State-Sponsored Vigilantism and the Fight against Insecurity in Zamfara State, Nigeria

By

Adelani, Sunday. PhD
Institute of Governance and Strategic Studies
Nasarawa State University Keffi.
&
Andrew, Ezadueyan Zamani
Department of Psychology
Nasarawa State University Keffi.

ABSTRACT

This study examined the impact of state-sponsored vigilantism on the fight against insecurity in Zamfara state, Nigeria. The employed quantitative research design using survey approach, with population of 2,600 state-sponsored vigilante members in Zamfara State, out of a ample size of 416 was used and employed purposive sampling technique to select respondents. Data were obtained through questionnaire, while analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling with the aid of SmartPLS 3.0. The findings revealed that vigilante government support and funding, as well as vigilante collaboration with formal security agencies, have positive and statistically significant effects on the fight against insecurity at the 5 percent level of significance. Among the variables, government support and funding showed the strongest influence, indicating that provision of logistics, financial resources, and operational support greatly enhances the effectiveness of vigilante groups. In contrast, vigilante training and capacity building showed a positive but statistically insignificant effect, suggesting that training alone may not be sufficient without adequate support and coordination. The study concludes that state-sponsored vigilantism plays a vital role in addressing insecurity in Zamfara State, particularly when it is backed by strong government support and effective collaboration with formal security agencies. Based on the findings, the study recommends that the Zamfara State government should strengthen training and capacity building programmes for vigilante groups through more structured, regular, and practical approaches. This should include modern security techniques, intelligence gathering, and ethical standards, alongside sustained funding and coordination, to improve their overall effectiveness in combating insecurity.

Key words: Collaboration with formal security agencies, Government support and funding, Insecurity, State-sponsored vigilantism, Training and capacity building,

1. Introduction

The fight against insecurity has become a serious global concern as countries continue to struggle with terrorism, organised crime, and violent conflicts that threaten lives and development. Across countries such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Mexico, Brazil, and the United States, insecurity has remained persistent despite efforts by governments and international organisations. Available evidence shows that violence continues to claim a significant number of lives each year. For instance, about 458,000 people are killed globally due to homicide annually, a figure that exceeds deaths from armed conflict and terrorism combined (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), 2023). At the same time, terrorism remains widespread, with over 160 countries experiencing at least one terrorist

incident in recent years (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2025). Although global terrorism deaths were estimated at about 5,582 in 2025, the persistence of attacks across different regions shows that insecurity is far from being resolved (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2025). These realities have exposed the limits of formal security institutions such as the police and military, which are often overstretched and unable to respond effectively to local threats. As a result, many societies have increasingly turned to informal and community-based security arrangements, including vigilante groups, as complementary approaches to maintaining safety.

In Africa, the situation has taken a more troubling dimension, especially within the Sahel region where countries such as Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, and Nigeria have become hotspots of terrorism and armed violence. Reports indicate that the Sahel now accounts for over half of global terrorism-related deaths, making it the most affected region in the world (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2025). For example, Burkina Faso recorded over 1,500 terrorism-related deaths in 2024 alone, while Mali and Niger also reported hundreds of fatalities within the same period. In addition, about 51% of global terrorist attacks were traced to the West African Sahel, highlighting the scale of insecurity across the region. Beyond the Sahel, countries like Somalia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Mozambique continue to face prolonged insurgencies that have displaced millions of people and weakened state authority. These challenges are often linked to weak governance, poverty, unemployment, and porous borders that enable criminal networks to thrive. In response, many African governments have increasingly embraced community-based security systems, particularly vigilante groups, as a way of complementing formal security agencies. Studies show that these groups emerge largely because formal institutions are unable to adequately protect citizens, especially in rural and hard-to-reach areas (Nwangbo et al., 2022). In many cases, they operate with some level of government support, collaborate with security agencies, and receive basic training to improve their effectiveness.

In Nigeria, insecurity has become deeply rooted and widespread, taking the form of terrorism, banditry, kidnapping, armed robbery, and communal conflicts across different parts of the country. The situation is particularly severe in the northern region, where states such as Zamfara, Katsina, and Kaduna have recorded frequent cases of violence, mass killings, and abductions. Nigeria ranked among the most affected countries globally, accounting for about 6% of terrorism-related deaths, with over 11,000 people killed since the onset of insurgency (Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund, 2024). At the same time, the country faces serious capacity challenges within its formal security system. With about 377,000 police officers serving a population of over 170 million people, the police force remains overstretched and unable to adequately meet security demands (Kpae, 2024). This gap has contributed to the rapid growth of vigilante groups across the country, which are estimated to number in the millions and play active roles in local security (Peter et al., 2023). In Zamfara State in particular, the scale of banditry and rural violence has made reliance on vigilante groups almost unavoidable. Consequently, state-sponsored vigilantism has emerged as a practical response, reflected in government support and funding, collaboration between vigilantes and formal security agencies, and deliberate efforts toward training and capacity building. These elements are increasingly seen as essential for improving intelligence gathering, strengthening community-level security, and enhancing the overall fight against insecurity in Zamfara State.

