

VOLUNTARY PRIVATE SECURITY ORGANISATIONS AND MOBILISATION FOR COMMUNITY CRIME PREVENTION IN PLATEAU NORTH SENATORIAL DISTRICT, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The increasing rate of crime and insecurity and the inability of law enforcement agencies to curb the situation has given rise to different Voluntary Private Security Organisations (VPSOs) in form of Community Crime Prevention (CCP) strategies. Anchored on Social Disorganisation and Collective Efficacy Theories, this paper investigates how VPSOs mobilise for CCP in Plateau North Senatorial District. The paper adopts mixed method approach as the research design. Systematic random sampling was used to select 412 respondents which was determined using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula. Three (3) most urbanised local government areas with high concentration of VPSOs were purposively selected: Jos North, Jos South and Bassa. The operations and activities of VPSOs were found promoting collective responsibility among residents and mobilising community members for CCP. The most common way VPSOs mobilise communities include regular security meetings, and the substantial number of VPSOs depends on self-sponsorship for operations. The study concludes that VPSOs are integral component of security architecture critical for bridging gaps in formal security provision while simultaneously nurturing the social conditions necessary for building strong ties and sustainable crime prevention. It therefore recommends that the National House of Assembly should legislate a legal framework to integrate VPSOs for funding and training to effectively prevent crime in communities.

Key Words: Voluntary Private Security Organisations, Crime Prevention, Community Crime Prevention, Community Mobilisation, Resources Mobilisation,

Introduction

Crime is a major social problem bedeviling the entire world, including Nigeria. It manifests in different forms and degrees ranging from theft, murder, robbery to kidnapping terror attacks and other violent conflicts. Therefore, according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) (2010), crime prevention has become an increasingly important component of many national strategies on public safety and security. The major dimensions of crime prevention have been developed across societies globally. These are: Community Crime Prevention (CCP) which

focuses on the involvement and mobilisation of communities and resources based on community defense and development approaches; Crime Prevention through Social Development (CPSD) which primarily targets potential offenders; Situational Crime Prevention (SCP or CPTED) which mainly targets potential victims and potential crime sites such as places that are vulnerable to crime; Recidivism prevention which focuses on social reintegration; and Police and the Criminal Justice System (CJS) concern with the use of proactive, community-based, and problem-oriented policing approaches (Schneider, 2015). The phenomenon of voluntary private security policing is particularly widespread in Nigeria and reflects the extent of mobilisation for effective CCP.

Voluntary Private Security Organisations (VPSOs) originates from pre-colonial governance system. In pre-colonial era, there were popular mechanisms for mobilisation to deal with security threats in ways that were indigenous and satisfactory to the majority of the people (Suchi, 2022). Age-grade, women, and secret societies, council of elders as well as family and lineage heads, oracles, use of ‘juju’ and traditional leadership and councils were Voluntary organisations (Alemika et al., 2010 cited in Suchi, 2022) and were mobilised for effective CCP. With the introduction of formal policing structure, the VPSOs rooted in precolonial governance system were relegated to the background.

Historically, between 1900 and 1930, several security outfits were formed to police different parts of Nigeria. This ranges from Royal Niger Constabulary (Northern Protectorate), the Lagos Police Force and part of the Niger Coast Constabulary (Southern Protectorate) to the amalgamation in 1914, and eventual integration of the Police forces to form the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) headquartered in Lagos, in 1930. For effective policing of Nigerian territory, Section 214 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended), stipulates that “There shall be a Police Force in Nigeria, which shall be known as the NPF, and subject to the provision of this section no other Police Force shall be established for the Federation or any part thereof.” As a result, in the post-colonial era, the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) has remained the central institution for internal security. Nevertheless, persistent challenges—including inadequate personnel, limited resources, and the growing complexity of security threats—have constrained its effectiveness. According to Home Service Report (2021, p. 12) for example with around 370,000 officers, the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) has not met the “UN recommended ratio of one police officer per 400 residents, and would need to train another 155,000 officers”. This has intensified the resuscitation and reliance on informal policing arrangement for crime prevention.

Chapter II, Section 24(e) of the Nigerian constitution stipulates that every citizen must help appropriate and lawful agencies in the maintenance of law and order. Therefore, the VPSOs operations contemporarily are mainly complementary for information sharing, extra surveillance presence, and quick reporting to the formal policing structures such as Police Force/Service, Immigration, Military amongst others. Due to the significant role played by the VPSOs, “there is considerable potential in mobilising communal self-interest to join in the effort, even if the strategy will inevitably see the emergence of some undesirable elements” (Baker, 2006, p. 61). The overarching question of interest to this paper therefore is: in recent times, how are societies mobilising community members and resources with the environment conducive for effective CCP in Plateau North Senatorial District? This question is relevant in that effort is now towards crime prevention that pulls together a spectrum of community stakeholders in order to focus attention, energy and resources on developing initiatives designed to increase community safety and fostering a sense of belonging, ownership and connection among residents.

