

ALTERNATIVE SECURITY ARCHITECTURES AND PUBLIC SAFETY IN NIGERIA: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF AMOTEKUN OPERATIONS IN IBADAN

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Abstract

The rising incidence of insecurity across Nigeria has necessitated the emergence of alternative security frameworks, particularly in regions where trust in conventional policing has declined. In Southwestern Nigeria, the establishment of the 'Amotekun' represents a culturally grounded response to escalating security challenges, rooted in indigenous systems and community-based vigilance. This study examines the informal security structure among the Yoruba population in Ibadan, focusing on the emergence, roles, and operational effectiveness of the Southwestern Security Network (Amotekun). The study was guided by three objectives: to examine Amotekun's operational strategies, assess its effectiveness in addressing local security concerns, and identify challenges limiting its performance. Structural functionalist theory was used to anchor this study. A quantitative research design was adopted, and data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to 98 residents across selected areas in Ibadan Oyo State, Nigeria. Respondents were selected using purposive sampling techniques to ensure representativeness. Findings revealed that Amotekun is widely perceived as a responsive and culturally attuned security outfit that has bridged critical gaps left by formal security agencies. Its role in community surveillance, crime deterrence, and rapid responses are particularly valued. However, the corps faces significant challenges, including inadequate funding, poor logistics, and insufficient legal backing, which hinder its effectiveness. The study concludes that with improved institutional support, enhanced legal frameworks, and better coordination with formal security agencies, Amotekun can serve as a sustainable model for community policing. It recommends increased funding, capacity building, and strengthened inter-agency collaboration.

Keywords: Amotekun, community policing, security challenges, indigenous security, Nigeria.

Introduction

Security is a fundamental necessity in any society, as it protects lives and property and promotes the overall well-being of individuals within the community. It is the condition in which people are free from threats, violence, and instability, allowing them to engage in economic, political, and social activities without fear (Ibrahim, 2023). Security can be viewed from various perspectives, including national security, which protects a country from external and internal threats, and community security, which focuses on safeguarding local populations from criminal activity and social unrest. In a broader sense, security also encompasses human security, which extends beyond physical protection to include economic stability, access to basic needs, and political freedoms. In modern societies, security is often managed by state institutions such as the police, the military, and intelligence agencies (Saleem & Umar, 2024). However, in many parts of the world, particularly in developing nations like Nigeria, state security institutions often face numerous challenges, including inadequate resources, corruption, and inefficiency, leading to the rise of informal security structures as alternative means of protection (Hameed & Taiwo, 2023).

The Yoruba people, one of the largest ethnic groups in Nigeria, have historically maintained their own indigenous systems of security and governance long before the advent of colonial rule and the establishment of formal security agencies. Yoruba society is traditionally organized into kingdoms and towns, each governed by a monarch, known as the Oba, and a council of elders responsible for maintaining order and enforcing customary laws (Hameed, 2023). Security and justice were largely managed through community-based structures such as the Ologun (warriors) and age-grade associations that took on the responsibility of defending their communities from external threats and internal conflicts. Traditional Yoruba security systems also involved spiritual elements, where deities and ancestral beliefs played a crucial role in ensuring justice and preventing crime (Hameed, 2023). The fear of divine punishment or ancestral wrath discouraged individuals from engaging in criminal activities, and those who violated societal norms were subjected to traditional justice mechanisms, including public shaming, exile, or spiritual cleansing rituals (Adebayo & Aborishade, 2020). Despite the transition to modern governance and the establishment of state security institutions, Yoruba communities have continued to rely on informal security structures due to the persistent inefficiencies of the formal security apparatus in Nigeria (Saleem & Raheem 2022).

The Nigerian Police Force, the primary agency responsible for maintaining law and order, has often been criticized for its inadequacies, including corruption, brutality, and a lack of community engagement (Farid, 2023). The inability of the formal security sector to effectively curb crimes such as armed robbery, kidnapping, and herdsmen attacks in southwestern Nigeria has led to widespread fear and distrust among the people. As a result, local communities have turned to vigilante groups, neighborhood watches, and other forms of community-based security to fill the gaps left by state security agencies (Adetumbi&Adedigba, 2021). One of the most significant developments in Yoruba security architecture in recent times is the establishment of the Southwestern Security Network, commonly known as Amotekun. This regional security outfit was launched in January 2020 as a response to the increasing wave of insecurity across the southwestern states, particularly in response to the alarming rise in kidnappings, herdsmen-related violence, and armed banditry (Saleem & Raheem, 2022).

Amotekun was established as a collaborative effort between the six southwestern states, such as Oyo, Ogun, Osun, Ondo, Ekiti, and Lagos to provide a localized security network that would work alongside formal security agencies in tackling crime and ensuring the safety of the region's inhabitants (Al-Ameen, Peter, and Lukman, 2022). Amotekun operatives in Yoruba land particularly in Ibadan have been actively involved in combating crime, conducting patrols, and working closely with local communities to provide intelligence and security support. Their presence has been particularly notable in areas prone to criminal activities, where they have conducted night patrols, intercepted suspicious movements, and responded swiftly to distress calls (Yusuf, 2022). However, the operation of Amotekun in Ibadan and other parts of southwestern Nigeria has not been without challenges. One of the major issues faced by the security network is the question of jurisdiction and authority. Since security is a constitutional responsibility of the federal government in Nigeria, there have been tensions between Amotekun and federal security agencies, particularly the police and the military (Biodun & Yunus, 2023). There have been instances where Amotekun operatives were arrested or disarmed by the police, raising concerns about the recognition and legitimacy of the outfit within Nigeria's broader security framework. Additionally, allegations of human rights abuses, excessive use of force, and lack of proper training have been raised against some Amotekun personnel, further complicating its operations and acceptance among the populace (Okebukola, 2021).