The fight against insecurity in Zamfara State has remained a major concern despite several efforts by government and security agencies. In recent years, Zamfara State has experienced persistent cases of banditry, kidnapping, cattle rustling, and rural violence, leading to loss of lives, displacement of communities, and destruction of livelihoods. This situation reflects a broader national crisis, as Nigeria continues to grapple with rising insecurity across different regions. Available evidence shows that insecurity in Nigeria is largely driven by factors such as poverty, unemployment, weak institutional capacity, and the proliferation of small arms, with over eight million illegal weapons circulating within the country (Udeoba & Eze, 2021). In addition, the inability of formal security institutions to effectively police the country has worsened the situation. For instance, Nigeria has been described as under-policed, with about 357,000 to 377,000 officers serving a population exceeding 170 million, far below international standards (Ajegbomogun, 2020; Peter et al., 2023). This shortage has created serious security gaps, particularly in rural areas like Zamfara, where state presence is weak and communities are frequently exposed to attacks.

As a response to this growing insecurity, communities and governments have increasingly turned to vigilante groups as alternative or complementary security arrangements. Studies have shown that the emergence of vigilante groups in Nigeria is largely a reaction to the failure of formal policing systems to provide adequate protection for lives and property (Aina & Ocheja, 2020) . In many parts of the country, including the North-West, vigilantes have been actively involved in intelligence gathering, patrol, and crime control. However, despite their growing relevance, the effectiveness of these groups remains questionable. While some studies report that vigilante interventions have contributed to crime reduction, others highlight serious challenges such as lack of training, poor coordination, and weak institutional support (Yusuf, 2024; Eja et al., 2023) . In Zamfara State, the persistence of banditry and kidnapping despite the presence of vigilante groups raises important questions about how these groups are structured, supported, and integrated into the broader security framework. In particular, issues relating to government support and funding, collaboration with formal security agencies, and training and capacity building appear to be critical factors influencing their effectiveness.

From an empirical standpoint, existing studies on vigilantism in Nigeria have largely focused on specific cases such as crime prevention in Kogi State, youth violence in Lagos, and kidnapping in Kaduna, with limited attention given to the North-West region, especially Zamfara State. For example, studies by Aina and Ocheja (2020) and Tukur et al. (2020) concentrated on crime control and kidnapping in other states, leaving a gap in understanding how state-sponsored vigilantism operates in areas most affected by banditry. Furthermore, while some studies acknowledge the role of vigilantes in complementing the police, they do not sufficiently examine how structured government support, funding mechanisms, and inter-agency collaboration shape their performance outcomes. This creates a clear empirical gap that this study seeks to fill by focusing specifically on Zamfara State and examining the operational dimensions of state-sponsored vigilantism.

Theoretically, most existing studies have relied on frameworks such as Broken Window Theory and Social Bond Theory to explain crime control and vigilante activities (Tukur et al., 2020; Yusuf, 2024). While these theories provide useful insights into community-level crime

prevention, they do not adequately capture the role of the state in supporting and regulating vigilante groups. In particular, there is limited theoretical engagement with state-centric perspectives that explain how government involvement through funding, training, and policy support affects the performance of informal security actors. This theoretical gap limits a comprehensive understanding of state-sponsored vigilantism as a hybrid security model involving both formal and informal institutions.

Methodologically, many of the existing studies have relied heavily on descriptive statistics such as frequency and percentage, frequency tables and chi-square statistical technique to analyse data (Aina & Ocheja, 2020; Tukur, et al., 2020; Peter, et al., 2023; Eja, et al.,2025). While these approaches provide valuable insights, they do not allow for robust statistical testing of relationships between variables such as government support, collaboration, training, and insecurity outcomes. Mudasiru and Fatai (2020) used qualitative research design and used sample size of only 60 respondents. There is therefore a need for more rigorous quantitative or mixed-method approaches that can provide empirical evidence on the effectiveness of state-sponsored vigilantism. This study addresses this methodological gap by adopting a more structured analytical approach that allows for testing the impact of key variables on insecurity.

Finally, there is a clear real-world gap between policy intentions and actual outcomes in the fight against insecurity in Zamfara State. Despite the increasing reliance on vigilante groups and the introduction of community-based security initiatives, insecurity continues to persist, suggesting that existing strategies may not be effectively implemented or properly coordinated. Issues such as inadequate funding, lack of professional training, and weak collaboration between vigilantes and formal security agencies continue to undermine their effectiveness. As noted by Nwangbo et al. (2022), vigilantism thrives on partnership and collective action, yet in practice, these elements are often poorly managed in Nigeria. This disconnect between theory, policy, and practice underscores the need for a systematic investigation into how state-sponsored vigilantism can be better structured to address insecurity in Zamfara State.