The crime and security challenges are becoming more complex, complicated and aggravated in Plateau state and the most ravaged is Plateau North Senatorial District. This crime

of gargantuan proportion has had a tall and destabilising effect on the socioeconomic lives of residents and the neighbourhoods within the state. The progressive introduction and adoption of what is known as community policing in the midst of growing violent conflicts and other crime and criminal activities is an indication that the state agencies are overwhelmed and a vacuum exist that need to be filled.

Consequently, the perceived inability and failure of the State Security Organisations (SSOs) to live up to the constitutional responsibility and adequately prevent crime at the community level has potentially opened opportunity for the VPSOs to increasingly involved in crime prevention but their activities are not clear. Within this prism, this paper examines the VPSOs and mobilization of members and resources for CCP. The specific objectives include to:

1. Examine the extent to which voluntary private security organisations are mobilising communities for community crime prevention in Plateau North Senatorial District.
2. Examine how voluntary private security organisations are mobilising resources for community crime prevention in Plateau North Senatorial District.

Conceptual Clarification

Voluntary Private Security Organisations (VPSOs) are one of the components of informal crime control agency or Private Security Organisations (PSOs). In Nigeria, informal crime control agencies are generally divided into two main categories: Private Security Guards (operating under private security firms) and Private Vigilante Groups (classified as VPSOs) (Omoyibo, 2010). According to Suchi (2022), the classification of PSOs is based on factors such as their legal status, organizational structure, and primary purpose whether profit-driven or voluntary. The conceptualisation of Voluntary Private Security Organisations (VPSOs) therefore gains insight from the definition of vigilantism which sees vigilante groups as “largely informal and composed of volunteers often funded through communal contributions” (Olaniyi, 2005, p. 22 cited in Suchi, 2022). The VPSOs are community-based security outfits, and their operations are mostly supplemental and complementary to foster community participation in crime control and prevention.

According to Maidawa (2023), Community Crime Prevention (CCP) is a three-legged strategy which entails: community involvement in crime prevention strategy; environmental modification crime prevention strategy; and community mobilisation crime prevention strategy. Schneider (2015) had viewed CCP from the lens of mobilisation, reinforcement or modification of individual and collective behaviors of local residents to produce or strengthen a local social environment that can informally regulate itself, including the regulation and prevention of criminal, delinquent, disorderly, and uncivil behavior. Therefore, CCP focuses on the involvement and mobilisation of communities and resources based on community defense and development approaches.

Literature Review

Studies have shown how Voluntary Private Security Organisations (VPSOs) are mobilising community members for Community Crime Prevention (CCP). For example, a quantitative study by Maidawa (2023) in Bauchi state indicates that majority (63.8) of respondents agreed that the rate of community participation in crime prevention is very high (35.4%) and high (28.4%). Furthermore, a quantitative study by Madaki and Najeeb (2023) in Jos Metropolis indicates that members of communities have responded to juvenile delinquency by establishment of vigilante groups (49%). Also, one of the ways communities are mobilised for CCP is education. The qualitative study of Akinlabi and Ihejeme (2021) at Ile-Ife, Osun State, reveals that people were educated to engrave their properties, such as computer, electronics, vehicles and instruct

hoteliers to screen all their guests, monitor them and report any suspicious movement to either the police or the vigilante groups as a part of strategies to control criminal activities. They are also educated on how to engage in proper screening of tenants before room letting and monitor their movement. However, other areas where VPSOs are most successful in mobilising the community such as traditional and visible security efforts exist.

Additionally, a qualitative study by Oladunni et al. (2022), in Ogbomosho, reveals that the activities performed by Peace Corps of Nigeria (PCN) in crime prevention is mobilising community for training and workshop on nation building, authority delegation, field hygiene and first aid, conflict resolution, peace management and self-defense among others. These enable the security actors operate with units such as administration, medical, information, program, operation, intelligent and provost.

Regarding how Voluntary Private Security Organisations mobilise resources for CCP, Deme et al. (2020) conducted an interview with Vigilante Commanders at Gyel, Jos South, on the activities of Vigilante and found that they have been mobilising resources to prevent community crimes. They use the resources to purchase den guns, torch lights, and other items for “protection of lives and property, especially, in the night, arresting criminals and handing them over to security personnel”.

