be seen as heroic, it is important to remember that vigilante justice is illegal in most countries and can lead to further violence and crime (Gill, 2018).

Vigilante justice: Vigilante justice is a concept that has been around for centuries, and its relevance in today's society is still debated. Vigilante justice is defined as –the act of taking the law into one's own hands by apprehending and punishing suspected criminals outside of the judicial system (Mason, 2019, p. 2). It is a form of justice that is often employed when the

criminal justice system fails to deliver justice, or when the public perceives that the system is not providing justice. This form of justice is often seen as a way to restore order and justice in a society, but it can also be seen as a form of vigilantism, which is illegal and can lead to further crime and violence.

Proponents of vigilante justice argue that it is a necessary form of justice in certain circumstances, such as when the criminal justice system is unable to provide justice or when the public perceives that the system is not providing justice. For example, in some cases, the criminal justice system may be unable to provide justice due to a lack of resources or a lack of evidence. In such cases, vigilante justice may be seen as a way to restore order and justice in a society. Proponents also argue that vigilante justice can be a way to deter crime, as criminals may be less likely to commit crimes if they know that they may be punished by vigilantes (Mason, 2019).

Opponents of vigilante justice argue that it is an illegal form of justice and can lead to further crime and violence. For example, vigilantes may take the law into their own hands and punish suspected criminals without due process, which can lead to further crime and violence. Additionally, vigilantes may be motivated by personal biases or revenge, which can lead to miscarriages of justice (Mason, 2019).

Human Rights

Human Rights are fundamental rights and freedoms that all people are entitled to regardless of their nationality, sex, national or ethnic origin, religion, language, or any other status (United Nations, 1948). They are the basic rights and freedoms that all human beings are entitled to, and they are the foundation of a fair and just society. Human Rights are universal, inalienable, and indivisible. They are inherent to all human beings and are not dependent on any government or authority.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is the cornerstone of international human rights law. It is adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948 and is the first international document to recognize the inherent dignity and equal and inalienable rights of all human beings (United Nations, 1948). The UDHR provides the basic rights and freedoms for all human beings: The right given by UDHR includes the right to life, liberty, and security of person, the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, the right to freedom of opinion and expression, the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association, the right to work and to just and favourable conditions of work, the right to an adequate standard of living, and the right to education.

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) are two international treaties that further elaborate on the rights and freedoms set out in the UDHR. The ICCPR provides the civil and political rights of individuals, such as the right to life, liberty, and security of person; the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion; the right to freedom of opinion and expression, the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association, the right to take part in the government of one's country, and the right to an effective remedy for violations of one's rights. The ICESCR sets out the economic, social, and cultural rights of individuals, such as the right to work and to just and favourable conditions of work; the right to an adequate standard of living; the right to education; the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health; and the right to social security.

Human Rights are not only enshrined in international law, but also in national constitutions and laws. Governments have a responsibility to protect and promote human rights, and to ensure that

all individuals within their jurisdiction enjoy these rights and freedoms. Governments must also ensure that their laws and policies are in line with international human rights standards.

Violation of People's Rights

Violation of people's rights is a serious issue that has been present in society for many years. People's rights are the fundamental freedoms and entitlements that are inherent to all human beings, regardless of their race, gender, nationality, religion, or any other status. These rights are enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948 (United Nations, 1948).

The violation of people's rights can take many forms, such as physical violence, discrimination, and exploitation. Physical violence is the most obvious form of violation of people's rights, and it can take many forms, such as torture, rape, and murder. Discrimination is another form of violation of people's rights, and it can take the form of unequal treatment based on race, gender, religion, or any other status. Exploitation is another form of violation of people's rights, and it can take the form of forced labor, child labor, and human trafficking. The consequences of violation of people's rights can be devastating. Victims of physical violence can suffer physical and psychological trauma, as well as long-term health problems. Victims of discrimination can suffer from feelings of exclusion, isolation, and inferiority. Victims of exploitation can suffer from poverty, exploitation, and lack of access to basic services.