Despite these challenges, Amotekun has gained significant support from Yoruba leaders, traditional rulers, and local communities who see it as a necessary structure to safeguard their lives and property. This study seeks to achieve the following specific objectives: to examine Amotekun's operational strategies, assess its effectiveness in addressing local security concerns, and identify challenges limiting its performance in Ibadan, Nigeria.

The Southwestern Security Network (Amotekun)

The Southwestern Security Network, popularly known as Amotekun, is a regional security initiative established by the six states of southwestern Nigeria, such as Oyo, Osun, Ogun, Ondo, Ekiti, and Lagos to address growing security challenges in the region. Its formation was driven by the increasing incidents of armed robbery, kidnapping, herder-farmer conflicts, and other forms of violent crimes that overwhelmed the existing formal security agencies (Akogun, 2022). Amotekun was officially launched in January 2020 as a response to the deteriorating security situation in the region and the failure of federal security forces to effectively curb the menace. The Yoruba people, who form the dominant ethnic group in southwestern Nigeria, have historically placed a strong emphasis on communal security, and Amotekun emerged as a modern adaptation of these traditional security measures. The establishment of Amotekun marked a significant shift in the approach to security governance in Nigeria, as it was the first coordinated regional security outfit in the country, setting a precedent for decentralized security initiatives (Babatunde, 2023). The structure of Amotekun is designed to complement formal security agencies while operating within the framework of community policing. Each of the six states in the southwest has its own branch of the security network, operating under the supervision of a state-appointed commander. These state-level units work independently but share intelligence and collaborate on cross-border security issues affecting the entire region.

Amotekun recruits its operatives from local communities, ensuring that members have an intimate knowledge of the terrain, cultural dynamics, and security threats unique to their respective areas. This community-based approach allows for a more proactive and responsive security network that can effectively tackle crime at the grassroots level. Unlike the Nigerian Police Force, which is a federal institution, Amotekun is controlled by state governments, giving it a degree of autonomy that allows for quicker decision-making and more localized strategies in crime prevention (Umar, 2023). Amotekun's operational objectives revolve around intelligence gathering, crime prevention, and rapid response to security threats. Its

primary mandate is to assist formal security agencies in combating criminal activities such as kidnapping, banditry, armed robbery, and illegal land encroachment. One of the key aspects of Amotekun's strategy is its emphasis on community engagement (Akinyemi & Adebayo, 2021). Amotekun operatives maintain close relationships with residents, traditional rulers, and local vigilante groups. This allows them to gather actionable intelligence that might otherwise be inaccessible to formal security forces. By leveraging local knowledge and trust, Amotekun enhances the effectiveness of security operations and fosters greater cooperation between the security network and the people it serves. Another fundamental aspect of Amotekun's operations is its use of traditional security methods combined with modern crime-fighting techniques (Yunus, 2022). Many of its members are drawn from indigenous hunter guilds, local vigilante groups, and other community-based security outfits with a deep-rooted history of protecting Yoruba communities.

These operatives possess tracking skills, knowledge of the local landscape, and familiarity with the movement patterns of criminal elements. This indigenous knowledge is further reinforced with modern security tools such as patrol vehicles, communication devices, and firearms, allowing Amotekun to operate efficiently in both rural and urban areas. The blending of traditional and contemporary security strategies distinguishes Amotekun from conventional law enforcement agencies and enhances its effectiveness in addressing regional security threats (Jamiu, 2020). The legal framework guiding Amotekun's operations is an essential aspect of its legitimacy and functionality. Initially, the formation of Amotekun was met with resistance from the federal government and security agencies, which viewed it as an unconstitutional paramilitary group (Adisa & Afolabi, 2021). The Nigerian constitution places matters of security under the exclusive jurisdiction of the federal government, leading to concerns that Amotekun's establishment was in violation of national laws. However, following extensive negotiations, legal battles, and public advocacy, each southwestern state enacted a law establishing Amotekun as a state security outfit operating within the bounds of the Nigerian legal system (Debowale, 2023). The passage of these laws provided Amotekun with the legal backing necessary to function as a recognized security agency under state control. Amotekun operatives are required to work in conjunction with the police and other law enforcement agencies, ensuring that their actions align with national security protocols. The legal framework also mandates a code of conduct for operatives, including guidelines on the use of force, respect for human rights, and adherence to ethical standards (Dada & Shina, 2022).