Thus, the objective of this study is to examine the impact of state-sponsored vigilantism proxies by government support and funding, collaboration with formal security agencies and training and capacity building on the fight against insecurity in Zamfara state, Nigeria. Based on these objectives, the following hypotheses were developed and tested:

H_{01}: Vigilante government support and funding have no significant impact on the fight against insecurity in Zamfara state, Nigeria.

H_{02}: Vigilante collaboration with formal security agencies has no significant impact on the fight against insecurity in Zamfara state, Nigeria.

H_{02}: Vigilante training and capacity building have no significant impact on the fight against insecurity in Zamfara state, Nigeria.

2. Literature Review

Fight Against Insecurity

According to Kpae (2024), the fight against insecurity involves a combination of strategies adopted by the state, including policing, military intervention, and the use of informal

security structures such as vigilante groups to respond to the growing complexity of violent crimes. This perspective shows that insecurity cannot be addressed by a single institution alone but requires a coordinated and multi-layered approach that reflects the realities on ground. In a similar vein, Aina and Ocheja (2020) describe the fight against insecurity as the deliberate effort to prevent and control crime through both formal and informal mechanisms. Nwangbo et al. (2022) view the fight against insecurity as a collective responsibility that involves partnership between the state and the people. They argue that community-based security systems, such as vigilantism, are rooted in shared responsibility and local participation in maintaining social order. This means that effective security is achieved when there is cooperation between formal institutions like the police and informal actors within the community.

State-Sponsored Vigilantism

State-sponsored vigilantism refers to a form of security arrangement where the government recognizes, supports, or collaborates with informal security groups to maintain law and order within communities (Mudasiru & Fatai, 2020). Nwangbo, et al. (2022) describe vigilantism as the mobilization of civilians into organized groups to support community policing and ensure social control through collective action. When such groups receive backing from the state, either through legal recognition, funding, or operational support, they become part of a broader security framework rather than purely self-help initiatives.

Vigilante Government Support and Funding

Vigilante government support and funding can be understood as the deliberate involvement of the state in providing financial resources, logistics, and institutional backing to vigilante groups to enhance their role in maintaining security (Abdullahi, 2020). According to Udeoba and Eze (2021), government support for addressing insecurity include community policing, intelligence gathering, and the strengthening of local security structures, which often require financial commitment and policy support from the state. This implies that government support is not limited to recognition alone but extends to funding and equipping local actors to improve their operational capacity. Ogbunugwor et al. (2026) defined vigilante government support and funding as the government support for local security initiatives often includes collaboration with vigilante groups, provision of equipment, and investment in security infrastructure.

Vigilante Collaboration with Formal Security Agencies

Vigilante collaboration with formal security agencies refers to the working relationship and partnership between informal community-based security groups (vigilantes) and officially recognized security institutions such as the police, military, and other law enforcement bodies. This collaboration is usually built on mutual understanding, shared responsibilities, and the common goal of maintaining law and order in society (Yusuf, 2024). Aina and Ocheja (2020) view vigilante collaboration with formal security agencies as a cooperative effort necessary for effective crime control. Ajegbomogun (2020) explains that vigilante groups serve as an interface between the community and formal security agencies, helping to bridge the gap that often exists between the people and the police. Abdulkadir et al. (2023) highlight that collaboration between vigilantes and formal security agencies involves synergy, networking,

and coordinated actions such as intelligence gathering, security planning, and operational support.

Vigilante Training and Capacity Building

Vigilante training and capacity building refer to the deliberate efforts aimed at equipping vigilante group members with the necessary skills, knowledge, values, and competencies required to perform their security roles effectively and responsibly within their communities (Adiele & Emeodu, 2022). In simple terms, it is about preparing vigilantes to move beyond informal and unstructured methods of crime control toward more organized, professional, and evidence-based practices. Training in this context is not just about teaching techniques, but also about shaping attitudes, improving judgment, and ensuring that vigilante operations align with accepted standards of justice and human rights. Eja, et al. (2025) describe training as a structured process that improves the ability of vigilantes to detect crime and interact with victims in a more professional manner. According to Adiele and Emeodu (2022), strengthening vigilante capacity involves not only educating members but also providing them with opportunities for skill development, empowerment, and sustainability.

Empirical Review

State-Sponsored Vigilantism and Fight against Insecurity

Ogbunugwor et al. (2026) looked at how government policies are used to address insecurity in Anambra State. Using a descriptive approach based on secondary data, the study found that measures like community policing, working with vigilante groups, and investing in security infrastructure are important steps in tackling insecurity. However, these efforts are often weakened by poor implementation and lack of proper coordination. A major weakness of the study is that it did not use primary data or empirical testing, making it difficult to clearly determine how effective these policies are in practice.