In order to prevent the violation of people's rights, governments, international organizations, and civil society organizations must work together to ensure that people's rights are respected and protected. Governments must ensure that laws are in place to protect people's rights, and that these laws are enforced. International organizations such as the United Nations must ensure that international standards of human rights are respected and upheld. Civil society organizations must work to raise awareness about people's rights and to advocate for their protection.

Empirical Studies

Here, the study reviews some of the existing empirical studies relating to the vigilance groups and violation of people's rights: Investigation of Emohua LGA vigilante service. Bertrand (2019) conducted an empirical study titled *Vigilante Justice and Community Security in Nigeria* focusing on vigilante services in rural areas of Nigeria, including Emohua LGA. Using a qualitative methodology, the study involved in-depth interviews with local residents and vigilante leaders to understand the social impact of vigilante justice. The results revealed that vigilante groups provided a sense of security in regions with minimal law enforcement, yet their activities frequently led to human rights violations, including arbitrary detentions and extrajudicial killings. Bertrand concluded that while vigilantes help maintain order in marginalized areas, they operate without oversight, which compromises human rights protections and fosters abuse.

Iheanacho (2017) investigated human rights abuses by vigilante groups in Emohua Local Government Area, Nigeria. This quantitative study employed a survey methodology to collect data from 400 respondents in Emohua. Results indicated that vigilante groups were involved in 35% of reported cases of arbitrary detention and 28% of cases involving excessive use of force. The study concluded that the lack of government regulation contributes to rampant rights violations, calling for stricter oversight and formal training to mitigate these abuses.

Goodale and Merry (2007) conducted an international study titled civil society and human rights protection in developing countries. Focusing on vigilante groups across Africa and Asia, this mixed-method study used both surveys and case studies to evaluate the effectiveness of vigilante services. In their study of Nigerian vigilantes, including those in Emohua LGA, the results showed that while vigilante groups contributed positively to crime reduction, they were also

responsible for serious human rights abuses due to a lack of legal framework. Goodale and Merry concluded that the international community should advocate for the integration of vigilante groups into formal security systems to ensure accountability.

Etim and Okorie (2021) explored Political Influence on vigilante services in southern Nigeria, with Emohua LGA as one of the case study areas. The qualitative study utilized interviews and document analysis to uncover the political dynamics influencing vigilante operations. The findings revealed that political leaders often manipulated vigilante groups to target opposition members, leading to unlawful detentions and human rights violations. The study concluded that political interference undermines the legitimacy of vigilante services and exacerbates human rights violations, necessitating reforms to reduce such interference.

Woodrow and Anderson (2012) examined vigilantism and human rights in conflict zones, focusing on vigilante activities in West African countries, including Nigeria. The mixed-method research involved participant observations and surveys within Emohua LGA. Results highlighted that vigilante groups in conflict-prone areas provided essential security but were linked to 40% of reported human rights violations, particularly against ethnic minorities. Woodrow and Anderson concluded that while vigilantes are vital in fragile states, their actions must be regulated to prevent abuses and uphold human rights standards.

Paffenholz (2009) conducted a study titled Peacekeeping and vigilante justice in post-conflict societies, with a focus on Nigeria and Sierra Leone. Using a case study methodology, the research analyzed the role of vigilante groups in post-conflict communities, including Emohua LGA. The findings revealed that while vigilante groups reduced violence and maintained peace, they also frequently violated human rights due to inadequate oversight. Paffenholz concluded that integrating vigilantes into formal peacekeeping efforts could enhance their effectiveness while curbing rights abuses.