The VPSOs often draw their support from members of the organisations and communities. Kwaja (2017, p. 19)’s qualitative research had found that Vigilante Group of Nigeria, Peace Corpse of Nigeria and Ali Sokoto Group are self-funded whereas Civilian Joint Task Force is sponsored by individuals and communities. This implies that members of communities’ equality contribute resources for smooth running of the activities of Vigilante Groups. An interview with a resident of Eyidudu Community, Kogi State, Kwaja (2017, p. 16) found that they always call on the local government to come and support this group. The vigilantes always depend on the community for support and with the way the economy is today, the support has gone down.

However, some community members deliberately refuse to contribute sighting lack of performance by the VPSOs. An interview with an official of the landlord association of Gwandara, carried out by Suchi (2016), reveals that many landlords are no longer paying their contributions to support the group (Nyanya-Gwandara Vigilante Group) due to lack of satisfaction with their performance.

There is generally dearth of studies on the entire gamut of Voluntary Private Security Organisations (VPSOs) and how they are mobilising community members and resources for community crime prevention. The VPSOs are mobilising communities and resources for Community Crime Prevention (CCP). However, the way communities are being mobilised as a first line or spot of response, and to achieve collective efficacy and social control for effective CCP has not been adequately investigated.

Theoretical Framework

The theory of social disorganisation was propounded by Shaw and McKay (1942) out of research conducted at the University of Chicago in the 1920s and 1930s. Clifford Shaw and Henry McKay's conceptualisation of social disorganisation was influenced by the ecological perspective of their Chicago School of Sociology predecessors Robert Park and Ernest Burgess and the social psychological perspective of Thomas and Znaniecki (1918).

Related to the arguments of Thomas and Znaniecki (1918), Shaw and McKay (1942) argue that the weakening of social institutions in disorganised areas hinders efforts to reinforce conventional value systems. They contend that low-rate delinquency areas are more often characterised by a community consensus on how to deal with social problems and how to

collectively regulate unconventional behavior like delinquency. Central to this point is that in certain neighbourhoods, traditional forms of social control are weakened and ineffective at countering the advance of these unconventional value systems and the resulting criminal behavior (Kirk, 2010). According to Shaw and McKay (1942), physical decay, poverty, and a higher level of ethnic and cultural mixing are all difficulties in neighborhoods with the highest crime rates. It is the poor urban neighborhoods that foster criminal values that supplant established societal standards. Thus, when areas or communities lack consensus, of course, the level of community crime will be problematic.

Accordingly, Shaw and McKay (1942) found that patterns of delinquency were higher in areas characterised by poor housing, poor health, socio-economic disadvantage and transient populations. This led them to suggest that crime was a function of neighbourhood dynamics and not due to individual actors and their actions. Therefore, the environment plays a key role in determining the rate of crime in a given society in that it is a defensible space theory, which examines how the design of physical space is related to crime. Thus, to design out crime, Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) strategy can be utilised.

Therefore, in neighborhoods, Plateau North and Nigeria at large especially urban areas, crime will be higher in areas characterised by poor housing, poor health, socio-economic disadvantage and transient populations. Hence, because conventional institutions of social control appear weakened and unable to regulate the behaviour of local youths, strengthening and funding of conventional institutions, agencies and agents of social control and environmental modification (to a lesser extent) are often advocated. Not greater attention is given to community consensus and social capital as put forward by collective efficacy theory.

Collective Efficacy Theory was developed by Robert Sampson in 2010. It is rooted in the social disorganisation tradition in sociology and criminology (Sampson, 2010), and helps explain one of the most robust findings in criminological research, that crime is non-randomly distributed across geographic space. Neighborhoods vary in their capacity for efficacious action (Sampson, 2010), and this variation explains differences across neighborhoods in levels of crime and violence.

Collective Efficacy Theory is premised on three basic elements. These are collective efficacy, social cohesion and social control. Collective efficacy underscores the process of activating or converting social ties among neighborhood residents in order to achieve shared values, common goals or collective goals, such as public order or the control of crime (Sampson, 2006a; Sampson et al., 1997 in Sampson 2010). Social cohesion refers to the bonds or social glue that hold communities together, promoting unity, sense of belonging and cooperation. It is the bonds and ties between and amongst community members that foster trust, cooperation and mutual support and respect. This reduces conflicts amongst diverse groups in communities.

Social control refers to willingness of community members to intervene and regulate each other's behavior to maintain and sustain social order. While many studies in criminology conceive of social control as the direct supervision of behavior (whether by parents, teachers, or neighbors) Sampson et al (1997, p. 918) define social as "the capacity of a group to regulate its members according to desired principles" (p. 918). The precise means to achieve these desired principles are many and may include group intervention and collective socialization.

