



International Journal of Comparative and Applied Criminal Justice

ISSN: 0192-4036 (Print) 2157-6475 (Online) Journal homepage: <http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rcac20>

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To cite this article: Justice Tankebe & Muhammad Asif (2016) Police legitimacy and support for vigilante violence in Pakistan, *International Journal of Comparative and Applied Criminal Justice*, 40:4, 295-314, DOI: [10.1080/01924036.2016.1217425](https://doi.org/10.1080/01924036.2016.1217425)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01924036.2016.1217425>



Published online: 08 Aug 2016.



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Police legitimacy and support for vigilante violence in Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

Bottoms and Tankebe recently analysed the multidimensional nature of police legitimacy and made an argument for its relevance to social order. Using survey data from three communities of varying socioeconomic conditions in Pakistan, this paper examines the links between the multiple dimensions of the Bottoms-Tankebe model of police legitimacy and support for vigilante violence. The findings show overall high levels of support for vigilantism. Regression analysis shows that experiences of police illegality consistently predict support for vigilantism across the three communities. Perceived quality of police decision-making predicts support for vigilantism in some conditions but not others. Contrary to expectations, quality of interpersonal treatment by police and police effectiveness do not explain support for vigilantism. We also found no evidence to show that feelings of obligation to obey the police mediate the influence of police legitimacy on vigilante support. The implications of these findings are discussed in this paper.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 20 February 2016

Accepted 22 July 2016

KEYWORDS

Legitimacy; vigilantism; lawfulness; procedural justice; corruption; dialogic legitimacy

In November 2008, residents in a neighbourhood in Karachi apprehended three men suspected of robbery, beat them up, doused them with petrol, and burned them. Media reports said the residents justified their actions by referring to police corruption and ineffectiveness, and that they even attempted to attack police officers at the scene (Daily Times, 2008). Similarly, a mob killed two brothers in the city of Sialkot – and in the presence of police officers – on suspicion that they were robbers, a suspicion that later proved to be false (Malik, 2015). Vigilantism – that is, “the killing of one or more people by groups of citizens without government authority” (Zimring, 2003, p. 90) – is by no means exclusive to Pakistan. There is documented evidence of vigilante violence from various countries, including Bolivia (Goldstein, 2003), Nigeria (Harnischfeger, 2003; Pratten, 2008), South Africa (Buur, 2003), Israel (Weisburd, 1988), the Netherlands (Haas, de Keijser, & Bruinsma, 2014), and the United States (Garland, 2005; Kil, Menjivar, & Doty, 2009; Tucker, 1985).

Little is known in any systematic way about public support for vigilantism. However, and notwithstanding the long-established gap between attitudes and behaviour (Sheeran, 2002), investigating the extent of, and the reasons for, public support for vigilantism can be the first step towards developing a body of research evidence and policy formulation. There is also evidence to suggest that vigilantism matters for understanding support for capital punishment (Zimring, 2003). Previous quantitative studies have linked support for vigilantism to institutionalised distrust in local police (Haas et al., 2014; Jackson, Huq, Bradford, & Tyler, 2013; Tankebe, 2009a). This study seeks to add to the literature by applying Bottoms and Tankebe’s (2012) recent

model of police legitimacy to support for vigilantism in Pakistan. Legitimate power is “power which is acknowledged as rightful by relevant agents, who include power-holders and their staff, those subject to the power and third parties whose support or recognition may help to confirm it” (Beetham, 2013, p. 19). In Tyler’s work, legitimacy is operationalised as comprising perceived feeling of obligation to obey legal authorities, institutional trust, and “moral alignment” with these authorities (Sunshine & Tyler, 2003; Tyler, 2006; Tyler & Huo, 2002; see also, Hough, Jackson, & Bradford, 2013; Jackson et al., 2013). Bottoms and Tankebe (2012) offer an alternative conceptualisation, according to which legitimacy is viewed as multidimensional, with police effectiveness, fairness, and lawfulness as its components. The Bottoms–Tankebe model has so far been tested in relation to legal compliance and public willingness to cooperate with legal authorities (Hough et al., 2013; Tankebe, 2013; Tankebe, Reisig, & Wang, 2016). An as yet unstudied aspect of this model is the extent to which it might contribute to our understanding of public support for vigilantism.

This study extends research on police legitimacy to the context of vigilantism, with an empirical focus on Pakistan. In the 2014 fiscal year, the United States government spent \$76.8 million on democracy and governance support in Pakistan (USAID, 2014). Compared with 2011 expenditure of \$21 million, the expenditure increased approximately fourfold. This trend in foreign assistance appears to reflect a concern with weak governance and rule of law in that country. For example, the 2014 Failed States Index ranks Pakistan as the tenth most “fragile state” in the world (Haken et al., 2014). Results from the 2013 Global Corruption Barometer shows that, on a scale ranging from 1 (not at all corrupt) to 5 (extremely corrupt), the judiciary and police in Pakistan received a score of 3.3 and 4.3, respectively (Hardoon & Heinrich, 2013). Compared with Afghanistan, the score for the police is worse (2.9) but it is better in the case of the judiciary (3.7), while the scores for both institutions are worse than those for Iraq (2.8/2.8) (Hardoon & Heinrich, 2013, p. 38). One of the manifestations of weak governance capability and rule of law is vigilante violence, a phenomenon that appears common in Pakistan.

Criminologists are students par excellence of the problem of social order; they seek to understand and explain why people obey societal rules, to understand the forms of social control mechanisms available for conflict resolution in particular societies, and to explain why people choose the type of control mechanisms they choose for conflict resolution. In many ways, vigilantism speaks to the character and health of social order. Thus, applying the Bottoms–Tankebe legitimacy model to vigilantism in Pakistan allows us to test the extent to which normative orientations to institutions contribute to our understanding of social order in the context of state fragility. Moreover, a number of criminologists have stressed the merits of cross-cultural comparative criminology by, among other things, testing criminological theories in different sociopolitical contexts (LaFree, 2007; Nelken, 2010). This study adds to the limited literature on cross-cultural testing of theories of legitimacy and public behaviour (see, Bradford, Huq, Jackson, & Roberts, 2014; Johnson, Maguire, & Kuhns, 2014; Reisig & Lloyd, 2009; Reisig, Tankebe, & Meško, 2014; Tankebe, 2009b).

Police legitimacy: a conceptual overview

In their article “Beyond procedural justice,” Bottoms and Tankebe (2012) argue that legitimacy is best conceptualised as an “ongoing dialogue, which begins with power-holders making a claim to exercise legitimate authority. One or more audiences, the authors argue, may respond to that claim, and power-holders might perhaps adjust their claims in the light of audience responses, and so on. Dunn (2013, p. 1) makes a similar point about the inherently dialogic nature of legitimacy: legitimacy is “a process of permanently active judgment, if one conducted with very uneven alertness and imaginative engagement by its full cast of eager or involuntary participants.” Drawing on the work of Beetham (1991), Bottoms and Tankebe (2012) argue for a distinction between two dimensions of legitimacy: *power-holder legitimacy* and *audience legitimacy*. The

former describes power-holders' recognition of, or confidence in, their own individual entitlement to power; it, therefore, concerns the self-recognition of entitlement to power (Bottoms & Tankebe, 2013). The latter refers to legitimacy as perceived by those who are subject to power (e.g., suspects, prisoners, or the wider community). Our focus in this paper is on audience legitimacy and its links to vigilante violence.

