

COMMUNITY BASED APPROACHES IN MITIGATING SECURITY CHALLENGES IN ORIADE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF OSUN STATE, NIGERIA

Clementina Nkolika CHUKELU, Ph.D

Federal College of Education (Technical) Akoka

nkolichukelu@gmail.com

Abstract

This study examines community-based approaches in mitigating security issues in Oriade Local Government of Osun State, Nigeria: A Case Study of Amotekun". This paper made use of two objectives and two research questions. Questionnaire was used to gather information from community heads, members of the community, and members of Amotekun. The study was subjected to analysis using mean, standard deviation, and grand mean. The study found that the respondents' opinions about Amotekun's effectiveness are consistent and strongly support the idea that Amotekun has significantly improved security networks in Osun State and that the respondents' views strongly support the idea that community-law enforcement collaboration plays a substantial role in enhancing security networks in Osun State. The study concludes and emphasises the importance of community-based security approaches in addressing security challenges. It was recommended among others that there should be community awareness and active participation in community policing initiatives, emphasizing the importance of collaboration between Amotekun and local residents.

Keywords: Amotekun, Community policing, Security Issues, and Community-Based Approaches

Introduction

In Nigeria, the implementation of local-level stabilization initiatives has encountered a multitude of problems. The primary obstacle at present is the persisting state of insecurity, primarily seen in the North-Eastern area of Nigeria, Borno State in particular. The region has been plagued by frequent assaults perpetrated by Boko Haram and the Islamic State of West Africa Province (ISWAP) along with military interventions. These have impeded the repatriation of displaced individuals and posed significant challenges for humanitarian agencies in accessing vulnerable areas. According to the International Catastrophe Group (2017), the aforementioned circumstances have led to

the persistence of conditions characterised by a protracted humanitarian catastrophe. The state of Osun is now facing significant similar security concerns, as the area is grappling with a range of security difficulties. The effectiveness of government initiatives in tackling these challenges has been criticised by scholars (Adagba, Ugwu and Eme2012; Uhumwuangho and Aluforo, 2011) saying that the government fails to deploy security operatives effectively and swiftly in the face of insecurity. The establishment of the Amotekun Corps was a response to increasing security concerns, with a focus on Osun State, as outlined by Agbaje (2017). Osun State, like many other

places inside Nigeria, confronts a multitude of security concerns, including abduction, armed robbery, banditry, and disputes between farmers and herders. These insecurity issues pose significant threat to the safety and welfare of individuals, as well as impede socio-economic growth and the establishment of community peace. In light of the situation, there has been an increased recognition of the significance of community-based security techniques, exemplified by initiatives like Amotekun. These approaches have garnered attention as they serve to supplement the efforts of conventional law enforcement authorities and cultivate a feeling of localised ownership and accountability. Established in January 2020, the Amotekun Corps is a prominent community-driven security programme that has attracted considerable recognition. The appellation "Amotekun," which derives its meaning from the Yoruba language, specifically connotes "Leopard". This term symbolises the collective effort of the six states in the South western part of Nigeria, including Osun State, to effectively tackle the distinctive security challenges prevalent within the area. The principal aim of Amotekun is to enhance the security infrastructure through the active engagement of local communities in safeguarding lives and properties. Throughout history, community-based security systems have shown their effectiveness in many regions around the globe for example in Medellin, Colombia (Smith et al, 2023). Within the specific context of Osun State, the aforementioned technique is in accordance with the cultural and traditional values strongly rooted in the Yoruba culture which places significant emphasis on communal collaboration and safeguarding the welfare of its members. Amotekun functions under a

framework that prioritises community engagement and collaboration. An Amotekun outfit, consisting of members from the respective local communities, is organised in each local government area of Osun State. These individuals have a profound understanding of the geographical features, social customs, and persons inhabiting a particular area, hence facilitating the collection of information, prompt reaction to potential dangers, and establishment of a reliable rapport with the local population. One benefit of adopting this community-centric strategy is its capacity to collect timely and practical intelligence information. The Amotekun operators at the local level possess an exceptional level of familiarity with their respective areas, enabling them to discern and address security challenges with heightened efficacy. The acquisition and use of localised knowledge play a pivotal role in the prevention of criminal activities and the mitigation of security breaches. Furthermore, the community-oriented characteristic of Amotekun cultivates a strong feeling of trust and cooperation between the security personnel and those living in the local area. Trust has a pivotal role in determining the efficacy of security efforts that are rooted in community engagement. When there is a high level of confidence among community members in the competence and integrity of Amotekun, it is more probable that they will engage in cooperative behaviour, share crucial information, report suspicious activities, and actively contribute to initiatives aimed at preventing crime. Another noteworthy fact of Amotekun's strategy is its cooperation with pre-existing law enforcement entities, including the Nigerian Police Force and the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC).