Therefore, mechanism for collective efficacy is simply a mobilisation for group intervention in order to stop a criminal event from occurring (situational effect) and collective efficacy more broadly involves the collective socialisation of youths toward pro-social (volunteering) behavior (enduring effect), and Sampson (2006a in Sampson, 2010) characterises these as the situational and enduring effects of collective efficacy. With the former, collective

efficacy inhibits crime in a given neighborhood regardless of where the would-be criminal resides, while in the latter collective efficacy in an individual's neighborhood of residence influences her behavior even when she leaves the confines of the neighbourhood (Kirk, 2009).

Suffice to say that the Voluntary Private Security Organisations (VPSOs) are mobilising communities and resources for Community Crime Prevention (CCP). However, the way communities are being mobilised as a first line or spot of response for effective CCP is unclear. How traditional constituted authorities and stakeholders can be mobilised to achieve collective efficacy, foster social cohesion and social control for effective CCP is scarcely captured.

Methods

The paper utilised mixed-method research design that triangulated quantitative and qualitative data from members of the VPSOs, communities and personnel of the Nigeria Police Force. This is to allow for comparing results from quantitative data with findings from the qualitative data thereby enhancing the validity of the findings. Data was collected in three (3) Local Government Areas (LGAs) within the Plateau North Senatorial District, namely: Jos North, Jos South and Bassa LGAs. These LGAs were purposively selected out of the six LGAs in the district (others are Barkin Ladi, Jos East and Riyom LGAs) because they included two most urbanised (Jos North and Jos South) and one less urbanised (Bassa) LGAs with higher concentration of VPSOs in the district.

The population of study comprised 34,676 from the purposively selected five (5) VPSOs in the three (3) of the six (6) LGAs in Plateau North. They were: Vigilante Group of Nigeria (NVG), 6,806 (Plateau State Commandant Office, 2024); Hunters Council of Nigeria (HCN), 14,510 (The Office of State Commandant, 2024); Professional Hunters Association in Nigeria (PROHAN), 7,660 (The Office of State Commandant, 2024); Neighbourhood Watch (NW), 4,300 (Chairman, Police Community Relations Committee Office, 2024); Peace Corpse of Nigeria (PCN), 1,400 (Office of Plateau State Commandant, 2024). The lists of the members were used as sampling frame for the study. Systematic random sampling was used to select a representation in a fixed periodic pattern. The sample size was 412 determined using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula. The sample size was proportionally selected.

Four (4) Focus Group Discussions (of 8 discussant each) and four (4) Key Informant Interviews (KII) sessions with police and community leaders were carried out. The participants for FGD were community leaders drawn across Bassa, Jos North and Jos South LGAs. These were traditional, community and religious leaders who are conceivably knowledgeable on the phenomenon in that they have held top positions that allowed them to work with the VPSOs in the LGAs. The meetings were held at venues agreed by participants. This was purposefully done to ascertain the responses of the communities about the influence of VPSOs on crime control and social cohesion. The variables on which the data were collected including voluntary private security organisations (independent variable) and mobilization for community crime prevention (dependent variable).

Results**Table 1****Extent to which VPSOs Mobilise Community Members for Crime Prevention in their Community**

| LGA | VPSO | Extent | | | Total |
|--------------|----------|--------------------|--------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| | | Very Large | Large | Moderate | |
| Jos North | VGN | 26 (6.5%) | 17 (4.2%) | 1 (0.2%) | 44 (10.9%) |
| | PROHAN | 23 (5.7%) | 25 (6.2%) | 0 (0.0%) | 48 (11.9%) |
| | HCN/NFSS | 51 (12.7%) | 40 (10.0%) | 1 (0.2%) | 92 (22.9%) |
| | NW | 20 (5.0%) | 4 (1.0%) | 0 (0.0%) | 24 (6.0%) |
| | PCN | 6 (1.5%) | 4 (1.0%) | 0 (0.0%) | 10 (2.5%) |
| Jos South | VGN | 12 (3.0%) | 9 (2.2%) | 0 (0.0%) | 21 (5.2%) |
| | PROHAN | 11 (2.7%) | 13 (3.2%) | 0 (0.0%) | 24 (6.0%) |
| | HCN/NFSS | 26 (6.5%) | 19 (4.7%) | 0 (0.0%) | 45 (11.2%) |
| | NW | 8 (2.0%) | 2 (0.5%) | 0 (0.0%) | 10 (2.5%) |
| | PCN | 3 (0.7%) | 2 (0.5%) | 0 (0.0%) | 5 (1.2%) |
| Bassa | VGN | 10 (2.5%) | 6 (1.5%) | 0 (0.0%) | 16 (4.0%) |
| | PROHAN | 9 (2.2%) | 9 (2.2%) | 0 (0.0%) | 18 (4.5%) |
| | HCN/NFSS | 19 (4.7%) | 14 (3.5%) | 0 (0.0%) | 33 (8.2%) |
| | NW | 7 (1.7%) | 2 (0.5%) | 0 (0.0%) | 9 (2.2%) |
| | PCN | 2 (0.5%) | 1 (0.2%) | 0 (0.0%) | 3 (0.7%) |
| Total | | 233 (58.0%) | 167 (41.5%) | 2 (0.5%) | 402 (100%) |