Security Challenges in Southwestern Nigeria

Security has remained one of the most pressing concerns in southwestern Nigeria, with the region experiencing a steady rise in criminal activities that threaten the safety and stability of communities (Babaita, 2020). Historically, southwestern Nigeria, home to the Yoruba ethnic group, has been known for its relatively peaceful environment compared to other parts of the country. However, in recent years, insecurity has escalated due to various socio-economic, political, and environmental factors (Ojo, 2021). The increase in crime rates has not only affected the daily lives of residents but has also posed significant risks to businesses, agriculture, transportation, and overall economic development. Criminal activities such as kidnapping, armed robbery, cultism, herder-farmer conflicts, and communal clashes have become more rampant, overwhelming the capacity of the formal security forces to maintain law and order effectively (Bayonle, 2021). One of the primary security challenges in southwestern Nigeria is the surge in violent crimes, particularly kidnappings for ransom. The region's highways, which serve as major commercial routes connecting cities such as Lagos, Ibadan, Akure, and Abeokuta, have become hotspots for criminal activities. Commuters, travelers, and even local residents frequently fall victim to highway kidnappings, where armed criminals ambush vehicles, abduct passengers, and demand ransom for their release. The fear of such incidents has forced many individuals to avoid certain routes or resort to expensive private security escorts (Dunsanya, 2022).

These criminal elements often take advantage of the dense forests and poorly monitored road networks to establish hideouts, making it difficult for security agencies to track and apprehend them. Farmers and rural dwellers have also been significantly affected, as criminal gangs invade farmlands, destroy crops, and force communities to abandon agricultural activities. Another major security concern in the region is the persistent conflict between farmers and herders, which has led to numerous cases of violence, destruction of property, and loss of lives (Adisa & Afolabi, 2021). The southwestern states have long been home to farming communities whose livelihoods depend on agricultural production. However, the increasing migration of herders from the northern parts of Nigeria has resulted in frequent clashes between farmers and cattle herders over grazing land. Many farmers have accused herders of encroaching on their farmlands, allowing cattle to destroy crops, and engaging in violent attacks when confronted. On the other hand, herders argue that they are struggling to find pasture due to environmental changes and government policies restricting open grazing.

These tensions have escalated into deadly confrontations, leading to the destruction of villages, displacement of communities, and an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty (Usman, 2022).

Despite the efforts of formal security agencies to mediate these conflicts, the lack of a comprehensive conflict resolution framework has made it difficult to achieve lasting peace (Suleiman & Gbadebo, 2023). The limitations of formal security forces in addressing these security threats have further compounded the problem. The Nigerian Police Force, which is the primary agency responsible for maintaining law and order, faces significant challenges in terms of manpower, logistics, and operational efficiency. With a national population of over 200 million people, Nigeria has an insufficient number of police officers, making it difficult for the force to provide adequate security coverage. Many police divisions in southwestern states are understaffed, underfunded, and lack the necessary resources to combat crime effectively. The slow response time of security personnel, coupled with allegations of corruption, has led to a general distrust of law enforcement agencies by the public. Cases of police officers demanding bribes, mishandling cases, or failing to respond to distress calls have further eroded public confidence in the formal security system (Shina, 2023).

Given the worsening security situation and the inadequacies of formal security agencies, there has been a growing need for alternative security solutions in southwestern Nigeria. The call for decentralized security structures has gained momentum, with many advocating for state policing and community-led security initiatives. Traditional rulers, community leaders, and local vigilante groups have played an active role in filling the security gaps left by formal agencies (Ajayi & Ogunyemi, 2023). The creation of the Southwestern Security Network, popularly known as Amotekun, was a direct response to these security challenges and the growing demand for localized security solutions. Amotekun was established to complement the efforts of the Nigerian Police Force in tackling crime and ensuring the safety of residents in the region. Amotekun's community-driven approach has been seen as an effective means of addressing security concerns in ways that formal security agencies have struggled to achieve (Ajayi, 2023). By recruiting operatives from local communities who are familiar with the terrain, culture, and security threats in their areas, Amotekun has been able to respond more swiftly and efficiently to incidents of crime. The integration of traditional security methods, intelligence gathering, and collaboration with local residents has made Amotekun a significant force in combating crime in southwestern Nigeria. However, despite

its successes, Amotekun has also faced challenges, including issues of funding, legal limitations, and resistance from federal security agencies (Emmanuel, 2021).

The Impact of Amotekun on Security in Ibadan

The establishment of the Western Nigeria Security Network, popularly known as Amotekun, marked a significant shift in the approach to security within Nigeria's southwestern region, particularly in Ibadan, the capital of Oyo State. This initiative emerged as a regional response to escalating security challenges, aiming to complement existing federal security agencies and address the unique needs of local communities. To comprehensively assess Amotekun's impact on security in Ibadan, it is essential to examine both empirical evidence from case studies and field reports, as well as the public's perception of the corps' role in crime reduction. Since its inception, Amotekun has been actively involved in various operations aimed at curbing criminal activities in Ibadan and its environs (Farid, 2023). One notable instance highlighting the corps' effectiveness occurred in February 2021, when Amotekun operatives successfully rescued a 29-year-old kidnapping victim, Olabiyisi Mobolaji Charles, within 15 hours of his abduction. The victim recounted that the kidnappers, who were armed and of Fulani descent, attempted to cross the expressway with him into the bush. Despite the assailants' cautious movements, Amotekun operatives were able to track and intercept them, leading to the victim's rescue (Al-Samad & Saeed, 2021).