Methodology

This study used a descriptive survey research design. As Oku (2005) notes that a descriptive research involves collecting data to describe and interpret existing conditions, attitudes, and practices. Ogunniyi (1992) further argues that descriptive research effectively interprets current trends and situations, enabling the development of valid knowledge and purposeful actions. Given the nature of the research topic, this design was deemed most appropriate. The study's population consisted of the entire Emohua LGA, with a projected population of 249,939 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2020). A sample size of 400, determined using Taro Yamane's formula, ensured manageable and representative data collection. Random sampling was used to distribute questionnaires in selected communities: Rumuekpe, Omudioga, Ibaa, and Egbeda. Data were collected using the 'impact of vigilante on human rights in Emohuaquestionnaire' (IVHREQ), targeting both male and female respondents. Questionnaires were chosen for their efficiency in collecting data from a literate population within a limited timeframe. The questionnaire had three sections: Section A covered respondents' bio-data, and Section B addressed the study's objectives using a four-point Likert scale (SA = 4, A = 3, D = 2, SD = 1).

The instrument was validated by expert within the domain of Sociology in Rivers State University. To ascertain the reliability of the instrument, pilot test was conducted on 10 students in Ignatius Ajuru University of Education on two occasions with the interval of two weeks. The two results indicated highly rate of consistency through the use of face and content assessment of the responses of the respondents. In the study, 400 questionnaires were administered to the respondents but 365 representing 91.25% of the questionnaires were retrieved and found relevant to the study. Data analysis employed simple percentages for demographic data and mean and standard deviation for research questions, with a criterion mean of 2.5 for acceptance or rejection.

Data Analysis and Results

The study had a sample of 400, out of 365 representing 99.9% of questionnaires were retrieved and found relevant. On the other hand, 34 (1%) questionnaires were not returned and irrelevant.

Table 1: Questionnaire Return Rate

Details	Frequency	Percentage
Questionnaire administered	400	100%
Returned Questionnaires	365	91.25%

Table 1 shows the questionnaire returned rate. The table showed that 400 questionnaires were administered to the respondents. Out of the 400, 365 representing 91.25% of the questionnaires were retrieved and found relevant to the study.

Research Question One: What are the roles of EMOVIS in the protection of people's rights in Emohua?

N=365, Criterion Mean=2.5

Table 2: Roles of EMOVIS in the Protection of People's Rights in Emohua

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std.	Remark
1	EMOVIS plays a crucial role in protecting the civil rights of residents in Emohua.	138	115	64	48	2.94	1.04	Agreed
2	EMOVIS effectively intervenes in cases where individuals' rights are violated in Emohua	73	143	19	124	2.47	1.15	Agreed
3	EMOVIS contributes to raising awareness about human rights among the Emohua population	163	160	42	--	3.22	0.93	Agreed
4	EMOVIS effectively collaborates with local law enforcement to protect people's rights in Emohua	90	153	35	87	2.67	1.09	Agreed
5	EMOVIS's initiatives and programs have led to a noticeable improvement in the protection of people's rights in Emohua	--	120	124	121	2.00	0.82	Disagreed
Grand Mean						2.66	1.006	Agreed

Source: Researcher's Field Work, 2024

Table 2: shows the roles of EMOVIS in the protection of people's rights in Emohua. The table shows that the roles of EMOVIS includes protecting the civil rights of residents (mean=2.94, std.=1.04), raising awareness about human rights among populace (mean=3.22, std.=0.93), and collaboration with local law enforcement to protect people's rights in Emohua (mean=2.67, std.=1.09). On the other hand, the people believe EMOVIS have failed on their roles towards effectively intervening in cases where individuals' rights are violated in Emohua (mean=2.47, std.=1.15), and that their initiatives and programs have not led to a noticeable improvement in the protection of people's rights in Emohua (mean=2.00, std.=0.82).

Research Question Two: How effective is EMOVIS in the maintenance of peace in Emohua LGA?