Bottoms and Tankebe (2012, pp. 144–5) identified lawfulness and “two specific values – procedural justice and effectiveness” as the key dimensions of police legitimacy.¹ The argument about lawfulness captures police adherence to the principles of the rule of law. This means that legitimate police power is that which is “acquired and exercised in accordance with established rules” (Beetham, 1991, p. 16). Lawfulness is the foundation of one of Max Weber's pure types of legitimacy: legal-rational authority. Here, legitimate power is grounded in “a belief in the legality of the enacted rules and the right of those elevated to authority under such rules to issue commands” (Weber, 1978, p. 215). With regard to the concepts of “justice” and “injustice,” Lucas (1980, p. 5) has argued that “if I talk only about justice I am in danger of relapsing into platitudes; it is when I get hot under the collar about some specific piece of unfairness that my eloquence has an edge to it, and I really know what is getting my goat.” Thus, allegations or actual incidents of police bribery and corruption (Knapp, 1972; Punch, 1985) and police criminality (Alpert & Dunham, 2004; Fyfe, 1988) signify violations of a condition of police legitimacy (Tankebe, 2010).

Procedural justice refers to “the fairness of the processes through which the police make decisions and exercise authority” (Sunshine & Tyler, 2003, p. 514). Prior studies have shown that the concept embraces two dimensions: the “quality of decision-making” and the “quality of interpersonal treatment” (Tyler, 2003; Sunshine & Tyler, 2003; Tyler & Blader, 2000). Issues encapsulated in the quality of decision-making include people being allowed to have their say before a decision is taken that affects them; the neutrality of the decision-maker, as well as his or her technical competence; and the consistency of decision-making in similar cases. The quality of interpersonal treatment, *per* Bottoms and Tankebe (2012), is “more personal.” Here, people are concerned about the extent to which legal authorities treat them as a “human being, with needs for dignity, privacy, respect for his or her moments of weakness” (p. 145). Tyler (1989) argues that procedurally just treatment has a symbolic significance: it communicates to members of local communities some crucial information about their normative standing in, and membership of, society. Thus, when police abuse the rights of citizens they communicate to those citizens “both their low social standing and the fact that the authorities may not protect them and may, in fact, even hurt them” (Tyler 1989, p. 831). Various studies have shown that procedural justice predicts compliance and intentions to cooperate with local police (e.g., Augustyn, 2015; Jackson, Bradford, Stanko, & Hohl, 2012; Murphy & Cherney, 2011; Reisig, Tankebe, & Meško, 2012; Sunshine & Tyler, 2003).

Perhaps the most contentious element in the Bottoms–Tankebe model is police effectiveness. Most earlier studies of legitimacy viewed effectiveness as an instrumental consideration, and thus distinct from legitimacy. For example, Sunshine and Tyler (2003, p. 514) contrast legitimacy with an instrumental perspective, which they define as embracing public acceptance of the ability of the police to effectively control crime and criminal behaviour. Bottoms and Tankebe (2012) contest this view. On their analysis, legitimacy presupposes the existence of shared values, which define what the objectives of the police ought to be (for example, preventing economic crimes, fighting drug trafficking, or addressing anti-social behaviour). Thus, “when citizens demand that the police demonstrate effectiveness in tackling crime and disorder in their local areas, it means that they are not simply making crude instrumental demands; on the contrary, they are expecting the police to fulfil a normative condition for their legitimacy” (Tankebe, 2013, p. 112).

Legitimacy and support for vigilantism

The Bottoms–Tankebe model, as depicted in [Figure 1](#), establishes the traditional predictors of legitimacy as the constitutive elements of legitimacy. On this analysis, obligation becomes the mechanism through which legitimacy might influence support for vigilante violence. However, the model also allows the various dimensions of legitimacy to exhibit direct influence on vigilante support.

As noted above, there is a small body of quantitative literature on support for vigilantism. Using data from Ghana, Tankebe (2009a) reported that perceptions of police trustworthiness were the main driver of support for vigilantism. Perceptions of police anti-corruption reforms and the quality of citizen treatment by the police were indirectly associated with disapproval of vigilantism. However, neither the effectiveness nor the quality of police decision-making predicted vigilantism. Jackson and his colleagues reported similar findings in their analysis of survey data from 1017 Londoners (Jackson et al., 2013). They found that procedural justice and police effectiveness did not explain people’s willingness to use violence to settle disputes. Instead, what mattered was people’s sense of obligation to obey the police. Haas et al. (2014) combined a series of items measuring various dimensions of police legitimacy to form what they termed “diffuse confidence in police,” and to test its effects on support for vigilantism. Their findings showed a statistically significant association between the two. More recently, Nivette (2016) analysed survey data from 18 Latin American countries in a study that examined two scenarios of vigilantism: one scenario involved an individual who killed a suspected rapist, and the other scenario involved an individual suspected of terrorising the community. The results showed that perceived police criminality and institutional ineffectiveness predicted approval of vigilantism in both scenarios.

Beyond these quantitative studies, evidence from ethnographic studies also points to the role of legitimacy in vigilantism. Anderson’s (1999) work in inner cities in the United States speaks to the role of effectiveness. He found that approval of, and recourse to, vigilantism arose in situations of ineffective state intervention, which created a need for individuals to assume personal responsibility for their own safety, culminating in “people’s law,” based on “street justice” (p. 10). Even when the police were capable, they might be unwilling to respond to people’s security needs: “When called, they may not respond, which is one reason many residents feel they must be prepared to take extraordinary measures to defend themselves and their loved ones against those who are inclined to aggression” (p. 34). Similar evidence is documented in studies among young people elsewhere in the United States (Wilkinson, Beaty, & Lurry, 2009). In Nigeria, the absence of a police response to violent robberies contributed to the rise of the Bakassi Boys, a vigilante group that combined torture with occult forces to fight crime (Harnischfeger, 2003; McCall, 2004; Meagher, 2007; Smith, 2004).

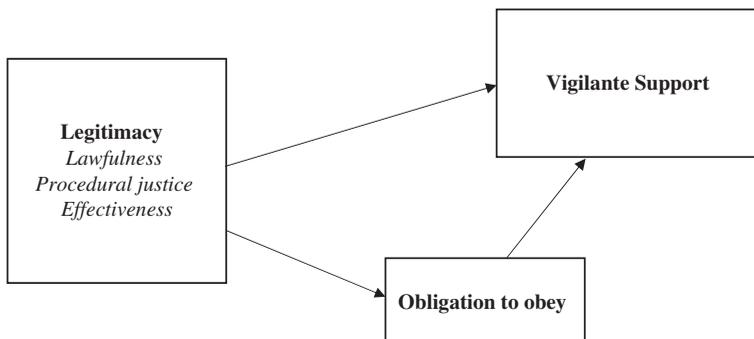


Figure 1. The Bottoms–Tankebe legitimacy model of social regulation. *Source:* Adapted from Tankebe et al. (2016).