This operation underscored the corps' rapid response capabilities and their proficiency in navigating the local terrain to combat kidnapping incidents. In another significant operation, Amotekun operatives dismantled a ritualist syndicate operating within Ibadan. The corps conducted a meticulous investigation that led to the apprehension of individuals involved in ritualistic practices, thereby preventing potential harm to the community. This intervention not only disrupted the activities of the syndicate but also served as a deterrent to others engaged in similar nefarious acts, thereby enhancing the overall sense of security among residents (Bello, 2020). However, the corps' operations have not been devoid of challenges. In January 2021, an incident occurred where an Amotekun operative allegedly shot and killed a 21-year-old resident, Tosin Thomas, in Ibadan. According to reports, the operative fired his weapon during a confrontation, resulting in the young man's death. This tragic event sparked public outrage and raised concerns about the training and conduct of Amotekun personnel (Gbadamosi, 2021).

In response, the corps dismissed the officer involved and reiterated its commitment to upholding human rights and maintaining professionalism in its operations. Public perception plays a pivotal role in the legitimacy and effectiveness of any security outfit. In Ibadan, the establishment of Amotekun has elicited a spectrum of reactions from various stakeholders, reflecting both support and apprehension. Many residents have expressed appreciation for Amotekun's localized approach to security (Saleem & Raheem, 2022). The corps' personnel, being indigenous to the communities they serve, possess an intrinsic understanding of the cultural and geographical nuances of the area. This familiarity facilitates more effective intelligence gathering and fosters trust between the operatives and the community members. The swift responses to kidnapping incidents and the dismantling of criminal syndicates have been lauded by locals, who feel a renewed sense of safety in their neighborhoods (Peter & Funsho, 2022).

Challenges Facing Informal Security Structures in Nigeria

Informal security structures play a crucial role in maintaining peace and stability in many communities, especially in regions where formal law enforcement agencies struggle with inefficiencies, understaffing, and limited resources. These community-based security networks often emerge as a response to the increasing levels of crime, insecurity, and the inability of state institutions to provide adequate protection (Odewale & Lamidi, 2021). However, despite their importance, these groups face a variety of challenges that hinder their effectiveness and sustainability. Among the most pressing concerns are legal constraints and opposition from state authorities, as well as issues related to human rights violations and accountability. One of the major obstacles faced by informal security structures is the lack of legal recognition and clear regulatory frameworks. Many governments view security as the exclusive responsibility of formal state institutions, such as the police and military, leaving little room for the official integration of informal security actors (Okebukola, 2021). As a result, these groups often operate in a legal gray area, where their activities are neither fully sanctioned nor explicitly prohibited. This legal ambiguity makes it difficult for them to function effectively, as they risk being labeled as illegal or rogue groups.

In some cases, governments have taken direct action against these security outfits, disbanding them or criminalizing their operations under the pretext of maintaining state control over security matters. This opposition from state authorities can lead to arrests, prosecution, and restrictions on their activities, ultimately limiting their ability to provide the

protection that communities rely on (Waheed & Junior, 2021). In addition to legal constraints, informal security structures often face resistance from state security agencies that perceive them as rivals or threats to their authority. Rather than cooperating with these community-based groups, formal law enforcement agencies may view them with suspicion and refuse to share intelligence or collaborate on crime prevention efforts (Al-Azawei et al., 2022). This lack of coordination can lead to unnecessary conflicts between informal and formal security forces, reducing the overall effectiveness of security measures. In some instances, informal security personnel have been targeted by state actors, facing intimidation, arrests, and even violence. This hostile relationship undermines efforts to create a comprehensive and inclusive security system that integrates both formal and informal approaches. Another major challenge facing informal security structures is the issue of human rights violations and the absence of accountability mechanisms (Adeyemo, 2021). Since these groups are not always subjected to the same legal and institutional oversight as state security forces, there is often a lack of standardized training and adherence to human rights principles. This can lead to the use of excessive force, extrajudicial punishments, and other forms of abuse against individuals suspected of criminal activities. Cases of arbitrary arrests, public beatings, and even unlawful executions have been reported in communities where vigilante groups and other informal security actors operate. These actions not only violate fundamental human rights but also erode public trust in the very institutions that were created to ensure safety and security (David, 2023).

Many of these groups rely on traditional and sometimes outdated forms of punishment that conflict with modern legal and ethical standards (Ayeleso, 2022). Practices such as public shaming, corporal punishment, and trial by ordeal continue to be employed in some areas, raising serious concerns about the fairness and legality of these measures. While such methods may be rooted in long-standing cultural practices, they often fail to provide justice in a manner that respects the rights and dignity of individuals. The role of informal security structures in community policing and crime prevention cannot be overlooked (Olaniyan & Sumbo, 2023). They provide immediate and context-specific responses to security threats in ways that formal security forces often cannot. However, for these groups to be effective and sustainable, there must be efforts to address the legal and institutional challenges that they face. Governments must find ways to integrate them into the broader security framework, providing clear legal mandates, training, and accountability mechanisms to

ensure they operate within the confines of the law while respecting human rights (Bayonle, 2021).