Table 1 shows that the overwhelming majority (99.5%) of the respondents indicated that to a very large extent (58.0%) and to large extent (41.5%), VPSOs are mobilising community members for crime prevention across the LGAs in Northern Plateau. The results also show a higher (92) tendency among HCN/NFSS groups in Jos North LGA to mobilise community for crime prevention than others especially PROHAN (48). This implies that the effort of HCN/NFSS for effective CCP in Jos North is greater than that of Jos South (45) and Bassa (33).

Similar pattern applies to Jos South and Bassa LGAs. Although generally the VPSOs are engaging communities toward crime prevention efforts to a large extent, the data indicate that the effort of HCN/NFSS is greater toward effective CCP. The responses suggest that VPSOs are actively and extensively involved in engaging the community in crime prevention efforts, revealing a high level of organisational commitment to public safety. They often meet with stakeholders in the community where they brief the communities and also gather advice from them just as indicated by a discussant from Gyel who holds that the VPSOs normally receive advice from the elders, chiefs, and the churches, and guided by the leaders, to ensure all crimes are prevented (FGD, Male Stakeholder, Gyel community, Jos South, 22nd February, 2025). This implies that the VPSOs use stakeholders' counsel for effective mobilisation of community members. They embark on operations, investigate any crime and report to the community leaders at meetings to enable more robust arrangements to guard themselves.

Also, KII indicates that VPSOs mobilise community members through education and other means by educating them about security threats and how to appropriately respond. One of the strategies is by grouping numbers to work on rotational basis and how to communicate when there are security or crime challenges to minimise collateral damage and harm from criminal elements (KII, Male Stakeholder, Gyel on 18th February, 2025).

A participant of FGD in Bassa LGA explained how the mobilisation of community networks by VPSOs can tremendously prevent crime. He states that there is always the need for more awareness about networking among VPSOs to operate for effective CCP. The system identifies agents for prompt dissemination of information and response (FGD, Male Stakeholder, Bassa LGA, 9th March, 2025). This suggest that members are mobilized for the purpose of early warning signals and response in the face of potential threats.

The predominant contributions by participants were on strategic engagement to mitigate crime. Hence, a participant indicated that, the VPSOs mobilise members towards mitigating crime problems in the communities. They sometimes discuss and interface with the known criminals for practical solutions in the community (FGD, Male Stakeholder, Bassa LGA, 9th March, 2025).

The quantitative data indicates a negligible number (0.5%) of respondents reporting a moderate extent within the period covered by this study. This means not all members feel that VPSOs are maximally mobilising communities for CCP as captured by qualitative data. A participant of FGD indicated that as community leaders, they identify and insulate the VPSOs, members and those with questionable character in order to avoid infiltration and in-fighting. In FGD in Jos North, a participant explained how stakeholders reconcile VPSOs in order to effectively mobilise the community collectively for effective crime prevention. Where there are unresolved disputes, stakeholders have a unique method of running these organisations by bringing all under one umbrella and select one leader who becomes the general commander for ease of operation. That is how they assist in addressing the challenge of in-fighting amongst VPSOs (FGD, Male Stakeholder, Jos North LGA, 11th March, 2025). The data shows that to avoid quarreling and ensure effective crime control, the stakeholders used to facilitate conversations that unite and bring the VPSOs under one umbrella and select a leader for ease of coordination. This is one of the ways the stakeholders get involved for effective mobilisation of community to effectively prevent crime.