In Tankebe's (2009a) study in Ghana, experience of police corruption was unrelated to support for vigilantism. However, some ethnographic accounts produce contrary evidence (e.g., Wilkinson, Beaty, & Lurry, 2009). Thus, in his study in Nigeria, (Harnischfeger, 2003, p. 24) found that the police had to tolerate vigilante groups because some groups had "a list of policemen who collaborated directly with armed robbers," which the police leadership did not want to be made public. In Bolivia, perceptions of police bribe-taking from criminals were found to create a certain mistrust that often resulted in resistance to police interventions intended to stop the lynching of suspects:

From the perspective of state law, a police officer intervening to stop an illegal lynching is acting in accordance with his assigned duties, but a barrio resident perceives this same action as a violation of the moral precepts of the community, a defense of the thieves against the people, and thus as a corrupt action. The resident's perception also is informed by the bribe taking generally imputed to corrupt individual officers. This set of perspectives creates an impossible situation for the police, who disrupt the lynching in the name of law and order but, in doing so, appear to the people in the crowd to be rescuing their accomplices, the thieves whom the crowd is attempting to punish. (Goldstein, 2003, p. 31)

Thus, both ethnographic and survey-based studies point to the influence of the various dimensions of legitimacy on vigilante violence. Yet it may be that both the approval of vigilantism and the role of legitimacy in explaining that approval vary across situational contexts. In an influential study, Sampson and Bartusch (1998, pp. 800–801) found evidence of "an ecological structuring to normative orientations [... such that] normative orientations toward law and deviance are rooted in experiential differences associated with neighbourhood context."

This study examines these issues in the context of Pakistan. Based on the literature review, we raise the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis I: Perceptions of police lawfulness will be associated with a rejection of vigilantism. As previously indicated, lawful policing re-assures citizens that police can be relied upon to promote justice in social relations.

Hypothesis II: People who perceive the police to be effective in tackling crime will be less inclined to support vigilantism. Policing plays an important role in the maintenance of law and order in local communities. It follows that when people perceive the police to be effective, they will more likely defer to them than appropriate police authority to themselves.

Hypothesis III: Perceptions of police procedural justice will be associated with a rejection of vigilantism. Prior studies have shown that when people perceive police to treat them with respect and dignity, they tend to reject vigilantism (e.g., Jackson et al., 2013; Tankebe, 2009a). We expect similar associations between procedural justice and vigilantism in Pakistan.

Hypothesis IV: People's feelings of obligation to obey the law will mediate the influence of police legitimacy (that is, police lawfulness, procedural justice and effectiveness) on support for vigilantism. A perception that the police are legitimate creates an obligation to obey them (Reisig et al., 2012; Hirschi, 2002). The more people believe they have a moral duty to obey the law, the less likely they are to support illegal behaviour, such as vigilantism.

Policing in Pakistan

A former British colony, Pakistan gained political independence in 1947. A turning point in the historical development of the police was the 1857 uprising against British rule. The uprising heralded what Bayley (1969, p. 44) calls "a period of agonising reassessment" a product of which was the Police Act 1861. Among its defining provisions was the attempt to demilitarise the police

and to create an entirely civil police headed by an inspector general responsible to political authorities (Bayley, 1969). However, both in terms of the ideology and proposed structure of the “new” police, the Act created “an authoritarian, unaccountable, and oppressive police force” (Abbas, 2009, p. 11). It was not until 2002 that a new legal framework, the Police Act 2002, replaced the 1861 Act.

Policing is decentralised into five provinces. These “act independently of each other, and there is no nationwide integration in terms of training standards and coordination” (Abbas, 2011, p. 8). However, they have similar structures and operate under the same legal arrangements such as the Pakistan Penal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure. Thus the Police Act 2002 applies equally to all police provinces. The Act sets out the duties of the police as *inter alia* maintaining law and order, preventing and detecting crimes, and offering assistance to victims of crime. It also explicitly requires officers to “behave with the members of the public with due decorum and courtesy” (Police Act 2002, Chapter II). The Act also creates independent police complaints commissions at district and federal levels that will receive, investigate, and sanction offending officers. Inherent in the Act is a tension between political control and efforts at creating an institutional arrangement to promote effective, efficiency, and fair policing.

However, legal scholars have long pointed to a gap between “enacted law and practiced law, even within the law-work of officials and professionals” (MacCormick, 2007, p. 71; see also, Tamanaha, 2001). Thus, notwithstanding the legal provisions governing police work, policing in Pakistan continues to face many challenges. Police-community relations are characterised by distrust. For example, while 85% of Pakistanis trust teachers, only 18% place trust in police officers (Gallup Pakistan, 2011). Perceptions of police effectiveness are low; 86% of respondents in Punjab believe the police are ineffective in tackling violent offences, and only 12% believe the police are sufficiently equipped to execute their functions (Jackson, Asif, Bradford, & Zakar, 2014). There is also evidence to show public suspicion of collusion between criminals and some police officers. Hence, some people avoid reporting their victimisation to the police (Hussain, 2010). Further, and despite the systems of accountability, there is widespread perception of police corruption and political interference in the operations of the police (Gallup Pakistan, 2011). Analysing data from a community survey, Jackson and his colleagues report that 65% of the people interviewed had paid money to police officers in order to avoid arrests; 78% reported witnessing other citizens engage in similar corruption transactions.

Challenges with terrorism have further compounded difficulties in transforming the police from an institution perceived as “ill-equipped, poorly trained, deeply politicised, and chronically corrupt” (Abbas, 2009, p. 8) into a fair and an effective institution. Pakistan is one of the five countries most affected by terrorism; terrorism killed 1760 people in 2014 (Liang et al. 2015). Historically, the police have focused disproportionately on the security needs of political and economic elites at the expense of the poor, some of whom often feel over-policed and under-protected. Terrorism has compounded this situation; “in high-threat areas, a majority of the police may be deployed at any time on private security details for political officials, their families, and chief supporters” (Perito & Parvez, 2014, p. 3). Within this context, justice can seem “elusive” for ordinary citizens (Abbas, 2011, p. 9), and poor attitudes by police officers create resentment and alienation. These reactions may have important implications for attitudes to vigilantism.

Methods

Our data come from a survey conducted in the capital of the Punjab Province. Three of the nine towns of Lahore – Wagah, Ravi, and Gulberg – were selected randomly for the survey. A multi-stage sampling technique was used to select (i) circles (an area with an average population of 6000), (ii) localities (an area consisting of an average population of 1000) and then (iii) households. The surveys were administered face-to-face using paper and pencil. We chose the head of the household, whether male or female, although in most cases they were male. Out of 576 interviews attempted, 516 were

successfully completed, representing a response rate of 89.6%. The questionnaire was drafted in English and then translated into Urdu – the national language of Pakistan. In a limited number of cases (40 cases) the questions were translated (orally) into Punjabi.