Eja et al. (2025) focused on the role of training in improving vigilante activities within community policing in rural Nigeria. The study, which used a survey design with 250 respondents, found that inadequate training limits the ability of vigilantes to properly detect crime and handle victims, sometimes leading to mistakes and mistrust from the public. While the study provides useful insights into the importance of training, it is limited because it concentrates mainly on training and does not fully examine other important factors such as funding and collaboration with formal security agencies.

Yusuf (2024), Kpae (2024), Akam and Onu (2024), and Peter et al. (2023) provide useful insights into insecurity and the role of vigilante groups in Nigeria. Yusuf (2024), using a qualitative design with 22 participants through interviews and thematic analysis, found that vigilantes are widely accepted and contribute to crime control, though their effectiveness depends on proper monitoring and coordination, with the small sample limiting broader application. Kpae (2024), relying on a descriptive design and secondary data analyzed through content analysis, showed that weak policing and socio-economic challenges have led to the rise of vigilante groups, but the absence of primary data weakens empirical strength. Akam and Onu (2024), using a mixed-method approach with 400 respondents (323 valid) analyzed with SPSS, established that good governance significantly improves security outcomes, although the study does not isolate the role of vigilantes. Peter et al. (2023),

adopting a mixed-method approach with 100 respondents and using frequency analysis, found that while vigilantes support intelligence gathering and local security, they have not significantly reduced banditry due to poor training and weak collaboration, with limited analytical depth restricting stronger conclusions. Overall, the studies show that vigilante effectiveness depends largely on governance, training, and coordination, though methodological limitations remain.

Adiele and Emeodu (2022) and Nwangbo et al. (2022) both examine vigilantism in Nigeria from different angles. Adiele and Emeodu (2022), using a descriptive survey design with 400 respondents and basic statistical tools, found that OSPAC vigilante groups contributed to crime reduction and improved social and economic activities in Rivers State, although the use of only descriptive statistics limits deeper analysis of their actual impact. In contrast, Nwangbo et al. (2022) adopted a qualitative approach based on secondary data and showed that vigilantism has become widespread in Nigeria due to weak policing and low public trust in formal institutions, thriving mainly through community participation and cooperation. However, their study lacks primary data and empirical testing, making it difficult to apply the findings to specific contexts. Taken together, both studies suggest that while vigilante groups play an important role in security, there are still gaps in evidence needed to fully understand their effectiveness.

Udeoba and Eze (2021), Mudasiru and Fatai (2020), and Tukur et al. (2020) all examine insecurity and the role of responses to it from different angles. Udeoba and Eze (2021), using a survey design with 300 public servants and mean analysis, found that insecurity in Nigeria is largely driven by poverty, unemployment, weak institutions, and porous borders, while solutions such as community policing and intelligence gathering remain important, though the study is limited by its narrow focus on public servants. Mudasiru and Fatai (2020), through a qualitative approach with 60 participants, showed that vigilante groups like Onyabo emerged due to state failure and helped reduce youth violence, although issues such as abuse of power were noted, and the findings cannot be easily generalized. Similarly, Tukur et al. (2020), using a survey design with 100 respondents and chi-square analysis, found that vigilante groups contribute to reducing kidnapping, but their effectiveness is weakened by poor training and lack of institutional support, with the study limited to a single local area.

Aina and Ocheja (2020) and Isibor et al. (2020) further deepen the discussion by focusing on crime control and the drivers of insecurity. Aina and Ocheja (2020), using a cross-sectional survey of 186 respondents and descriptive analysis, found that vigilante groups play a significant role in reducing crime and improving community safety, especially through collaboration with the police, though the study lacks deeper statistical analysis. On the other hand, Isibor et al. (2020), with a larger sample of 510 respondents and both descriptive and inferential analysis, established that external funding significantly sustains insecurity and terrorism in North-East Nigeria, highlighting a critical dimension of the problem. However, the study's regional focus limits its applicability to other areas. Taken together, these studies show that while vigilante groups and government strategies contribute to addressing insecurity, their effectiveness is shaped by broader structural and institutional factors.

Theoretical Framework

Routine Activity Theory

The underpinning theory for this study is Routine Activity Theory. Routine Activity Theory was developed by Cohen and Felson (1979). The theory explains how everyday patterns of life shape the occurrence of crime. The theory is built on a simple but powerful idea: crime is likely to occur when three elements come together at the same time and place a motivated offender, a suitable target, and the absence of a capable guardian (Cohen & Felson, 1979). The theory moves beyond looking only at why people commit crime and instead focuses on how the environment and available opportunities make crime easier or harder to carry out. Over time, scholars have built on this idea. Felson (1995) stressed the role of "capable guardians" like the police and community members in preventing crime, while Clarke (1997) showed that crime can be reduced by limiting opportunities and increasing the risks involved. In the same way, Eck (1994) highlighted that certain places create more chances for crime, and that proper monitoring of such areas can help control it.