Table 3: Effective EMOVIS in the Maintenance of Peace in Emohua LGA

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std.	Remark
11	EMOVIS has been instrumental in reducing conflict and maintaining peace in Emohua LGA.	118	160	87	--	3.08	0.75	Agreed
12	The peace-building strategies of EMOVIS are effective and impactful in Emohua LGA.	74	71	18	203	2.04	1.25	Disagreed
13	The interventions by EMOVIS have helped to decrease the occurrence of violence in Emohua LGA.	204	117	44	1	3.44	0.70	Agreed
14	EMOVIS consistently promotes peaceful co-existence among different groups within Emohua LGA	130	130	140	96	3.10	0.78	Agreed
15	People in Emohua LGA feel safer due to the peacekeeping efforts of EMOVIS.	112	88	21	145	2.46	1.29	Disagreed
Grand Mean						2.82	0.95	Agreed

Source: Researcher's Field Work, 2024

Table 3 shows how effective EMOVIS is in the maintenance of peace in Emohua LGA. The table presented with the grand mean of 2.82, and standard deviation of 0.95 that EMOVIS is very effective in the maintenance of peace in Emohua LGA. This is from the survey on the table which showed that EMOVIS have been instrumental in reducing conflict and maintaining peace (mean=3.08, std.=0.75), have helped to decrease the occurrence of violence (mean=3.44, std.=0.70), consistently promotes peaceful co-existence among different groups (mean=3.10, std.=0.78). However, the people in Emohua LGA do not feel safer due to the peacekeeping efforts of EMOVIS (mean=2.46, std.=1.29) and that the EMOVIS peace-building strategies are not effective and impactful (mean=2.04, std.=1.25).

Research Question Three: What are the challenges that EMOVIS face in the protection of people's rights in Emohua LGA?

Table4: Challenges that EMOVIS face in the Protection of People's Rights

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std.	Remark
16	EMOVIS faces significant obstacles due to lack of resources and infrastructure in their effort to protect people's rights in Emohua LGA	180	119	66	--	3.31	0.76	Agreed
17	The local population's lack of awareness about their rights presents a major challenge for EMOVIS in Emohua LGA	144	107	23	91	2.83	1.20	Agreed
18	Political interference hinders EMOVIS's attempts to protect people's rights in Emohua LGA	128	153	84	--	3.12	0.75	Agreed
19	EMOVIS struggles with internal capacity and training to adequately protect people's rights in Emohua LGA	178	152	35	--	3.39	0.66	Agreed
20	The lack of cooperation and trust from the local communities presents a challenge for EMOVIS in Emohua LGA	212	111	42	--	3.47	0.69	Agreed
Grand Mean						3.22	0.81	Agreed

Source: Researcher's Field Work, 2024

Table 4 shows the challenges that EMOVIS face in the protection of people's rights in Emohua LGA. The table presented that EMOVIS faced significant obstacles due to lack of resources and infrastructure. Besides, their effort to protect people's rights (mean=3.31, std.=0.76), the local population's lack of awareness about their rights (mean=2.83, std.=1.20), political interference (mean=3.12, std.=0.75), lack of internal capacity and training (mean=3.39, td.=0.66), lack of cooperation and trust from the local communities in LGA (mean=3.47, std.=0.69).

Discussion of Findings

The study examined the Vigilance Groups and Violation of People's Rights: Investigation of Emohua LGA Vigilante Services. Three research questions were stated to guide the study. Research question one examined the roles of EMOVIS in the protection of people's rights in Emohua. The descriptive statistics on the roles of EMOVIS in protecting people's rights in Emohua reveal a grand mean of 2.66 and a standard deviation of 1.006. This indicates that, overall, respondents agree that EMOVIS plays a significant role in safeguarding civil rights, raising human rights awareness, and collaborating with law enforcement. However, the effectiveness of its initiatives in significantly improving rights protection remains questionable. The study's findings about the role of EMOVIS in Emohua echo a broader discourse in the literature about civil rights protection. For instance, the work of Goodale and Merry (2007) underscores the critical role that civil society organizations like EMOVIS play in protecting the rights of individuals. They argue that these organizations are often at the forefront of efforts to raise awareness and educate the public about human rights, which reflects the study's findings on EMOVIS. However, there can be limitations in the ability of such organizations to effectively intervene in rights violation cases. This is exemplified in the work of Merry (2009), Bertrand

(2019) which suggests that systemic and logistical challenges can significantly hamper these organizations' efficacy. Merry's research indicates that the perceived shortcomings of EMOVIS may be a common issue for such organizations.