The sample was 25.7 % female and 74.3% male; 19.2% were between 18 and 25 years, 44.1% between 26 and 33 years, and 36.7% were aged 34 years or more. In terms of educational attainment, 61.4% had either basic or no education at all, 32.8% had pre-university education, and only 5.9% had university education.

Survey instrument

The items employed in the study were adapted from a variety of prior studies (e.g., Sunshine & Tyler, 2003; Tankebe, 2009a; Tyler & Huo, 2002). Before the scales were developed, principal component analysis was conducted to establish the assumed dimensions of legitimacy. The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was 0.84, and the Bartlett’s test of sphericity was statistically significant, $\chi^2(595) = 4987.3, p < 0.001$. The results of the principal component analysis are displayed in Table 1. One of the items “the police treat everyone equally” cross-loaded on two variables, and was therefore excluded.

Support for vigilantism

The items were drawn from Tankebe (2009a), and included the following: “It is all right for members of the public to beat up crime suspects,” “People who kill armed robbers should not be blamed,” “It is sometimes OK for people to take the law into their own hands if they feel the police are unable to protect them,” “It is pointless to hand over a suspected criminal to the police because they won’t bring the offender to justice.” The items were measured using a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree), with a higher score indicating greater support for vigilantism ($\alpha = 0.72$; mean = 3.59; standard deviation (S.D.) = 0.86).

Effectiveness

As Table 1 shows, the items employed to measure perceived police effectiveness loaded into two distinct factors, which have been labelled *neighbourhood security* (e.g., “Crime levels in my neighbourhood have changed for the better in the last year”; $\alpha = 0.82$; mean = 2.26; S. D. = 0.82), and *police responsiveness* (e.g., “The police are always ready to provide satisfactory assistance to victims of crime”; $\alpha = 0.71$; mean = 1.78; S.D. = 0.60). In both cases, items were measured using a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree), with a higher score indicating more favourable assessments of police effectiveness.

Procedural justice

As previously indicated, procedural justice has two dimensions: “quality of interpersonal treatment” and “quality of decision-making.” The results of the factor analysis reflect the distinction. The former was measured using three items on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree): “The police treat everyone with respect”; “The police respect people’s rights”; and “The police respect people’s rights.” The overall scale was reliable ($\alpha = 0.71$; mean = 1.60; S. D. = 0.59). We measured quality-of-decision-making using six items; e.g., “The police clearly explain the reasons for their actions”; “The police provide opportunity for unfair decisions to be corrected”; and “The police take account of the needs and concerns of people they deal with” ($\alpha = 0.75$; mean = 1.82; S.D. = 0.57).

Lawfulness

The measure of lawfulness was based on direct and vicarious experiences of police corruption: “Have you ever paid money to a police officer or promised the officer a favour to overlook your unlawful behaviour (e.g., speeding, assault)?”, “Have you ever witnessed somebody pay money to

Table 1. Results of principal component analysis on the scaled items.

	Factor loadings
Neighbourhood security (explained variance = 19.3%)	
1. I feel safe walking in my neighbourhood in the night	0.78
2. Overall, my neighbourhood is a good place to live in terms of security	0.75
3. There are not many instances of crime in my neighbourhood	0.74
4. Overall, the police are doing a good job in my neighbourhood	0.66
5. Crime levels in my neighbourhood have changed for the better in the last year	0.65
6. When the police stop people they usually handle the situation well	0.43
Quality of decision-making (explained variance = 7.2%)	
1. The police provide opportunity of unfair decisions to be corrected	0.67
2. The police try to find the best solution for people's problems	0.64
3. The police clearly explain the reasons for their actions	0.61
4. The police sincerely try to help people with their problems	0.56
5. The police take account of the needs and concerns of people they deal with	0.50
6. The police follow through on their decisions and promises	0.41
Responsiveness (explained variance = 6.2%)	
1. The police are always ready to provide satisfactory assistance to victims of crime	0.67
2. The police reach there where you need them	0.67
3. The police respond promptly to calls about crime (e.g., robbery, assault)	0.64
4. The police are always able to provide the assistance the public need from them	0.63
5. The police are doing well in controlling violent crime	0.51
Police lawfulness (explained variance = 5.2%)	
1. Used someone related to a police officer to prevent a case being pursued against you	0.71
2. The police refused to investigate, arrest, charge, or prosecute you because you are related to a police officer	0.65
3. Ever paid money to a police officer or promised the officer a favour to over unlawful behaviour	0.61
4. Witnessed someone pay money to a police officer or promise the officer a favour to overlook their unlawful behaviour	0.58
5. Personally known a situation where the police decided not to investigate, arrest, charge, or prosecute someone because that person is a relative or friend	0.58
Vigilante support (explained variance = 4.5%)	
1. It is alright for members of the public to beat up crime suspects	0.78
2. People who kill armed robbers should not be blamed	0.77
3. It is sometimes OK for people to take the law into their own hands if they feel the police are unable to protect them	0.65
4. It is pointless to hand over a suspected criminal to the police because they would not bring the offender to justice	0.60
Obligation to obey the police (explained variance = 4.2%)	
1. It is your moral duty to do what the police tell you to do even when you do not understand the reasons for their decisions	0.75
2. It is your moral duty to do what the police tell you to do even when you disagree with their decisions	0.74
3. It is your moral duty to do what the police tell you to do even when you do not like the way they treat you	0.70
4. It is your moral duty to do what the police tell you to do even if you think they are wrong	0.57
Quality of interpersonal treatment (explained variance = 3.7%)	
1. The police treat everyone with dignity	0.78
2. The police treat everyone with respect	0.67
3. The police respect people's rights	0.67
Total variance explained (%)	53.4%

Only factor loadings >0.40 are displayed.

a police officer or promise the officer a favour for the officer to overlook their unlawful behaviour (e.g., speeding, assault, theft)?”, “Have the police ever refused to investigate, arrest, charge, or prosecute you because you are related to a police officer?”, “Have you ever made use of somebody related to a police officer to prevent a case being pursued against you?”, “Have you ever personally known a situation where the police decide not to investigate, arrest, charge, or prosecute somebody because that person is a relative or a friend?”. The responses ranged from 1 = Many times to 4 = Never ($\alpha = 0.67$; mean = 1.94; S.D. = 0.53).

Table 2. Descriptive statistics.

Variables	<i>M</i>	S.D.	Minimum	Maximum
Obligation	1.72	0.49	1	4
Quality of interpersonal treatment	1.60	0.59	1	4.33
Quality of decision-making	1.82	0.57	1	4
Lawfulness	1.94	0.53	1	3.80
Vigilantism support	3.59	0.86	1.25	5
Responsiveness	1.78	0.60	1	4.20
Neighbourhood security	2.26	0.82	1	4.67
Female	1.26	–	1	2
Age	2.17	–	1	3
Education	1.95	–	1	3
Community	1.94	–	1	3

Obligation to obey police

Four items were employed to measure perceived feelings of obligation to obey police directives: “It is your moral duty to accept the decisions made by police, even if you think they are wrong” “It is your moral duty to do what the police tell you to do even when you do not understand the reasons for their decisions”; “It is your moral duty to do what the police tell you to do, even when you disagree with their decisions”; and “It is your moral duty to do what the police tell you to do even when you do not like the way they treat you.” Each question had the following Likert-type response set: 1 – “strongly disagree” to 5 – “strongly agree.” These responses then were combined to create an obligation-to-obey index ($\alpha = 0.66$; mean = 1.72; S.D. = 0.49).