Despite its usefulness, Routine Activity Theory has been criticized on several grounds. One major criticism is that it pays limited attention to the deeper social and economic factors such as poverty, inequality, and unemployment that motivate individuals to commit crime (Osgood et al., 1996). Furthermore, it does not fully explain why some individuals become offenders while others in similar environments do not. However, in spite of these limitations, the theory remains highly relevant to this study on state-sponsored vigilantism and the fight against insecurity in Zamfara State. The presence of vigilante groups, especially when supported by the government, directly increases "capable guardianship," which is central to reducing crime opportunities. Through funding, training, and collaboration with formal security agencies, vigilantes help to monitor communities, deter criminal activities, and respond quickly to threats. In a context like Zamfara State, where formal security presence is often limited, Routine Activity Theory provides a clear explanation of how strengthening local security structures can reduce insecurity by limiting opportunities for crime.

3. Methodology

This study adopted a **quantitative research design using a survey approach.** The population This study adopted a quantitative research design using a survey approach. The population of the study comprises all state-sponsored vigilante members in Zamfara State. In February 2024, the state government inaugurated about 2,600 members of the Community Protection Guards (ZCPG) as part of efforts to complement formal security agencies in addressing armed banditry and protecting vulnerable communities, especially in rural areas (Zamfara State Government, 2024). Based on this, the total population for the study is 2,600 vigilante members. Using the Yamane (1967) formula at a 5% level of significance, a sample size of 347 respondents was determined. However, to reduce the risk of non-response, incomplete questionnaires, and possible attrition during data collection, an additional 20 percent was added to the sample size, following the recommendation of Israel (2013). This adjustment increased the final sample size to 416 respondents. The study further employed purposive sampling technique to select respondents, as it allows the researcher to focus on individuals who are directly involved in vigilante operations and are therefore in a better position to provide relevant and reliable information for the study.

The study used a structured questionnaire based on a five-point Likert scale. To ensure reliability, a pilot test was conducted using 30 state-sponsored vigilante members from neighbouring Katsina State. The internal consistency of the instrument was tested using Cronbach's Alpha, which produced a coefficient of 0.86. This value exceeds the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating that the instrument was reliable and consistent (Hair et al., 2022). Feedback from the pilot study also helped to identify unclear items and improve the wording and overall structure of the questionnaire, making it easier for respondents to understand. The copies of questionnaire were administered in person with the support of six trained research assistants who were fluent in both English and the local language spoken in the study area. This helped respondents better understand the questions and improved the accuracy of their responses. Out of the 416 questionnaires distributed, 362 were properly completed and used for analysis, representing a response rate of 87 percent. This rate is considered adequate for reliable statistical analysis.

For data analysis, this study employed Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) due to its suitability for analysing relationships among multiple constructs such as state-sponsored vigilantism and the fight against insecurity. PLS-SEM is appropriate for studies with latent variables and does not require strict assumptions of data normality, making it suitable for social research (Hair et al., 2022). The analysis was conducted using SmartPLS 3.0 following a two-step approach: first, the measurement model was assessed to confirm reliability and validity; second, the structural model was evaluated to examine the strength and significance of the relationships among the variables. The model guiding the analysis is presented in Figure 1:



Fig. 1 The Model of the Study
Source: SmartPLS, 2026

Ethical standards were strictly observed in this study. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed about the purpose of the research before giving consent. They were assured of confidentiality and anonymity, and informed of their right to withdraw at

any time without any consequences. All data collected were securely stored and used strictly for academic purposes, ensuring the integrity of the study.