This collaborative effort facilitates a smooth and efficient flow of information and allocation of resources, hence enhancing the entire security infrastructure in Osun State. Through collaborative efforts, the integration of Amotekun and established security agencies may facilitate the implementation of a synchronised and multifaceted approach to addressing prevailing security concerns. While Amotekun primarily directs its efforts toward addressing community-level concerns and collecting information, bigger investigations and operations are typically managed by the police and other relevant authorities. The adoption of this synergistic approach contributes to the enhancement of the state's comprehensive security framework and strengthens its ability to successfully address diverse security challenges (Alindogan, 2018). In addition, Amotekun demonstrates a proactive approach by allocating resources towards preventative measures and actively engaging with the community, playing its role as a solely reactive security entity. The Corps arranges town hall meetings, security awareness programmes, and educational activities in order to raise awareness among the community on the significance of security and their responsibility in ensuring its protection. Through active community involvement, Amotekun cultivates a collective feeling of responsibility for security, serving as a formidable deterrent against criminal behaviour. Central to community-based security programmes such as Amotekun is the recognition that the duty of security extends beyond the purview of the government and law enforcement authorities, including a shared commitment that rests upon the whole community. This change in viewpoint promotes the active engagement of individuals in safeguarding

their own security as well as that of their community members. Town hall meetings and security awareness programmes serve as effective mechanisms for facilitating direct engagement between Amotekun and community members, enabling the organisation to effectively address their issues and impart knowledge on optimal security practices. These efforts aim to elucidate the security process, making it more comprehensible and relevant to the general populace. Moreover, Amotekun implements a community policing strategy that places significant emphasis on fostering strong ties between law enforcement agencies and the community. This strategy fosters the development of trust and collaboration between Amotekun operators and local inhabitants, hence establishing a conducive atmosphere whereby individuals are more likely to disclose incidents of criminality and dubious behaviours. Amotekun has shown notable advancements in bolstering security inside Osun State, yet it encounters various obstacles. Resource limitations is a significant challenge for community-based security efforts such as Amotekun, since their capacity to procure contemporary technology security equipment, deliver complete training, and maintain operations over an extended period might be affected by insufficient funds. The resolution of these resource-related difficulties is of utmost importance in ensuring the sustained efficacy of Amotekun and analogous endeavours. Another problem that arises is the need for standardised training and laws pertaining to community-based security organisations. The implementation of comprehensive and standardised training programmes for all Amotekun operators is crucial to maintaining professionalism and enhancing operational

efficacy across the organisation. Well-defined norms and regulations are important in order to mitigate the potential for power abuse and uphold the principle of responsibility.

This paper offers a thorough overview of Amotekun, its operational framework, the obstacles it encounters, and the effects it has had in addressing security concerns within Osun State. It thereby, provides significant contributions to understanding the possibilities of using community-based strategies to effectively tackle security issues and improve the general safety and welfare of those living in the state.

This study further serves as an emblematic representation of optimism and a testimony to the efficacy of community engagement in addressing intricate security concerns. As it undergoes further expansion and evolution, it has the potential to enhance the safety and security of Osun State's inhabitants.

The concept of security has been extensively studied and debated with various perspectives on its nature and implications. It is often viewed as a state of being free from external threats and intrusion, while also encompassing human security, including basic needs like food and shelter. The traditional understanding of security emphasizes danger and coercive measures, with the military perspective focusing on the state as the central object. However, this perspective has been criticized for failing to acknowledge the growing non-military origins of security threats across various domains (Best, 2007).

According to Williams (2008), The primary emphasis of security remains consistent, including protecting lives and assets, preserving national prestige, promoting economic growth, and developing national infrastructure for citizen welfare (Booth

(2007). The concept of "it" is often linked to mitigating risks to cherished values, while "survival" encompasses the capacity to pursue political and social aspirations.