Demographic variables

Prior research shows that levels of support for vigilante violence vary with individual characteristics. For example, research shows that older people are more likely than younger people to support vigilantism (Tankebe, 2009a). Accordingly, three demographic variables are included in the analysis. First, sex is a dichotomous measure where female participants are coded as 2 (male = 1). Second, age is an ordered-categorical variable ranging from 18 – 25 years (coded 1), 26 – 33 years (coded 2) to 34 years or older (coded 3). Third, education is categorised as: basic or no education; pre-university; and university.

Findings

The analysis begins by looking at the extent of support for vigilantism (Table 3). The data show consistently widespread approval of vigilantism across all four indicators. Approximately, half the respondents would tolerate beating suspects of crime (49.3%), but 1 in 3 (32.6%) disapproved. Six out of ten would condone extrajudicial killing of violent robbers (60.6%), and two-thirds believed citizens could appropriate the powers of formal justice institutions if they believe those institutions to be incapable of providing security. Only 14.9% felt it was worthwhile to defer to the police in dealing with suspects of crime; 75.4% believed it was “pointless” to do so. This represent

Table 3. Levels of support for vigilantism.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1. It is all right for members of the public to beat up crime suspects	11.2	21.4	18.2	31.8	17.5
2. People who kill armed robbers should not be blamed	5.1	13.7	20.6	42.4	18.2
3. It is sometimes OK for people to take the law into their own hands if they feel the police are unable to protect them	7.8	10.4	10.6	46.1	25.1
4. It is pointless to hand over a suspected criminal to the police because they won't bring the offender to justice	4.3	10.6	9.6	42.7	32.7

N = 510.

us intense rejection of due process – a key element of the principle of the rule of law – in responding to perceived threat to social order.

Neighbourhood contexts are associated with differential political and economic resources, allowing people to influence power that constrain their lives (Sampson & Bartusch, 1998). Feelings of cynicism and perceptions of legal injustice, and, therefore, the levels of support for vigilantism, will vary across different socioeconomic conditions. We sought to investigate differences in vigilante support in the three communities from which the data were collected: Wagah sits on the border between Pakistan and India. It “looks more like a sleepy outpost of a small town than an international border, with its handful of tea stalls, a couple of public phone booths, and not much else” (Bahree, 2009, p. 41). Ravi’s population comprises rural migrants and local inhabitants (Budlender, 2009). Gulberg is a wealthy residential and commercial town (Jadoon, Batool, & Chaudhry, 2014).

Table 4 presents results from a series of one-way ANOVAs exploring differences in support for vigilantism, perceptions of legitimacy, and feelings of obligation to obey the police. With the exception of obligation, we found statistically significant differences in levels of support for vigilantism and perceptions of legitimacy. *Post hoc* comparisons were conducted using Tukey’s post-hoc test. Starting with vigilantism, the results showed support levels in Ravi Town ($M = 4.02$, $S.D. = 0.60$) were significantly greater than in Wagah town ($M = 3.23$, $S.D. = 0.92$) and Gulberg town ($M = 3.20$, $S.D. = 0.85$). However, there was no statistically significant difference in vigilance support between Gulberg and Wagah towns. Participants in Gulberg ($M = 2.56$, $S.D. = 0.88$) and

Table 4. One-way analysis of variance of vigilantism, legitimacy, and obligation.

Source		Sum of squares	df	Mean of squares	<i>F</i>
Support for vigilantism					
ANOVA	Between groups	82.36	2	41.18	71.21***
	Within groups	293.20	507	0.58	
	Total	375.56	509		
Neighbourhood security					
ANOVA	Between groups	48.47	2	24.24	41.91***
	Within groups	293.14	507	0.58	
	Total	341.61	509		
Police responsiveness					
ANOVA	Between groups	16.92	2	8.46	26.11***
	Within groups	164.29	507	0.32	
	Total	181.21	509		
Quality of decision-making					
ANOVA	Between groups	4.15	2	2.07	6.40**
	Within groups	164.11	507	0.32	
	Total	168.26	509		
Quality of interpersonal treatment					
ANOVA	Between groups	5.11	2	2.56	7.49**
	Within groups	173.00	507	0.34	
	Total	178.11	509		
Lawfulness					
ANOVA	Between groups	10.40	2	5.20	20.11***
	Within groups	131.02	507	0.26	
	Total	141.42	509		
Feeling of obligation to obey police					
ANOVA	Between groups	0.71	2	0.35	1.47
	Within groups	122.20	507	0.24	
	Total	122.90	509		

** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Table 5. Correlation matrix for substantive variables.

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Neighbourhood security						
2. Responsiveness	0.48**					
3. Vigilantism	-0.31**	-0.21**				
4. Lawfulness	0.32**	0.26**	-0.34**			
5. Quality of decision-making	0.45**	0.39**	-0.19**	0.23**		
6. Quality of treatment	0.32**	0.33**	-0.21**	0.23**	0.49**	
7. Obligation to obey police	0.12**	0.15**	-0.12**	0.13**	0.15**	0.21**

** $p < 0.01$, $N = 510$.

Wagah ($M = 2.53$, $S.D. = 0.92$) did not differ in their perceptions of neighbourhood security but differences emerged between them and those from Ravi ($M = 1.93$, $S.D. = 0.56$). Similar results were found in perceptions of police responsiveness (Gulberg, $M = 1.93$, $S.D. = 0.70$; Ravi, $M = 1.58$, $S.D. = 0.33$; Wagah, $M = 1.98$, $S.D. = 0.73$). Participants from Gulberg ($M = 1.93$, $S.D. = 0.65$) tended to provide more favourable assessments of police decision-making than participants from Ravi ($M = 1.73$, $S.D. = 0.45$); however, no statistically significant differences emerged between Gulberg and Wagah ($M = 1.88$, $S.D. = 0.66$) or between Wagah and Ravi. For quality of interpersonal treatment and police lawfulness, Ravi participants were more predisposed to hold negative perceptions. They ($M = 1.50$, $S.D. = 0.48$) perceived police officers to be unfair in their treatment of citizens than participants from Gulberg ($M = 1.71$, $S.D. = 0.65$) and Wagah ($M = 1.67$, $S.D. = 0.68$) did. Ravi ($M = 1.79$, $S.D. = 0.48$) participants in the sample were also less likely to report experiences of lawful police behaviour than participants from Gulberg ($M = 2.09$, $S.D. = 0.52$) and Wagah ($M = 2.06$, $S.D. = 0.55$). Taken together, the ANOVA results point to Ravi as a hotspot of perceived police illegitimacy and vigilante support.