4. Result and Discussion

Assessment of Measurement Model

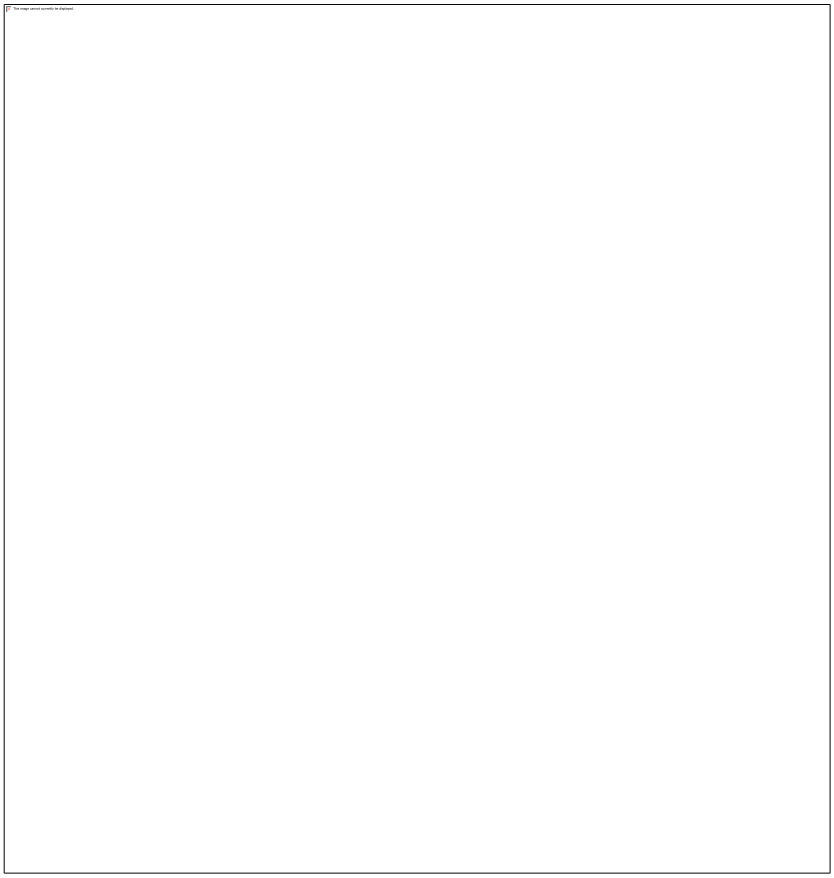


Fig. 2: Measurement model of the study constructs and indicators.
Source: SmartPLS Output, 2026

Assessment of Measurement Model Using Factor Loading, Validity and Reliability of the Constructs

The measurement model for this study was assessed by examining factor loadings, as well as the validity and reliability of the constructs. The results of the factor loadings are presented in fig. 2 and Table 1, while the validity and reliability results are shown in Table 2.

Table 1: Factor Loadings

	Fight Against Insecurity	Vigilante Government Support & Funding	Vigilante Collaboration with Formal Security Agencies	Vigilante Training & Capacity Building
Items	Loadings	Loadings	Loadings	Loadings
FAI1	0.909			

FAI2	0.961			
FAI3	0.920			
FAI4	0.957			
VGSF1		0.897		
VGSF2		0.894		
VGSF3		0.944		
VGSF4		0.932		
VCSA1			0.795	
VCSA2			0.774	
VCSA3			0.896	
VCSA4			0.801	
VTCB1				0.854
VTCB2				0.913
VTCB3				0.884
VTCB4				0.832

Source: SmartPLS Output, 2026

Table 2: Construct Reliability and Validity

	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Fight Against Insecurity	0.954	0.966	0.878
Vigilante Government Support & Funding	0.937	0.955	0.841
Vigilante Collaboration with Formal Security Agencies	0.838	0.890	0.669
Vigilante Training & Capacity Building	0.895	0.926	0.759

Source: SmartPLS Output, 2026

Table 1 is the result of factor loadings for all the construct used in the study. All items under Fight Against Insecurity have very high loadings ranging from 0.909 to 0.961, indicating that they strongly reflect the concept being measured. Similarly, items for Vigilante Government Support and Funding also show strong loadings between 0.894 and 0.944, suggesting that the indicators are reliable measures of the construct. For Vigilante Collaboration with Formal Security Agencies, the loadings range from 0.774 to 0.896, which are acceptable and indicate a good level of representation, even though a few are slightly lower compared to others. The items for Vigilante Training and Capacity Building also perform well, with loadings between 0.832 and 0.913. Therefore, since all loadings are above the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70, it shows that the measurement items are strong and suitable for explaining their respective constructs in this study.

Table 2 presents the reliability and validity of the constructs used in the study. The Cronbach's Alpha values for all variables range from 0.838 to 0.954, indicating a high level of internal consistency among the items. Similarly, the Composite Reliability values, which range from 0.890 to 0.966, further confirm that the constructs are reliable. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values, which fall between 0.669 and 0.878, are all above the recommended minimum

of 0.50, showing that each construct has good convergent validity and adequately explains the variance of its indicators. Therefore, these results confirm that the measurement model is both reliable and valid, and the constructs used in the study are appropriate for examining the relationship between state-sponsored vigilantism and the fight against insecurity.

Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity was assessed to confirm that each construct in the study is clearly different from the others and that the items used measure only their intended concepts. Discriminant validity of this study was assessed using HTMT values. The results of the discriminant validity analysis are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

	Fight Against Insecurity	Vigilante Government Support & Funding	Vigilante Collaboration with Formal Security Agencies	Vigilante Training & Capacity Building
Fight Against Insecurity				
Vigilante Government Support & Funding	0. 532			
Vigilante Collaboration with Formal Security Agencies	0.295	0.329		
Vigilante Training & Capacity Building	0.292	0.225	0.393	

Source: SmartPLS Output, 2026

Table 3 presents the HTMT values used to assess discriminant validity among the constructs. The results show that all values range between 0.225 and 0.532, which are well below the commonly accepted threshold of 0.85. This indicates that each construct (Fight Against Insecurity, Vigilante Government Support and Funding, Vigilante Collaboration with Formal Security Agencies, and Vigilante Training and Capacity Building) is clearly distinct from the others. In other words, the variables are measuring different concepts without overlapping, confirming that the model has good discriminant validity and is suitable for further analysis.