Theoretical Framework

The Structural Functionalism Theory was used to anchor the study. The Structural Functionalism Theory, developed by Emile Durkheim in 1893 and later expanded by Talcott Parsons in the 1950s, offers another valuable perspective on the role of informal security networks in society. This theory views society as a complex system composed of various institutions, each with specific functions that contribute to overall stability (Kehinde & Ismail, 2022). According to this perspective, different structures must work together to maintain order and balance. In the context of security, formal agencies such as the Nigerian Police Force represent the primary institutions responsible for law enforcement. However, when these institutions have challenges such as inadequate manpower, logistical constraints, or public distrust, alternative structures may emerge to support them. Informal security outfits like Amotekun can be seen as functional subsystems that help maintain societal equilibrium. Rather than existing in opposition to formal security agencies, these groups play a complementary role by filling the gaps that official institutions cannot adequately address (Okeola, 2021). In Ibadan, Amotekun has been actively involved in patrolling communities, responding to distress calls, and intercepting criminals, thus contributing to the larger goal of public safety. The theory also explains the challenges faced by Amotekun, particularly in terms of its integration into the broader security framework. Since informal security networks are not traditionally recognized as part of the state's policing structure, conflicts may arise between them and formal agencies. Structural Functionalism provides insights into how these security networks can be harmonized within the existing framework to ensure effective security governance (Gbenga, 2022).

Methodology

This study adopted a quantitative research method to critically investigate the mode of operation and effectiveness of Amotekun in Ibadan. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. This design enabled the researcher to collect detailed, factual information from participants regarding the functions, perceptions, and effectiveness of the informal security structure and Amotekun in ensuring safety within the Ibadan community. Data were collected using structured questionnaires. The questionnaire was designed to elicit respondents' views on the effectiveness, challenges, and coordination of Amotekun

operations in Ibadan. The study population comprised ninety-eight residents of selected communities in Ibadan, members of informal security groups (such as vigilantes or traditional security structures), and officials of the Southwestern Security Network (Amotekun Corps). About one hundred and twenty (120) questionnaires were distributed but only ninety-eight (98) were retrieved. The study employed purposive sampling techniques. Purposive sampling was used to select individuals who are directly involved in or have adequate knowledge of security operations, such as members of informal security structures and Amotekun operatives. This sampling method was also used to select community members who have had experience with Amotekun's operations in Ibadan. The study adopted a modified four-point Likert scale. The study was conducted in selected areas in Ibadan, including Eleyele, Apata, Moniya, and Ojoo, located within Ido and Akinyele Local Government Areas. These locations were purposively selected due to their strategic relevance to security dynamics in the state, including a high concentration of Amotekun personnel, proximity to forest reserves, and their status as border communities. Additionally, these areas have recorded relatively higher incidences of security challenges such as kidnapping, banditry, and herder–farmer conflicts. Ethical standards were strictly adhered to throughout the study. The purpose of the research was explained to all participants, and informed consent was obtained before participation. Anonymity and confidentiality of respondents were ensured, and participation was entirely voluntary, with the right to withdraw at any point without consequences. Copies of the questionnaire were coded and analysed using simple descriptive statistics.

Data Analysis

In this section, data on the alternative security architectures and public safety in Nigeria: A critical Analysis of Amotekun operations in Ibadan are presented in the table below.

Results

Table 4.1 Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age Range	18–25 years	21	21
	26–35 years	31	31
	36–45 years	25	25
Gender	46 years and above	21	21

Marital Status	Male	57	57
	Female	41	41
	Single	35	35
	Married	40	40
	Divorced	16	16
	Widowed	7	7.0
Educational Qualification	No Formal Education	4	4.0
	Primary	11	11.0
	Secondary	27	27.0

Source: Researcher's Field Work, 2025.

The socio-demographic data reveals that the respondents represented a wide age range, ensuring a diverse viewpoint on security issues in Ibadan. A significant proportion (31%) were between the ages of 26 and 35, followed closely by those aged 36-45 years (25%) and those above 45 years (23%). Respondents between 18 and 25 years constituted 21% of the sample. This distribution shows that the study captures insights from both the youthful and older segments of the population. Importantly, the dominance of the 26-45 age range suggests a strong representation of socially and economically active individuals those most likely to experience or be directly involved in community safety dynamics. Ajayi (2020) emphasized that age cohorts within the 25-45 range are most likely to engage with and assess local security agencies, given their frequent mobility and social involvement within communities. With respect to marital status, 40% of the respondents were married, while 35% were single. Divorced and widowed individuals made up 16% and 7%, respectively. This mix suggests varied personal and family responsibilities, influencing how individuals perceive threats and security responses. Alemika and Chukwuma (2005) argue that household structure significantly affects perceptions of security, as married individuals are more likely to express concern about domestic safety and the protection of dependents. In contrast, single individuals may focus more on their personal safety and public space vulnerabilities.

Educational attainment was notably high among the respondents. Over half (56%) had obtained tertiary education, while 27% had completed secondary education. Only a small fraction had primary (11%) or no formal education (4%). This high level of literacy among participants is important, as it suggests that many of the respondents could critically evaluate

the performance of security structures in their communities. Educated individuals are also more likely to be familiar with public safety policies, government interventions, and the distinction between formal and informal security agencies, such as Amotekun. According to Olowu (2018), citizens with higher educational attainment tend to be more critical of governance structures, including policing, and are better equipped to articulate specific areas where security responses are inadequate.