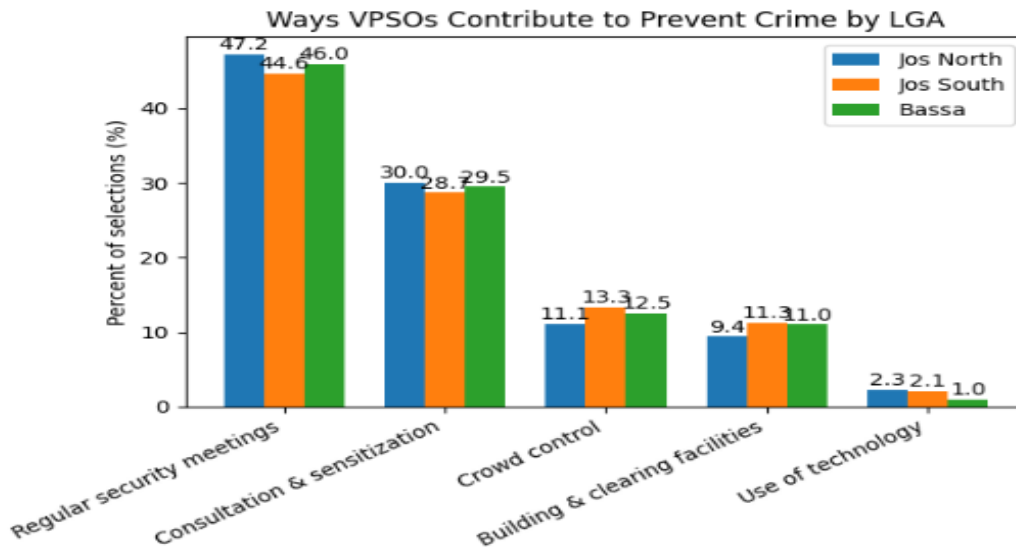


Figure 1: Ways Community Members are Mobilised for CCP by LGAs

Figure 1 shows that about half (52.2%) of the VPSOs mobilise communities through organisation of regular security meetings, with Jos North leading at 47.2%, followed by Bassa at 46.0%, and Jos South at 44.6%. This indicates a strong reliance on frequent community engagement for maintaining security. Consultation and sensitization efforts also play a major role, particularly in Jos North (30.0%), with Bassa (29.5%) and Jos South (28.7%) showing nearly identical levels of engagement suggesting the importance of awareness and collaboration in enhancing local security efforts.

The qualitative data indicated that VPSOs and stakeholders engaged in different activities such as community meetings, consultations amongst others. This assist in uniting the different areas of contribution by members in communities. A participant of the FGD at Ali Kazaure indicated that all security outfits were sub-divided into specialties based on area of specialisation. Some are specialised in tackling drug related issues, cultism and other aspects. Some are responsible for education, resource mobilisation and joint team patrol with a central leader. Religious leaders are also involved in mobilising members for crime prevention (FGD, Male, Jos North LGA, 11th March, 2025).

This implies that the VPSOs are mobilising community members to specialised areas of operations and activities for effective crime prevention. They mobilise members in consultation with religious leaders and other stakeholders in specialised areas such as drug abuse and trafficking, education, community services, vigilance, early warning signals and response amongst others to attack and reduce crime to the barest minimum. They are equally sensitized, trained and counseled to specialized in different areas for the VPSOs to effectively mobilise resources, impact crime control and cohesion partner with SSOs.

Table 2
How VPSOs are Mobilising Resources for Crime Prevention in Plateau North Senatorial District

| LGA | VSPO | Community Support | NGOs | Government | Spirited Individuals | Self-Sponsorship | Total |
|--------------|----------|--------------------|-------------------|------------------|----------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| Jos North | VGN | 13 (3.2%) | 8 (2.0%) | 3 (0.7%) | 7 (1.7%) | 14 (3.5%) | 45 (10.9%) |
| | PROHAN | 13 (3.2%) | 8 (2.0%) | 4 (1.0%) | 7 (1.7%) | 13 (3.2%) | 45 (10.9%) |
| | HCN/NFSS | 27 (6.7%) | 16 (4.0%) | 7 (1.7%) | 14 (3.5%) | 29 (7.2%) | 93 (22.9%) |
| | NW | 7 (1.7%) | 5 (1.2%) | 2 (0.5%) | 4 (1.0%) | 7 (1.7%) | 25 (6.2%) |
| | PCN | 6 (1.5%) | 4 (1.0%) | 1 (0.2%) | 2 (0.5%) | 5 (1.2%) | 18 (4.4%) |
| Jos South | VGN | 6 (1.5%) | 4 (1.0%) | 2 (0.5%) | 3 (0.7%) | 6 (1.5%) | 21 (5.2%) |
| | PROHAN | 6 (1.5%) | 4 (1.0%) | 2 (0.5%) | 3 (0.7%) | 6 (1.5%) | 21 (5.2%) |
| | HCN/NFSS | 13 (3.2%) | 8 (2.0%) | 3 (0.7%) | 7 (1.7%) | 14 (3.5%) | 45 (11.2%) |
| | NW | 4 (1.0%) | 2 (0.5%) | 1 (0.2%) | 2 (0.5%) | 4 (1.0%) | 13 (3.2%) |
| | PCN | 1 (0.2%) | 1 (0.2%) | 0 (0.0%) | 1 (0.2%) | 1 (0.2%) | 4 (1.0%) |
| Bassa | VGN | 4 (1.0%) | 2 (0.5%) | 1 (0.2%) | 2 (0.5%) | 6 (1.5%) | 15 (3.7%) |
| | PROHAN | 4 (1.0%) | 2 (0.5%) | 1 (0.2%) | 2 (0.5%) | 6 (1.5%) | 15 (3.7%) |
| | HCN/NFSS | 9 (2.2%) | 5 (1.2%) | 3 (0.7%) | 5 (1.2%) | 11 (2.7%) | 33 (8.2%) |
| | NW | 3 (0.7%) | 2 (0.5%) | 1 (0.2%) | 2 (0.5%) | 4 (1.0%) | 12 (3.0%) |
| | PCN | 1 (0.2%) | 0 (0.0%) | 0 (0.0%) | 0 (0.0%) | 3 (0.7%) | 4 (1.0%) |
| Total | | 117 (29.1%) | 71 (17.7%) | 31 (7.7%) | 61 (15.2%) | 129 (32.1%) | 402 (100%) |