Assessment of the Structural Model

Multicollinearity and Model Goodness of Fit Test

Multicollinearity and model goodness-of-fit tests were carried out to ensure the reliability of the model used in this study. Multicollinearity was assessed using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) to confirm that the independent variables are not highly correlated and each contributes uniquely to the model. The goodness-of-fit test was also used to determine how well the model explains the observed data. The results of the multicollinearity and model goodness-of-fit tests are presented in Tables 4 and 5 respectively.

Table 4: Inner VIF Values

	Fight Against Insecurity
Vigilante Government Support & Funding	1.228
Vigilante Collaboration with Formal Security Agencies	1.112
Vigilante Training & Capacity Building	1.171

Source: SmartPLS Output, 2025

Table 5: Model Goodness of Fit (GOF)

	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0.055	0.055
d_ULS	0.405	0.405
d_G	0.743	0.743
Chi-Square	880.937	880.937
NFI	0.808	0.808

Source: SmartPLS Output, 2026

The results in Table 4 show that the VIF values for all the independent variables range from 1.112 to 1.228. These values are well below the commonly accepted threshold of 5.0, indicating that there is no problem of multicollinearity among the variables. This means that Vigilante Government Support and Funding, Vigilante Collaboration with Formal Security Agencies, and Vigilante Training and Capacity Building each contribute unique information in explaining the fight against insecurity. As a result, the model is stable and the estimates of the relationships can be considered reliable.

Table 5 presents the goodness-of-fit results for the model. The SRMR value of 0.055 is below the recommended threshold of 0.08, indicating a good fit between the model and the data. The NFI value of 0.808 is also acceptable, suggesting that the model has a reasonable level of explanatory power. Additionally, the identical values for both the saturated and estimated models show consistency in the model's performance. therefore, these results indicate that the model fits the data well and is suitable for explaining the relationship between state-sponsored vigilantism and the fight against insecurity in this study.



Fig. 3: Measurement model of the study constructs and indicators.
Source: SmartPLS Output, 2026

Path Coefficients

The results presented in Table 6 show how explain how vigilante government support and funding, vigilante collaboration with formal security agencies, and vigilante training and capacity building influence the fight against insecurity Zamfara State.

Table 6: Path Coefficient

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values	Decision
Vigilante Government Support & Funding -> Fight Against Insecurity	0.437	0.434	0.056	7.795	0.000	Rejected
Vigilante Collaboration with Formal Security Agencies -> Fight Against Insecurity	0.125	0.133	0.048	2.609	0.009	Rejected
Vigilante Training & Capacity Building -> Fight Against Insecurity	0.092	0.092	0.052	1.777	0.076	Not Rejected

Source: SmartPLS Output, 2026

For this study, Table 6 presents the key statistics used for interpretation, including the original sample values (beta coefficients), sample means, standard errors, t-values, and p-values. The structural model was assessed using the beta coefficients together with their corresponding t-values and p-values to determine the significance of each relationship. These results were generated through the bootstrapping procedure, which helps to produce more reliable and stable estimates of the relationships among the study variables.

Hypothesis 1: Vigilante government support and funding have no significant impact on the fight against insecurity in Zamfara state, Nigeria.

The results in Table 6 show that vigilante government support and funding have a positive and statistically significant impact on fight against insecurity in Zamfara State. The result for vigilante government support and funding shows a strong and positive effect on the fight against insecurity in Zamfara State ($\beta = 0.437$, $t = 7.795$, $p = 0.000$). This means that increased government support such as funding, provision of equipment, and logistics significantly improves the ability of vigilante groups to tackle insecurity. Among all the variables used in this study, this factor has the strongest impact, indicating that when vigilantes are properly supported, they become more effective in responding to banditry and protecting communities. The hypothesis was therefore rejected.

The strong and significant effect of vigilante government support and funding on the fight against insecurity can be clearly understood from the perspective of Routine Activity Theory. The theory explains that crime is reduced when there is the presence of capable guardians, and in this case, government support strengthens vigilante groups to perform that role more effectively. When vigilantes are properly funded, equipped, and supported, they are more visible, responsive, and active within communities, making it harder for criminals to operate freely. In practical terms, this means that in Zamfara State, improved funding and logistics enable vigilantes to patrol more effectively, gather timely intelligence, and respond quickly to threats, thereby reducing opportunities for banditry and other criminal activities. This finding shows that strengthening local security actors through government support is a practical and effective way of reducing insecurity.

Hypothesis 2: Vigilante collaboration with formal security agencies has no significant impact on the fight against insecurity in Zamfara state, Nigeria.