Table 2: Operational Strategies of Amotekun in Maintaining Security in Ibadan

Variable	Frequency				Total
	SA	A	D	SD	
Operational Strategies					
Conducts regular patrols	55(55.0%)	41(41.0%)	1(1.0%)	1(1.0%)	98(100%)
Responds quickly to threats	64(64.0%)	33(33.0%)	1(1.0%)	0(0.0%)	98(100%)
Collaborates with vigilante groups	76(76.0%)	20(20.0%)	1(1.0%)	1(1.0%)	98(100%)
Prevents crimes like kidnapping/robbery	59(59.0%)	40(40.0%)	1(1.0%)	0(0.0%)	98(100%)
Resolves community conflicts	59(59.0%)	40(40.0%)	1(1.0%)	0(0.0%)	98(100%)

Source: Researcher's Field Work, 2025.

This section is critical as it directly addresses the second research objective, which seeks to investigate how Amotekun contributes to community safety and order. Majority of respondents agreed that Amotekun conducts regular patrols in their communities. Specifically, 55% strongly agreed and 41% agreed, making a total of 98% in support of the claim. This high percentage indicates that Amotekun maintains a visible presence in neighborhoods, which is a core function of effective community policing. The importance of visibility in policing has been widely emphasized in literature; Alemika (2013) notes that regular patrols enhance perceived safety, boost community morale, and deter opportunistic crimes. The fact that Amotekun is locally rooted makes its patrols more predictable, relevant, and trusted, unlike the generalized deployments often seen with federal police. Regarding responsiveness to threats, 64% of respondents strongly agreed, while 33% agreed that Amotekun responds quickly to security incidents. The ability to respond promptly to threats is one of the defining characteristics that sets Amotekun apart from the conventional police, which are often criticized for delayed intervention. This quick response capacity is likely due to Amotekun's decentralized structure, use of local operatives, and deep familiarity with the geographical terrain of Ibadan communities.

Responsiveness is a critical metric of law enforcement legitimacy, and according to Salahu (2020), local responsiveness is often what separates effective community security initiatives from bureaucratic, state-centered agencies. Amotekun’s decentralized model allows it to mobilize operatives swiftly, avoiding the red tape that hinders the Nigeria Police Force. Its use of local recruits who understand the terrain and local communication patterns allows for rapid and context-aware interventions (Akinrinade &Olarinmoye, 2021). Collaboration with local vigilante groups is another highly supported statement, with 76% of respondents strongly agreeing and 20% agreeing. This result underscores Amotekun’s strategy of working alongside existing informal security actors rather than replacing them. It reflects a hybrid security approach, where modern state-backed structures blend with traditional models of grassroots surveillance and intervention. This collaboration also enhances intelligence gathering, as local vigilantes are often embedded in the community and have firsthand knowledge of potential threats. This collaborative model aligns with Olowu’s (2018) proposition that effective community policing in Africa must involve “inter-legality”, the blending of formal state structures with informal community-based mechanisms.

Table 3: Effectiveness of Amotekun in Addressing Security Challenges in Ibadan

Variable	Frequency				
Effectiveness	SA	A	D	SD	Total
Reduced crime	58(58.0%)	40(40.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	98(100%)
Trusted more than the police	43(43.0%)	55(55.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	98(100%)
Cultural knowledge enhances performance	71(71.0%)	26(26.0%)	1(1.0%)	0(0.0%)	98(100%)
Improved safety feeling	51(51.0%)	46(46.0%)	1(1.0%)	0(0.0%)	98(100%)
Addressed major security issues	82(82.0%)	16(16.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	98(100%)

Source: Researcher’s Field Work, 2025.

The table above presents respondents’ perspectives on the effectiveness of Amotekun in addressing security challenges among the Yorubas in Ibadan. This section is crucial, as it evaluates not just the presence of Amotekun, but its impact. The statements assessed include crime reduction, trust levels compared to the formal police, cultural competence, improvement of safety, and success in tackling serious security threats. To begin with,

respondents overwhelmingly acknowledged Amotekun's impact on crime reduction in their communities. A significant 58% of respondents strongly agreed that Amotekun has reduced the rate of crime in their area, while the remaining 40% agreed. This 100% consensus reflects widespread community recognition of Amotekun's deterrent effect on criminal activity. It also supports the notion that localized, culturally aware security outfits are more effective at responding to nuanced community threats than federal agencies that may lack proximity or understanding of the local terrain. According to Agbiboa (2022), decentralized security outfits that are rooted in the community tend to outperform national agencies in curbing local crime, especially when they are trusted by the populace. Amotekun's localized presence, knowledge of community layouts, and cultural legitimacy likely enhance its proactive policing capacity, resulting in lower crime rates.