Table 2 clearly indicates a consistent pattern across the three LGAs, where the substantial number (32.1%) of VPSOs depends heavily on self-sponsorship, followed by community support (29.1%) to sustain their operations. There is a slightly higher tendency that HCN/NFSS in Jos North depends on self-sponsorship (7.2%) and community support (6.7%) than HCN/NFSS in other LGAs especially in Jos South (3.5%) and (3.2%) respectively. Even at 1.7%, Jos North is still slightly ahead of other LGAs especially the Jos South at 0.7% reliance of VGN and PROHAN on spirited individuals. Bassa LGA also mirrors these patterns, with HCN/NFSS demonstrating consistent reliance on community support and self-sponsorship. Although aggregating the data indicate similar pattern across all LGAs, HCN/NFSS in Jos North maintain the highest consistency of reliance on self-sponsorship and community support suggesting that they are more active in mobilising resources for CCP.

The data however indicated moderate support from NGOs and spirited individuals, and minimal government contribution. This indicates that while the community is actively involved,

VPSO members often bear the financial burden of operations themselves with the NGO and government only playing a secondary role to VPSOs.

It is important to note also that qualitative data indicate that both KII and FGD sessions show that VPSOs received support from communities and are also self-funded. For example, a KII in Bassa LGA captures that they often embark on communal labor to perform any task that can earn them resources, tax themselves and solicit for support to carry out their operations (KII, Male Stakeholder, Bassa LGA, 8th March, 2025). The resources are used to facilitate their activities, and for feeding, torch light, gadgets for night duties, boots against crawling animals, some machete, bows and arrows, to some extent some light weapons amongst others (KII, Male Stakeholder, Bassa LGA, 8th March, 2025).

The results suggest that while external support is recognized, local initiatives and community-driven efforts are seen as the primary drivers of crime prevention resource mobilisation. To explain the community-driven effort for mobilising support in a KII with stakeholder in Gyel, Jos South, he holds that “there are times when there is mining activities. Sometimes they go to the mining sites and they are being supported with little mines and which after they sell, whatever they realise they also channel it to support what they are doing”. He also posits that:

the financial resources enable them to liaise with the traditional leaders at their own different levels for further support. Whatever they get, they make use of. Sometimes offerings are raised to support them from places of worship. Influential and wealthy individuals also support (KII, Male Stakeholder, Jos South, 18th February, 2025).

The data show that they get resources by liaising with traditional and hamlet heads as well as church leaders in order to effectively prevent crime in communities in Plateau North and other parts of the world. Similarly, a discussant from Ali Kazaure, Jos North, in FGD indicates that the religious leaders, both the two religious that we have there, with one leader, are being centralized in order to bring support, and the organisation that gives larger support is Fatima Cathedral Church (FGD, Male Stakeholder, Jos North, 11th March, 2025).

To elaborate on the way VPSOs mobilise resources, in FGD session in Bassa LGA, a discussant succinctly states that conventional organisations have the Government that substantially provide the necessary gadgets or resources but VPSOs are mostly self-sponsored and never be sufficient (FGD, Male Stakeholder, Bassa LGA, 9th March, 2025). These results suggest that while external support is recognized, local initiatives and community-driven efforts are seen as the primary drivers of resource mobilisation for CCP.

The findings suggest that while VPSOs enjoy some level of communal and individual support, the lack of significant institutional funding may pose challenges to their operational sustainability and effectiveness in providing community-based security. As a matter of fact, since the NGO and government only play a secondary role to VPSOs, and because their contributions remain limited, potential gaps in external support and institutional collaboration will not permit VPSOs to impact crime control and social cohesion.

Discussion

From the foregoing findings, the study has been able to establish that Voluntary Private Security Organisations (VPSOs) are to a large extent mobilising community members and resources for Community Crime Prevention (CCP). This depicts the importance of mobilization and environmental modification in community crime prevention consistent with the quantitative study by Maidawa (2023) in Bauchi which reveals that VPSOs mobilise members and a significant number are involved in CCP. As social disorganization theory holds the weakening of social

institutions in disorganised areas that hinders efforts to reinforce conventional value systems. Therefore, in certain neighbourhoods, traditional forms of social control are weakened and ineffective at countering the advance of these unconventional value systems and the resulting criminal behavior. The mobilization of community members and resources to a large extent can assist in community crime prevention. However, there are instances where the mobilisation of members for CCP may not be effective. This is indicative of nonchalant and/or irresponsible citizens who are involved in or sabotaging the mobilisation efforts due to weak community consensus.