Next, we turn to Table 5 to examine bivariate correlations for all study variables. The strongest correlate of support for vigilantism was police lawfulness ($r = -0.34$, $p < 0.01$). Quality of interpersonal treatment ($r = -0.21$, $p < 0.01$) and quality of decision-making ($r = -0.19$, $p < 0.01$) were both associated with decreased support for vigilantism. Further, participants who reported feelings of obligation to obey the police were less likely to support vigilantism ($r = -0.12$, $p < 0.01$). Table 5 also shows that the strongest correlations among the predictor variables were between perceived neighbourhood security and police responsiveness ($r = 0.48$, $p < 0.01$) and between neighbourhood security and quality of decision-making ($r = 0.45$, $p < 0.01$). The third strongest correlation was between quality of decision-making and quality of interpersonal treatment ($r = 0.49$, $p < 0.01$). However, none of these correlations is close to the conventional threshold for multicollinearity, which is defined as correlations of above 0.80 (Field, 2013). Diagnostic statistics further confirmed this initial impression; all variance inflation factor values were below 10 and the tolerance statistics were far greater than 0.2 (Field, 2013).

Next, we estimated two ordinary least squares models. The purpose of the regression analysis was twofold: first, to establish the unique effects that each explanatory variable had on support for vigilantism while controlling for other variables in the model. Second, to ensure that conclusions about the significant impacts of any of the explanatory variables upon support for vigilantism were not dependent upon the impacts of other variables in the equation (Tankebe, 2009a). Table 6 presents the standardised regression coefficients, standard errors, and significance levels for each coefficient.

In model 1, vigilantism support is regressed onto neighbourhood security, police responsiveness, quality of decision-making, quality of interpersonal treatment, lawfulness (measured as experience of corruption), type of community, and demographic variables. In this model, it was found that having a university education was associated with disapproval of vigilantism ($\beta = -0.12$, $p < 0.05$); that is, people with university education were less likely than those with no or basic education to support vigilantism. This finding is consistent with prior research, such as Tankebe's (2009a) study in Ghana and Nivette's (2016) cross-national study in Latin

Table 6. Support for vigilantism regression models.

	Model 1		Model 2	
	β	S.E.	β	S.E.
Female	-0.04	0.08	-0.04	0.08
Education (reference no./basic)				
Pre-university	-0.03	0.08	-0.04	0.08
University	-0.12*	0.10	-0.12*	0.10
Age (reference 18–25)				
26–33	0.13*	0.09	0.12*	0.09
34 or older	0.08	0.10	0.08	0.10
Quality of decision-making	-0.02	0.07	-0.02	0.07
Quality of treatment	-0.07†	0.06	-0.07	0.07
Lawfulness	-0.20***	0.07	-0.20***	0.07
Neighbourhood security	-0.08	0.05	-0.08	0.05
Responsiveness	0.04	0.07	0.04	0.07
Community (reference Gulberg)				
Ravi	0.35***	0.09	0.35***	0.09
Wagah	-0.03	0.09	-0.03	0.09
Obligation	–	–	-0.03	0.07
<i>F</i> -statistic	18.43***		17.06***	
Adjusted R^2	29.1%		29.1%	
<i>N</i>	509		509	

* $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.001$, † $p < 0.10$.

America. We also found that people between the ages of 26 and 33 were more approving of vigilantism than younger people (18–25 years), but there was no discernible difference between younger and older members of the sample. We also found that approval of vigilantism was stronger within Ravi than the wealthier community of Gulberg ($\beta = 0.35$, $p < 0.001$), but there was no statistically significant difference between wealthier Gulberg and the rural community of Wagah.

We hypothesised that the dimensions of legitimacy would be inversely related to support for vigilantism. The results show a mixed report card. Among the dimensions of legitimacy, lawfulness was the strongest predictor of vigilantism support, and the effect was negative ($\beta = -0.20$, $p < 0.001$). In other words, people who reported direct or vicarious experiences of police lawfulness tended to disapprove vigilantism. Quality of police interpersonal treatment was weakly associated with support for vigilantism, while the quality of decision-making, perceived neighbourhood security and police responsiveness had no discernible effects. The overall model accounted for 29% of the variance in vigilantism support. The story remains the same when a measure of feelings of obligation to obey was included in the analysis. Obligation was thus found to have no influence on support for vigilantism and did not attenuate the influence of lawfulness, and therefore falsifying the prediction that the influence of legitimacy on support for vigilantism is sometimes mediated by people's feelings of obligation to obey the police. It is true that the effects of quality of police interpersonal treatment were washed out in model 2, but these were weak to start with.

Given earlier findings showing differences in levels of support for vigilantism across the three communities, the analysis sought to establish the extent to which the correlates of vigilante support also varied across these communities. The results, as shown in Table 7, appear to show variance in the influence of some of the predictors. With the exception of lawfulness and quality of decision-making, none of the dimensions of legitimacy predicted support for vigilantism. However, while lawfulness was consistently associated with disapproval of vigilantism across the three communities, quality of decision-making predicted approval of vigilantism only in Ravi. When comparing the regression coefficients for lawfulness across the models, we found that the regression coefficient was largest in the relatively wealthy town of Gulberg and appeared least in the migrant town of Ravi. Utilising the formula suggested by

Table 7. Predictors of vigilante support across neighbourhoods.

	Wagah		Ravi Town		Gulberg	
	β	S.E.	β	S.E.	β	S.E.
Female	-0.15	0.20	0.07	0.09	-0.07	0.15
Education (reference no./basic)						
Pre-university	-0.02	0.19	-0.04	0.09	-0.25*	0.19
University	-0.11	0.28	-0.02	0.12	-0.33**	0.20
Age (reference 18–25)						
26–33	0.27*	0.23	-0.02	0.10	0.26*	0.20
34 or older	0.26†	0.27	-0.10	0.11	0.25*	0.21
Quality of decision-making	0.13	0.16	-0.23**	0.10	0.01	0.12
Quality of treatment	-0.14	0.14	0.01	0.09	-0.08	0.12
Lawfulness	-0.19*	0.15	-0.15*	0.09	-0.28**	0.13
Neighbourhood security	-0.10	0.10	-0.10	0.08	-0.05	0.09
Responsiveness	0.06	0.13	0.10	0.12	0.06	0.12
Obligation	-0.02	0.15	-0.15*	0.09	0.05	0.12
<i>F</i>	2.13*		4.11***		3.28**	
Adj. <i>R</i> ²	9.5%		12.5%		14.4%	
<i>N</i>	119		239		149	

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$, † $p < 0.10$.

Paternoster, Brame, Mazerolle, and Piquero (1998), we found the difference to be statistically non-significant ($Z = 0.82$, $p < 0.05$).

Obligation to obey the police was associated with disapproval of vigilantism, but only in Ravi. None of the individual-level variables was statistically significant in this community. In the other two areas, young adults (18–25 years) expressed greater disapproval of vigilantism than did their older counterparts. A higher level of education predicted greater disapproval of vigilantism in Gulberg, but not in the other areas. This latter finding is consistent with that by Tankebe (2009a) and supports the argument that higher education predisposes people to develop more favourable attitudes towards the principles of democracy. Education equips people with the requisite skills to understand what may often appear as the abstract subject of politics and the rule of law (Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993, p. 136). Overall, the models explained between 10% and 14% of the variance in support for vigilantism.