This result revealed that vigilante collaboration with formal security agencies has positive and statistically significant impact on the fight against insecurity in Zamfara state. The result for Vigilante Collaboration with Formal Security Agencies also shows a positive and significant effect on the fight against insecurity ($\beta = 0.125$, $t = 2.609$, $p = 0.009$). This suggests that cooperation between vigilantes and formal security agencies such as the police and military contributes meaningfully to improving security. However, the strength of this relationship is moderate compared to government support, indicating that while collaboration is important, it is not as impactful as direct funding and support. The hypothesis was rejected, meaning the relationship is statistically significant.

This result can be well explained using Routine Activity Theory, which emphasizes that crime is reduced when capable guardians are present and actively working together. Collaboration between vigilantes and formal security agencies strengthens this guardianship by combining local knowledge with formal authority. In practical terms, in Zamfara State, when vigilantes share intelligence with the police or military and support joint operations, it becomes more difficult for criminals to operate unnoticed. However, the moderate strength of the relationship suggests that while collaboration improves coordination and response, it may not be as effective on its own without adequate funding and resources. This means that partnership is important, but its impact becomes stronger when it is supported by proper logistics and government backing.

Hypothesis 3: Vigilante training and capacity building have no significant impact on the fight against insecurity in Zamfara state, Nigeria.

The finding for hypothesis three of this study reveal that vigilante training and capacity building have positive but insignificant impact on the fight against insecurity in Zamfara state. The result show that vigilante training and capacity building shows a positive but weak and statistically insignificant effect on the fight against insecurity ($\beta = 0.092$, $t = 1.777$, $p = 0.076$). Although training appears to improve vigilante performance to some extent, the result suggests that its impact is not strong enough to make a significant difference in the current context of Zamfara State. This may be due to inadequate or inconsistent training programmes. The hypothesis was therefore not rejected, indicating that training alone, without adequate support and coordination, may not be sufficient to significantly reduce insecurity.

From the perspective of Routine Activity Theory, this result suggests that training alone does not automatically make vigilantes effective "capable guardians" unless it is supported by other conditions. The theory emphasizes that crime is reduced when guardians are present, visible, and effective. In this case, although training improves the skills of vigilantes, it may not be enough to significantly reduce insecurity if they lack the necessary tools, funding, or coordination to apply those skills in real situations. In practical terms, in Zamfara State, a vigilante who is trained but not well-equipped or not working closely with formal security agencies may still struggle to respond to banditry or protect communities effectively. This explains why the impact of training is positive but weak, showing that while it is important, it needs to be combined with proper support and collaboration to make a real difference in reducing insecurity.

R Square

Tabe 7: R Square

	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Fight Against Insecurity	0.482	0.474

Source: SmartPLS Output, 2026

The result in Table 7 shows that the R-square value of 0.482 means that about 48.2% of the variation in the fight against insecurity in Zamfara State is explained by the three factors used in this study (vigilante government support and funding, collaboration with formal security agencies, and training and capacity building). The adjusted R-square of 0.474, which is slightly

lower, confirms that the model remains stable even after adjusting for the number of predictors. This indicates that the model has a moderate explanatory power. However, the remaining 51.8% is influenced by other factors not captured in this study, such as intelligence quality, community cooperation, leadership, technology, socio-economic conditions, and the activities of formal security agencies. This shows that while state-sponsored vigilantism plays an important role, the fight against insecurity in Zamfara State is shaped by a wider set of factors beyond those examined in this study.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings, this study conclude that state-sponsored vigilantism plays an important role in addressing insecurity in Zamfara State, but not all aspects contribute equally. Government support and funding emerged as the most influential factor, indicating that when vigilante groups are properly equipped and supported, they are better able to protect communities and respond to security threats. Collaboration with formal security agencies also proved to be important, as it strengthens coordination and improves overall effectiveness in tackling insecurity. However, although training and capacity building showed a positive effect, it was not strong enough to make a significant difference on its own, suggesting that training without adequate support and coordination may not yield the desired results. Overall, the findings highlight that a combination of strong government backing, effective collaboration, and well-structured support systems is essential for improving security outcomes in Zamfara State.

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are proposed to strengthen state-sponsored vigilantism and improve the fight against insecurity in Zamfara State:

i. Zamfara State government should continue to provide consistent and adequate financial support, equipment, and logistics to vigilante groups in Zamfara State. This can be achieved through adequate provision of communication tools, mobility support, and welfare packages that will motivate members and enhance their effectiveness in the fight against insecurity.

ii. Zamfara State government should continue strengthen the relationship between vigilantes and agencies such as the police and military. This can be achieved through clear communication channels, joint operations, and regular information sharing should be encouraged to improve coordination and trust.

iii. Zamfara State government should improve on training and capacity building for vigilante groups, this can be achieved through implementation of more structured, regular, and practical training programmes that focus on modern security techniques, intelligence gathering, and ethical conduct.

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