When asked about trust, 43% of respondents strongly agreed and 55% agreed that Amotekun is trusted more than the formal police. This result is highly revealing. It points to a crisis of confidence in the Nigeria Police Force and highlights the importance of cultural proximity, community visibility, and swift action traits that Amotekun embodies. Alemika (2003) emphasizes that public trust in law enforcement is strongly linked to perceived fairness, response time, and alignment with local values. The unanimous preference for Amotekun in this survey aligns with national findings that state police often suffer from institutional distrust, while community-driven models like Amotekun enjoy more organic legitimacy. The fact that not a single respondent disagreed indicates a significant trust deficit with federal law enforcement and a strong preference for community-rooted alternatives. The role of cultural competence was also explored, and responses strongly reinforced its importance. Seventy-three percent of respondents strongly agreed, and 26% agreed that Amotekun's knowledge of local culture enhances their performance, with only 1% disagreeing. This cultural familiarity likely informs how Amotekun mediates disputes, engages in intelligence gathering, and relates to different groups within Ibadan. Operatives who speak the local language, understand community customs, and are known to residents are more likely to gain cooperation, defuse tensions, and operate effectively in complex environments. Edewor (2019) notes that culturally embedded security agents are better positioned to resolve conflicts peacefully, gather intelligence, and gain voluntary compliance. Amotekun operatives' ability to navigate these cultural landscapes strengthens both their effectiveness and their credibility within Yoruba society.

Table 4: Challenges Facing Amotekun in Ibadan

Variable	Frequency				
	SA	A	D	SD	Total
Lack of modern equipment	53(53.0%)	45(45.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	98(100%)
Inadequate funding	58(58.0%)	40(40.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	98(100%)
Lack of proper training	55(55.0%)	42(42.0%)	1(1.0%)	0(0.0%)	98(100%)
Political interference	58(58.0%)	40(40.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	98(100%)
Poor cooperation with other agencies	70(70.0%)	26(26.0%)	1(1.0%)	1(1.0%)	98(100%)

Source: Researcher's Field Work, 2025.

Table 4 above explores the challenges confronting Amotekun in its bid to provide community-based security among the Yorubas in Ibadan. While earlier tables emphasized the perceived roles and effectiveness of the security outfit, this section provides a more critical look at the institutional and operational constraints that may hinder its long-term success. The data presented address several key challenges: inadequate equipment, insufficient funding, and lack of proper training, political interference, and poor coordination with formal security agencies. A common thread in the responses is the near-universal agreement that Amotekun faces significant structural and logistical obstacles. For instance, 53% of respondents strongly agreed and 45% agreed that lack of modern equipment affects Amotekun's operations. This suggests that while Amotekun may be effective in patrols and community response, its capacity to engage in high-level operations such as surveillance, coordinated raids, or pursuit of well-armed criminals is likely limited by outdated tools and the absence of advanced technology.

According to Aghedo and Osumah (2012), community policing units often underperform in the face of modern security threats due to poor investment in infrastructure and equipment leaving them over-reliant on traditional tools. In an era of sophisticated criminal networks, the lack of modern equipment could severely undermine long-term security effectiveness. The issue of inadequate funding was equally pressing. Sixty percent of respondents strongly agreed and 40% agreed that limited financial resources constrain Amotekun's performance. This reflects a broader challenge in Nigeria's security sector, where regional and local outfits often rely on inconsistent or politicized state allocations. Akinyemi and Adebayo (2021) note that the fiscal instability of local security outfits reduces their operational reach, accountability, and independence. Without consistent funding, it becomes difficult to

maintain patrol vehicles, pay operatives, or procure logistics like communication gadgets and protective gear. Financial uncertainty also breeds low morale, susceptibility to bribery, and weak discipline within the force. Training and skill development is another core concern. In response to the statement that lack of proper training affects operatives' performance, 55% of respondents strongly agreed, 42% agreed, and only 1% disagreed. This shows that while Amotekun operatives are often culturally embedded and trusted by locals, they may lack the professional capacity to address evolving threats such as organized crime, cybercrime, or insurgency.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study present a compelling narrative on the role, effectiveness, and operational realities of the Southwestern Security Network, popularly known as Amotekun, among the Yorubas in Ibadan. The findings of the study illustrate that Amotekun is not merely an auxiliary security outfit but a critical component of the informal–formal hybrid security structure that has emerged in the Nigerian Southwest. This study reinforces the continued relevance of informal security structures among the Yorubas in Ibadan, even in an age dominated by centralized state policing. Long before the existence of formal police agencies, Yoruba communities had relied on indigenous security models rooted in kinship, communalism, and shared responsibility. Examples include the Olode (traditional hunters), the Agbekoya movement (defenders of farmers' rights), and local vigilante systems typically sanctioned by community elders or Baales (village heads) (Olaniyan, 2023). The persistence of these systems is not merely a cultural artifact but a pragmatic response to the glaring inefficiencies of the Nigeria Police Force, which is often viewed as distant, underfunded, and slow to respond, and sometimes even predatory (Adebayo & Olaniyan, 2021). The responses overwhelmingly affirm that Amotekun is present, visible, and engaged. This is significant, particularly in the Nigerian context, where visibility of law enforcement is often limited to urban centers or selective patrols.

Amotekun's engagement in regular patrols, rapid response to threats, and collaboration with local vigilante groups positions it as a grassroots force with tactical awareness and operational agility. In a region often plagued by kidnapping, banditry, and inter-communal clashes, this kind of presence can be both a deterrent and a confidence booster for residents. Amotekun has been so effective and reliable as it has reduced crime rates, improved feelings of safety, and earned greater public trust than the Nigeria Police Force (Aremu, 2021).