The findings also indicate specific ways or aspects of crime prevention for which local security agencies mobilise the community for. That is made effective through regular security meetings followed by consultation and sensitization suggesting stronger social ties. The social ties facilitate the creation and maintenance of social capital. Social capital refers to a resource that arises from social relations. In line with Social Disorganization Theory which emphasized building community consensus in effective CCP and social capital is key. Social capital facilitates social control, as it is used as a critical resource for crime prevention in communities (Sampson, 2010). The inability of any community structure to mobilise, educate and empower communities to realise the common values of its residents and maintain effective social controls (Bursik, 1988; Kornhauser, 1978; Sampson & Groves, 1989 cited in Sampson, 2010) will always result in social disorganisation and subsequently crime and delinquency.

The data however indicates that VPSOs are most successful in mobilising the community through traditional and visible security efforts. The measures for mobilising communities are perceived as community-driven through traditional effort. Therefore, strong social ties are not enough but the social ties that will create social capital (resources that arise from social relations) to be used as a critical resource for community crime prevention. It is the social networks (bonding and bridging) that will determine the capacity with which a community will engage in the control of various behaviors, including crime and delinquency.

Findings also reveal mobilisation through education. This indicates the importance of mobilisation through education to achieve community consensus consistent with the qualitative study of Akinlabi and Ihejeme (2021) at Ile-Ife, Osun State which reveals that people were educated to engrave their properties, such as computer, electronics, vehicles and instruct hoteliers to screen all their guests, monitor them and report any suspicious movement to VPSOs. Thus, VPSOs mobilise members in the area of education and training for community involvement, community mobilization, environmental and behavioural modification as well as security effort to achieve effective CCP. This is consistent with Collective efficacy theory which underscores the process of activating or converting social ties among neighborhood residents in order to achieve shared values, common goals or collective goals, such as public order or the control of crime (Sampson, 2006a; Sampson et al., 1997 in Sampson 2010).

Second, the results also indicated that resources are mobilised to a very large extent and the most commonly chosen method was self-sponsorship indicating it as a key resource mobilisation strategy, and signifying that many community crime prevention efforts rely heavily on self-generated funding or local initiatives. This agrees with the qualitative study of Kwaja (2017, p. 19) which found that Vigilante Group of Nigeria, Peace Corpse of Nigeria and Ali Sokoto Group are self-funded whereas Civilian Joint Task Force is sponsored by communities.

However, a qualitative study in Gwandara, by Suchi (2016), reveals that landlords no longer contribute to support Nyanya-Gwandara Vigilante Group due to lack of satisfaction with their performance, indicating that community is the main source of support for VPSOs to

effectively prevent community crimes. This, in line with the findings, indicates that members of communities equally contribute to establishment of VPSOs (Madaki & Najeeb, 2023) and resources for the VPSOs to serve as first line or spot of response for effective CCP. Within this prism, community and individual efforts and contributions play a significant role in mobilising resources for visibility of security officers and infrastructures, and these (the visibility of security personnel and infrastructure) are perceived as deterrent to criminal activities.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has been able to establish that Voluntary Private Security Organisations (VPSOs) are to a large extent mobilising community members and resources for Community Crime Prevention (CCP) in Plateau North Senatorial District. The VPSOs mobilise community members through regular security meetings, consultation and sensitisation suggesting stronger social ties. VPSOs are also mobilising community members through education, training, traditional and visible security efforts. To mobilise resources, VPSOs rely on self-sponsorship and support from communities. These approaches, which are consistently adopted across Jos North, Bassa, and Jos South, underscore that VPSOs are integral component of security architecture critical for bridging gaps in formal security provision while simultaneously nurturing the social conditions necessary for sustainable crime prevention.

To enhance mobilisation of community members therefore, Government needs to create and supervise platforms for robust periodic (quarterly) engagement between stakeholders and VPSOs in communities. These stakeholders include traditionally constituted authorities such as traditional rulers, Community Development Associations, Community Youth Organisations, Community Women Organisations as well as Faith-based Organisations, Civil Society Organizations amongst others. This is to build community consensus through social capital to build networks for mobilisation, reinforcement and modification of environment and behaviour. Additionally, to enhance welfare, facilities as well as more technical and infrastructural interventions, National House of Assembly should legislate a legal framework that will integrate VPSOs for funding and training to enable effective CCP.

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