Discussion

Vigilante violence is an important societal phenomenon. Prior studies have examined its role in sustaining support for capital punishment (e.g., Jacobs, Carmichael, & Stephanie, 2005; Zimring, 2003). There appears to be a scholarly consensus that vigilantism arises from conditions of state illegitimacy. However, there is little quantitative analysis of support for vigilantism. The purpose of this study was to draw upon Bottoms and Tankebe (2012) model of police legitimacy to test the legitimacy–vigilantism link. Their model implied that support for vigilantism could be explained in terms of police effectiveness, fairness and lawfulness. To date, their model has been tested in the context of public cooperation with legal authorities and compliance with the law (Hough et al., 2013; Tankebe, 2013; Tankebe et al., 2016), but questions regarding its applicability in other contexts such as vigilantism remain largely untested. Using data from a survey in Pakistan, we assessed the extent to which public expressions of support for vigilantism can be explained by the Bottoms–Tankebe model.

Contrary to evidence from previous quantitative analyses (e.g., Haas et al., 2014; Tankebe, 2009a), we found evidence of pervasive support for vigilantism in Pakistan. The overall mean score of 3.59 reflects levels of support that are higher than what has been reported in earlier studies. For example, 75% did not believe the State police should handle suspected criminality, and 60% would not condemn those who kill suspected violent offenders. Our findings would seem

to support the conclusions reached by Sampson and Bartusch (1998) about neighbourhood variations in orientations towards the law. Specifically, approval for vigilante violence appears to vary across different neighbourhoods. In comparison with the more urbanised and wealthier town of Gulberg and the borderpost of town of Wagah, the migrant town of Ravi exhibited elevated levels of support for vigilantism. Participants from Ravi were also most predisposed view the police as illegitimate. The finding is also consistent with arguments that tolerance of vigilante violence is “a frontier phenomenon, occurring literally on the edges of state influence and control” (Abrahams, 1987, p. 179). Abrahams meant by “frontier sites” such contexts where the legitimacy of the state is in question.

Tankebe (2009a, p. 246) found that “significant public recourse to violent self-help speaks to broader issues of the rule of law, and suggests that the performance of the state and its legal institutions is being questioned.” Thus, high levels of vigilante support may reflect widespread disregard for principles of the rule of law among the citizens who took part in the survey. However, it would be wrong to suggest that any willingness to repudiate the rule of law is restricted to the general population. There is evidence of weak governance in Pakistan, with the country consistently performing poorly on various international indicators of the rule of law (Khan, 2007). It is nonetheless important to underscore the observation that attitudes do not always translate into behaviour. Future studies that focus on analysing the extent and nature of actual instances of vigilantism would advance our knowledge of the phenomenon. This might require qualitative research designs, including ethnographies and in-depth interviews, such as Kubrin and Weitzer’s (2003) study of retaliatory homicides in St. Louis (USA).

In this study, multiple regression analyses explored the correlates of support for vigilantism. First, participants with experiences of unlawful police behaviour – measured in terms of direct and vicarious experiences of corruption – reported higher levels of support for vigilantism. This finding contradicts prior quantitative analysis – for example, Tankebe’s (2009a) study in Ghana – but concurs with evidence from qualitative studies. It was the only dimension of legitimacy that predicted support for vigilantism in all three conditions. Unlike the dimensions of legitimacy, the lawfulness questions measured negative experiences. Yet it is known that “negative events are given more weight, people pay more attention to negative cues, the lessons they carry are learned more quickly and negative experiences have more impact on behaviour” (Skogan, 2006, p. 117). The relative influence of lawfulness may reflect this “negativity bias”. Nonetheless, the implication of our finding is that efforts to tackle vigilantism in Pakistan need to focus, in part, on controlling police corruption. Evidence from prior studies suggests that satisfaction with police anti-corruption reforms predicts disapproval of vigilantism (Tankebe, 2009a). However, as Kutnjak Ivkovic (2005, p. 72) argues, “police chiefs who talk the talk but don’t walk the walk, in addition to decreasing their own credibility, send the message that they are not sincere and that the efforts put into corruption control are hypocritical.” There are other forms of illegality beyond corruption, and future studies that employ other measures might offer greater insight into the role of lawfulness in explaining vigilante support.

The second, and consistent with Jackson and his colleagues’ findings in London, is that procedural justice predicts support for vigilantism. This influence of procedural justice on support for vigilantism was limited to the rural and migrant community of Ravi where support for vigilantism was most prevalent. However, it was the perceived quality of police decision-making, rather than quality of interpersonal treatment, that drove the influence of procedural justice. Given the irrelevance of perceived police effectiveness to vigilante support in Ravi, our findings suggest that the key issue at frontier spaces transcend ineffective state intervention as such; far more important is the character of that intervention such as the quality of everyday decision-making by state institutions. To recall, quality of decision-making concerns the extent to which police officers offer explanations for their decisions, offer opportunities for correcting unfair decisions, carry through their promises or are attentive to the welfare of citizens. These normative expectations are fundamental elements of democratic governance, rule of law, and principles of

human rights. Some researchers have suggested that procedural justice might not be applicable in other societies at different stages of development. Tonry (2007, p. 4) asserts that “the United States’ constitutional scheme premised on notions of limited powers of government and entrenched rights of citizens” which is unparalleled elsewhere and this makes procedural justice distinctively important to its citizens. The findings reported here show that these principles are equally important to some citizens in Pakistan, a context radically different from the United States and other western societies. Yet, there is evidence of a gap between these normative expectations and current policing practices in Pakistan. Perito and Parvez report that:

Police constables affect a military manner and answer to military-style discipline. Rank-and-file police officers have a reputation for being crude, abusive, and high-handed in their treatment of citizens. The police are generally feared but not respected. For the average citizen, seeking police assistance is considered potentially dangerous and often a last resort. Instead, [a culture of bribery, abuse and illegal detentions] serves the interests of the political elite, the wealthy, and those who can demand special treatment. (Perito & Parvez, 2014, p. 2)

Ravi was also the only community in which feelings of moral obligations to obey the police predicted disapproval of vigilantism. This finding concurs with Jackson and his colleagues’ findings according to which perceived moral obligations correlated with willingness to use violence to exact revenge and resolve disputes (Jackson et al., 2013). London and Ravi are two radically different sociocultural, political, and economic contexts; the former is a cosmopolitan city in a western democracy, the centre of liberal democratic governance. Ravi is a migrant community in a predominantly Muslim country. The finding that a sense of moral obligation towards legal institutions and aspects of procedural justice explain disapproval of vigilante violence enhances the cross-cultural applicability both of Bottoms–Tankebe’s model and Tyler’s procedural justice theory. Yet the inability of procedural justice and obligation to predict vigilantism within the border community of Wagah and the economically wealthy community of Gulberg point to possible spatial variations, which future studies should investigate. The key tentative conclusion to be drawn about the influence of quality of decision-making and feelings of obligation to obey the police is that both are important for understanding approval of vigilantism only in contexts in which they are perceived to be lacking.