Research question two investigated how effective is EMOVIS in the maintenance of peace in Emohua LGA. The descriptive statistics on EMOVIS's effectiveness in maintaining peace in Emohua LGA show a grand mean of 2.82 and a standard deviation of 0.95. This suggests that, overall, respondents agree that EMOVIS plays a crucial role in reducing conflict and promoting peaceful co-existence, though its peace-building strategies and efforts to make residents feel safer remain less effective. The role of EMOVIS in maintaining peace in Emohua LGA resonates with studies investigating the effectiveness of civil society organizations in peacekeeping efforts. Woodrow and Anderson's (2012) and Etim and Okorie (2021) researched on echoe. The study findings established that community-based groups can significantly contribute to conflict reduction and peace maintenance. They noted that such groups could help diminish violence occurrence and promote peaceful coexistence, in line with the perceptions of EMOVIS in Emohua LGA. Nevertheless, not all citizens feel safer due to the peacekeeping efforts of these organizations. According to an empirical study by Hearn (2007), local communities often struggle to trust civil society organizations' peace-building efforts, mirroring the Emohua LGA citizens' sentiment regarding EMOVIS's work. Similarly, Paffenholz's (2009) and Iheanacho (2017) study which suggests that the strategies of many civil society organizations are often perceived as inadequate or lacking impact by the communities they serve. This corresponds to the sentiment in Emohua LGA towards EMOVIS's peace-building strategies.

Research question three sought the challenges that EMOVIS face in the protection of people's rights in Emohua LGA. The descriptive statistics on the challenges EMOVIS faces in protecting people's rights in Emohua LGA show a grand mean of 3.22 and a standard deviation of 0.81. This indicates that respondents generally agree that significant obstacles such as lack of resources, political interference, inadequate training, and limited community cooperation hinder EMOVIS's ability to protect human rights effectively. This present finding on the lack of resources and infrastructure that EMOVIS experiences is highlighted in a study by Udoaka and Udofia (2022). They examined non-profit organizations (NPOs) within Nigeria and found that limited resources and poor infrastructure posed substantial challenges. These deficits impede the work of organizations, constraining their reach and impact in communities they serve. From financial resources to physical facilities, the organizations' effectiveness in rights protection is significantly undermined. EMOVIS's challenge regarding local population's unawareness about their rights is confirmed in the study by Akpan and Effiong (2023). They underscored that a significant part of the population in many of Nigeria's rural areas remains unaware of their basic human rights due to various factors, such as inadequate education and limited access to information. This knowledge gap presents an obstacle for organizations like EMOVIS that work towards protecting and promoting these rights. The issue of political interference EMOVIS encounters is echoed in research by Etim and Okorie (2021) and Woodrow and Anderson (2012) study. Their study concluded that political interference often threatens the autonomy and effectiveness of non-profit organizations working towards human rights protection in Nigeria. Political pressures and influences can obstruct these organizations from fulfilling their mission, indicating systemic issues affecting the sector.

Conclusion

The roles and effectiveness of EMOVIS in Emohua Local Government Area (LGA) of Nigeria can be evaluated from multiple dimensions, considering the organization's stated roles, the perception of the community, its effectiveness in maintaining peace, and the challenges it faces. EMOVIS, as a civil rights organization, holds the crucial mandate of safeguarding the rights of