Amotekun is viewed as more trustworthy than the police is not only a damning indictment of Nigeria's formal policing system but also a strong endorsement of localized, community-driven policing. Unlike federal police officers who are often posted to regions where they do not speak the local language or understand the community dynamics, Amotekun operatives are usually indigenes. This gives them an advantage not only in terms of linguistic communication but also in reading non-verbal cues, navigating cultural taboos, and mediating disputes (Agbibo, 2022). Amotekun operates not without flaws and the most frequently mentioned obstacles include lack of modern equipment, inadequate funding, insufficient training, political interference, and poor collaboration with formal security agencies. Each of these challenges, if not urgently addressed, threatens to undermine the very gains that Amotekun has made.

The lack of modern equipment means that Amotekun may be effective in short-range community patrols but is largely incapacitated when it comes to tackling well-organized criminal syndicates who often operate with advanced weaponry and vehicles (Ojo, 2020). Similarly, funding constraints not only affect logistics but also compromise operatives' morale and operational coverage. If officers are unpaid or underpaid, their loyalty and effectiveness diminish, and they may become vulnerable to bribery or compromise. Training is another critical concern. Many Amotekun operatives are recruited for their cultural embeddedness, not for their technical competence (Shonibare & Bello, 2023). Without structured training programs that cover surveillance, human rights, crisis negotiation, and tactical response, these operatives are at risk of making costly mistakes including abuse of power or escalation of violence. Furthermore, the threat of political interference looms large. If Amotekun is used to settle political scores or target opposition voices, its public legitimacy will quickly erode.

Conclusion

From the analysis and findings presented, it is evident that informal security structures remain vital in the maintenance of peace and order in local communities, especially within the Yoruba socio-cultural context. The study concludes that the effectiveness of these indigenous systems lies in their deep-rooted connection to the people, their customs, and their historical modes of social control. Amotekun, as a contemporary manifestation of this informal structure, exemplifies the adaptation of tradition to modern realities. The outfit is

not merely a duplication of traditional vigilantes; rather, it is a refined institution that draws strength from the past while incorporating elements of modern security management. It provides a practical example of regional security self-determination, where local people take ownership of their safety in the face of federal inadequacies. However, the success of Amotekun is curtailed by several systemic challenges. Without a clear constitutional mandate, stable funding, and harmonious coordination with national security agencies, the outfit's long-term sustainability remains uncertain. Nonetheless, the establishment of Amotekun has opened up important conversations around decentralizing security in Nigeria. The Yoruba experience in Ibadan indicates that community-led security is not only feasible but necessary. It reinforces the belief that effective policing must be localized, culturally competent, and responsive to the peculiarities of the environment it serves.

Recommendations

In light of the key findings and conclusions drawn from this study, several recommendations are made to enhance the functionality, efficiency, and long-term viability of the Amotekun Corps, particularly in Ibadan and other parts of Yorubaland.

- a) There is an urgent need for clear and robust legal backing for Amotekun at both state and federal levels. While state laws have created the outfit, constitutional ambiguity persists regarding its powers, roles, and the extent of its jurisdiction. An amendment of the Nigerian Constitution or an enabling Act from the National Assembly that explicitly recognizes regional security structures would provide the legitimacy required for Amotekun to operate without fear of legal contradictions.
- b) Adequate funding is also crucial to the operational sustainability of the corps. The state government should allocate sufficient budgetary provisions to cover salaries, operational logistics, infrastructure, technology, and welfare of personnel. Reliance on ad-hoc donations and irregular funding jeopardizes the efficiency of the organization.
- c) Training and capacity building should also be prioritized. Members of Amotekun must undergo regular and standardized training that balances traditional security practices with modern policing techniques. This should include modules on human rights, conflict resolution, community policing ethics, and the use of non-lethal force.
- d) Collaboration with federal security agencies must be actively pursued. Amotekun should not work in isolation. Formal structures should be created for intelligence

sharing, joint patrols, and coordinated responses to security threats. Mutual respect and inter-agency cooperation are essential for ensuring that security efforts are not duplicated or undermined.

- e) In addition, there is a need for community engagement and sensitization. Amotekun must continually strengthen its relationship with the people it serves. This can be achieved through town hall meetings, public awareness campaigns, school outreach programs, and culturally sensitive initiatives. Such engagement not only builds trust but also enhances the flow of intelligence from the community.

Limitations

This study should be viewed within the context of its limitations, even though it provides some compelling insights into the effectiveness of Amotekun operations in Ibadan, Nigeria. The study was geographically restricted to Ibadan, the capital of Oyo State. Although this location is central to the operations of Amotekun, findings may not comprehensively represent the experience of other Yoruba cities such as Akure, Abeokuta, or Osogbo, where similar dynamics may play out differently. Given the emerging nature of regional security networks like Amotekun and the complexity of Nigeria's security architecture, this study opens the door for several future research directions. One area worthy of exploration is a comparative analysis of Amotekun's operations across different Yoruba cities. Such a study would reveal the similarities and divergences in community perceptions, effectiveness, and challenges faced across various socio-political contexts.

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