Third, a commonplace explanation for vigilantism is that it arises in conditions of ineffective state intervention to resolve what Bernard Williams calls “the first political question,” which concerns how a society can establish and maintain “order, protection, safety, trust, and the conditions of cooperation” (Williams, 2005, p. 3). Kubrin and Weitzer (2003, p. 178) argue that retaliatory homicides are “a way of resolving problems and asserting social control in neighbourhoods where the agents of formal control are often” out of the loop “when it comes to crime and punishment.” This led us to predict that perceived police effectiveness would be associated with disapproval of vigilantism. We found no evidence in support of this hypothesis. Across the three communities, police effectiveness – measured as perceived police responsiveness and neighbourhood security – did not predict support for vigilantism. The finding is consistent with Tankebe’s (2009a) findings from Ghana but contradicts Nivette’s findings about institutional ineffectiveness in explaining support for vigilantism in Latin America. Measurement error can sometimes explain “null effects” (Messner, Baumer, & Rosenfeld, 2006), such as those reported here for the effectiveness-vigilantism link. Loader argues that there is more to security than being “safe”:

Security inheres, rather, in the capacity of individuals and groups to feel at ease with the threats that their environment poses, such that they do not, on an everyday basis, have to think about how safe they are, or routinely concern themselves with the effectiveness of the security measures that are in place, or constantly be bothered with whether and how these may need to be bolstered. *To be secure, as opposed to simply safe, is to be comfortable in, and with, one’s environment and hence free from the burdens of recurring security work.* (Loader, 2006, p. 208, emphasis added)

Loader's argument suggests a rethink of the measurement of police effectiveness in future studies. Based on his arguments, researchers should include items on the trust people have in their environment and how far people "feel routinely at ease with the threats posed by that environment" (p. 210).

Taken together, we found that police lawfulness matters for vigilantism in different socio-economic conditions, the influence of feelings of moral obligations to obey the police and quality of police decision-making is limited while perceived effectiveness proved irrelevant to efforts to understand support for vigilantism in the three communities examined. Our findings suggest caution when using aggregated data from multiple neighbourhoods. Beyond analysis of full samples, we need to understand contextual conditions that explain levels of support for vigilantism across different neighbourhoods. To do otherwise would increase the risk that researchers erroneously convey an impression that the Bottoms-Tankebe dimensions of legitimacy are always important for social order when in fact the picture is more variable. Reporting neighbourhood differences will avoid what Mouzelis (2008, p. 19) calls "contextless generalisations" in social-scientific research, namely generalisations that are "either trivial or actually wrong (wrong in the sense that they are valid only under certain conditions not specified in the theory)." The implication is that efforts to address legitimacy require an understanding of normative expectations of police in particular contexts and to develop mechanisms for responding to these expectations. Unfortunately, it is not uncommon for dialogues to be "one-sided, and all the participants quite frequently deaf to what their interlocutors are trying to say, or would like to convey, if they did elect to listen" (Dunn, 2013, p. 9). Tackling this hurdle is the challenge for police managers and policy makers interested in a culture of the rule of law and democratic governance.

People perceive, interpret, and react to apparent legitimacy or illegitimacy of police behaviour differently not least because they come to these perceptions with certain cognitive histories about policing or with concerns that have little to do with the police. As Skogan argues, "many people doubtless bring 'priors' to bear when they encounter the police, and when they later interpret what happened both to themselves and to researchers. These prior expectations could independently colour how they view specific features of an encounter" (2006, p. 276). These priors and other non-criminal justice concerns may sometimes account for people's reactions to vigilantism. Thus, while we found that police illegality in the form of corruption determined whether people viewed vigilantism as an appropriate action against suspected offenders, this factor explained not more than 29% of the variance in support for vigilantism. Looking at the individual communities, our models explained between 10% and 14% of the variances in support for vigilantism. The implication is that other factors may be involved and which we have not been able to capture. Some of these factors may be unrelated to what the police do, such that the conditions which allow vigilantism to emerge and the symbolic messages it communicates may transcend the quest for security. Thus Goldstein (2003, p. 22) argues that "vigilantism acts as a moral complaint against state inadequacy, challenging state legitimacy and redefining ideas about justice, citizenship, and law in the process." Similarly, and in the context of Nigeria, vigilantism has been found to be "much more than a popular response to crime. It operates at the intersections between the state and society, and lies at the centre of popular understandings of the roots of inequality, injustice, and corruption" (Smith, 2010, p. 167; see also Super, 2016). It is, thus, a way for the marginalised to use marginality to their advantage (Pratten, 2008). This suggests that factors such as broader State legitimacy or frustration with government more generally, personal involvement in crime, and feelings of social exclusion might contribute to our understanding of support for vigilantism. These insights point to fresh avenues of enquiry that should lead investigators to undertake quantitative criminological analysis of vigilantism.

Limitations

This study is not without limitations. First, the use of attitudinal data makes it difficult to establish how far the levels of support expressed by the research participants might translate into actual involvement in vigilantism and under what specific conditions that might or might not happen. We need criminological studies on actual vigilante violence, and future studies that use data from people actually involved in vigilantism will greatly advance knowledge of this social problem. Both for such studies and those that rely on attitudinal data, there might be merit in focusing on specific types of offences or deviance that attract vigilante response. Nivette's (2016) study in Latin America shows support can vary across different offences. Criminologists should follow Nivette's lead by focusing not only on reactions to street-level crimes and deviance, but also reactions to various specific types of white-color crimes. Second, there is scope for improved measurement of perceived police lawfulness. Our items focused on people's direct and vicarious experiences of police corruption, specially, bribery and nepotism. Such experiences might be indicative not only of police unlawful behaviour but also unlawful behaviour by the research participants. This raises an important question: was it the research participants' criminal propensity that predicted their support for vigilantism or the behaviour of the police? It is an ambiguity that we are unable to address. The reference to participants' unlawful behaviour leads to a final limitation of this study, which future studies should address. It concerns the role of standard criminological theories of crime in explaining involvement in or support for vigilantism. In democratic societies, vigilantism is criminal conduct. It is therefore an open question as to how far standard criminological theories of criminal behaviour – for example, “self-control theory,” “situational action theory,” or “general strain theory” (Agnew, 1992; Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990; Wikström, Oberwittler, Treiber, & Hardie, 2012) – can explain recourse to vigilante self-help.

Note

1. Bottoms and Tankebe's model originally focused mainly on lawfulness, procedural justice and effectiveness. However, subsequent work expanded the model to include “distributive justice” (see, for example, Bottoms & Tankebe, *in press*; Tankebe, 2014, 2013). Our study does not consider distributive justice; it is therefore only a partial test of the Bottoms and Tankebe model of police legitimacy.

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Funding

This work was supported by the International Development Research Centre Canada (IDRC) in collaboration with Sustainable Development Policy Institute Pakistan. For details see: <http://isfsa.sdpi.org/content.php?value=ec>

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