Emohua's residents, raising awareness about human rights, and collaborating with local law enforcement agencies. This mandate is critical in an environment where human rights issues often remain unaddressed due to a lack of resources or political will. The success of EMOVIS is therefore crucially tied to the progress of human rights in Emohua LGA. However, while EMOVIS is perceived as significantly improving overall security, there are concerns around transparency, accountability, and trust, critical aspects of any non-governmental organization's effectiveness. Without the trust of the people they serve, EMOVIS's work becomes even more challenging. Additionally, the perception that EMOVIS has not substantially contributed to Emohua LGA's social and economic development highlights an area of improvement. Economic and social development is deeply intertwined with human rights, as individuals need economic stability and social opportunities to fully exercise their rights. Moreover, the effectiveness of EMOVIS in maintaining peace is noted. The organization's role in reducing conflict and violence has positive influence in the community, further underlining the importance of such non-governmental bodies. Peace and security form the bedrock for the exercise and enjoyment of human rights. In areas prone to conflict and violence, rights protection becomes increasingly challenging. Therefore, EMOVIS's role in peacekeeping becomes even more crucial in this context.

Nevertheless, EMOVIS faces significant hurdles, including a lack of resources and infrastructure, local population's lack of rights awareness, political interference, and lack of internal capacity and training. The impact of these challenges cannot be understated. For instance, the scarcity of resources and infrastructure can drastically limit the organization's ability to function effectively and reach out to those in need. Similarly, the population's lack of awareness about their rights makes it difficult for EMOVIS to mobilize support and involvement from the community. Political interference, too, is a significant challenge. As EMOVIS works to protect people's rights, any undue political influence could compromise its independence and, consequently, its ability to function impartially and effectively. Furthermore, the lack of internal capacity and training can hamper the organization's ability to address complex human rights issues. Lastly, lack of cooperation and trust from local communities adds another layer of complexity. For EMOVIS to succeed, community support and involvement are essential. If the people do not trust the organization, it can be difficult to bring about any meaningful change.

Recommendations

Based on the identified findings, the following recommendations were highlighted:

- i. To overcome internal capacity challenges, it is recommended that EMOVIS should invest in continuous staff training and development. This will equip staff members with the necessary skills and knowledge to handle complex human rights issues and to operate effectively within their scope. Initiating collaborations with international human rights organizations could also offer opportunities for knowledge transfer and
- ii. To address the local population's lack of awareness about their rights, EMOVIS could introduce or intensify human rights education campaigns. These campaigns should be designed to reach all demographics and should be conveyed in local languages for maximum reach and impact.
- iii. Lastly, Emohua Local Government Area Vigilante Services should prioritize resource mobilization, leveraging both local and international funding sources to improve its operational capacity. The organization can seek partnerships with donor agencies, apply for grants, and encourage local philanthropy. Additionally, investments should be made to improve infrastructure, including office facilities and communication equipment, to support the effective discharge of their duties.

Contributions to Knowledge

The study significantly contributes to the understanding of the complex dynamics between community-based security initiatives and human rights. By focusing on Emohua LGA, this research provides a detailed analysis of how vigilante groups operate within local contexts and the implications of their actions on individual freedoms and community safety. It highlights the dual role of vigilante groups in providing essential security services in areas with limited police presence while simultaneously posing potential risks to human rights through excessive or unlawful actions. More so, the findings underscore the need for a balanced approach to community security, emphasizing the importance of regulatory frameworks and oversight to prevent abuses. This study contributes to policy discussions by offering empirical data that can inform the development of guidelines and training programs aimed at ensuring that vigilante activities align with human rights standards. Furthermore, it enhances academic discourse by bridging gaps between security studies, human rights, and local governance, providing a nuanced perspective that can be applied to similar contexts globally.

References

- Anyalebechi, I. & Chima, O. (2019). Vigilante services in the Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State, Nigeria: Challenges and prospects. *International Journal of Criminal Justice Sciences*, 14(1), 1-11.
- Bertrand, S. (2019). Vigilante justice and community security in Nigeria. *International Journal of Criminal Justice Sciences*, 14(1), 45-59.
- Etim, E., & Okorie, A. (2021). Political influence on vigilante services in southern Nigeria. *Journal of Conflict and Security*, 8(2), 23-38.
- Goodale, M., & Merry, S. E. (2007). Civil society and human rights protection in developing countries. *International Journal of Human Rights*, 11(3), 115-131.
- Iheanacho, U. (2017). Human rights abuses by vigilante groups in Emohua LGA, Nigeria. *African Journal of Legal Studies*, 10(2), 78-91.
- Paffenholz, T. (2009). Peacekeeping and vigilante justice in post-conflict societies. *Journal of Peace and Conflict Resolution*, 14(1), 90-112.
- Woodrow, P., & Anderson, M. (2012). Vigilantism and human rights in conflict zones. *Journal of African Studies*, 20(4), 110-129.
- Bertrand, S. (2019). *Vigilante justice*. *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Retrieved from <https://www.britannica.com/topic/vigilante-justice>
- Black Lives Matter. (2020). *About*. Retrieved from <https://blacklivesmatter.com/about/>
- Brennan, M. (2020). *Vigilantism*. Oxford University Press.
- Chaouia, M. (2020). The Role of Vigilante justice in history. *International Journal of Criminal Justice Sciences*, 15(2), 92-101.
- Jenkins, P. (2019). Vigilante justice. *Encyclopedia of Criminology and Criminal Justice*, 1-8.
- Chen, P. (2017). Vigilante Justice: An Analysis. *Journal of Contemporary Legal Issues*, 5(1), 39-47.

- Egwunyenga, O. & Bello, T., (2020). Human rights violations and the citizenry in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State, *Nigeria. Journal of Human Rights*, 5(1), 1-15.
- Fattah, E. A. (2020). Social control theory: An overview. In *Encyclopedia of Criminology and Criminal Justice* (pp. 6398-6411). Springer, Cham.
- Gill, M. (2018). *Vigilantism: A global history*. Routledge.
- Gill, S. (2017). Vigilante justice: Pros and cons. The Balance. Retrieved from <https://www.thebalance.com/vigilante-justice-pros-and-cons-978841>
- Human Rights Watch. (2021). *What are human rights?* <https://www.hrw.org/what-are-human-rights>
- Klein, M. W. (2006). *Vigilantism: Political history of private Power in America*. University of California Press.
- Kopel, D. (2020). Vigilante justice: A historical overview. The Cato institute. Retrieved from <https://www.cato.org/publications/policy-analysis/vigilante-justice-historical-overview>
- Lemieux, V. M. (2009). *Vigilantism and the State: A comparative study*. Routledge.
- Lemieux, V. M., & Klein, M. W. (2015). *Vigilantism: A global perspective*. Routledge.
- National Sheriffs' Association. (2020). National neighborhoodwatch program. Retrieved from <https://www.sheriffs.org/programs/neighborhood-watch>
- Pogge, T. (2008). *World poverty and human rights: Cosmopolitan responsibilities and reforms*. Malden, MA: Polity Press.
- United Nations Human Rights Council. (2019). Human rights violations. Retrieved from <https://www.ohchr.org/en/issues/hrviolations/pages/hrviolationsindex.aspx>
- United Nations. (1948). Universal declaration of human rights. Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>
- Bertrand, S. (2019). Vigilante justice and community security in Nigeria. *International Journal of Criminal Justice Sciences*, 14(1), 45-59.
- Etim, E., & Okorie, A. (2021). Political influence on vigilante services in southern Nigeria. *Journal of Conflict and Security*, 8(2), 23-38.
- Goodale, M., & Merry, S. E. (2007). Civil society and human rights protection in developing countries. *International Journal of Human Rights*, 11(3), 115-131.
- Iheanacho, U. (2017). Human rights abuses by vigilante groups in Emohua LGA, Nigeria. *African Journal of Legal Studies*, 10(2), 78-91.
- Paffenholz, T. (2009). Peacekeeping and vigilante justice in post-conflict societies. *Journal of Peace and Conflict Resolution*, 14(1), 90-112.
- Woodrow, P., & Anderson, M. (2012). Vigilantism and human rights in conflict zones. *Journal of African Studies*, 20(4), 110-129.