In their study, Achumba, Igbomereho, and Akpor-Robaro (2013) provided a comprehensive definition of security. They said, a comprehensive definition of security includes stability, continuity of livelihood, predictability of daily life, protection from crime, and freedom from psychological harm. Addressing citizens' security involves addressing challenges and underlying causes of insecurity within a country, using effective and innovative programmes and security strategies (Creative Associates International, 2020; Omoyibo and Akpomera, 2013). Security is a fundamental idea that predates the establishment of the state, with the primary objective of ensuring the security and well-being of its citizens (Idowu, 2014; Naankiel & Ayokhai, 2016).

National security, also known as domestic security, is the protection of a nation's physical boundaries and fundamental rights, such as life and improved living conditions (Yahaya, 2021). The Nigerian government is responsible for safeguarding the rights of its people, both within and abroad, without infringing on their basic human rights. Internal security refers to the systematic efforts to preserve social order and ensure the well-being of individuals within a given nation-state. Insecurity, on the other hand, is the antithesis of security, characterized by the absence or insufficiency of security measures.

In response to the ongoing issues of ritual killings, rapes, kidnappings, and the infiltration of Boko Haram bombers and herdsmen aggressors into the south-west region, the state governments of Osun, Ondo, Ogun, Oyo, Ekiti, and Lagos

convened a regional security summit to explore potential strategies to restore security, safeguard the populace from criminal activities, and ensure overall protection. The formation of the Amotekun organization, referred to as "Leopard" in the Yoruba language, was a response to an imperative need to investigate alternative approaches to safeguarding forests and ensuring the protection of individuals engaged in lawful activities within the region. However, the federal government has deemed the regional security group a contravention of the existing Constitution of Nigeria (Yahaya, 2021).

According to Akingbade (2012), the Amotekun Corps, established in the South west region of Nigeria, is alleged to be in violation of the Nigerian Constitution, which prohibits the establishment of any other police force for the Federation or its constituent parts (Mbah, 2003). However, the Constitution also stipulates that the primary objective of the government is to ensure the security and well-being of its citizens (Azeez and Gbadamosi, 2020). The Amotekun Corps' implementation in the region is seen as a violation of the Constitution, as it does not permit any state government to create an organization for the purpose of safeguarding or defending any component of Nigeria (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999). The governors of the South west region have also expressed concerns about the misrepresentation and insufficient management of criminals, particularly targeting innocent individuals in Nigeria, particularly those residing in the South west region. According to Kayode (2021) Governor Dapo Abiodun has expressed strong disapproval towards any manifestations of criminal behaviour and criminality, regardless of their ethnic

background. According to Okodolor (2019), the legal standing of the Amotekun security outfit in the South west region is crucial in addressing these concerns.

According to Ajayi (2019), the South west Governors of Nigeria recently convened a two-day security summit in Ibadan to address the increasing levels of insecurity faced by their constituents. The governors resolved to establish a security outfit to curb the activities of criminal elements, including herdsmen and Boko Haram, who are responsible for heinous crimes such as attacks on farmers, bombings, rape, robbery, kidnapping, and brutal killings (Gbadamosi et al., 2021). As extensively recorded by Olaniyi and Oyewale (2021), the proliferation of this criminal insurrection is rapidly expanding and the Yoruba nation expresses significant concern about the escalating state of disorder, especially, in the south-west region. The current situation in Nigeria is characterised by significant challenges, and the pressing need for immediate and dedicated efforts to address the pervasive issue of poor governance is evident. The success of the Amotekun security outfit relies on several key factors, including the establishment of a centralized information pool, fostering operational synergy among state Amotekun corps, digitization or automation of operations, and rebuilding trust with the communities under their jurisdiction (Alade, 2020). The triumph of the organization in the southwestern region has the potential to inspire governments to explore innovative approaches to address additional issues, resulting in diverse development endeavors around the area (Rasheed, 2020).

Research Questions

1. How effective is the implementation strategies of Amotekun corps in mitigating insecurity in Osun State?
2. How does community-law enforcement collaboration strategy influence the enhancement of security infrastructure in Osun State?

Methodology

This quantitative research is designed to gather data from community leaders, community members, and Amotekun members to examine community based approaches for mitigating security challenges in Oriade Local Government Area of Osun State, Nigeria.

This study employs a cross-sectional research design, focusing on data collection from a single point in time to gather responses from community leaders, community members, and Amotekun

members. The population under study includes community leaders, community members, and Amotekun members within Oriade Local Government, Osun State. Community leaders (6), community members (50), and Amotekun members (13) who are recognized as key informants were selected for the study.

Structured Likert scale format questionnaire was designed to collect quantitative data. The questionnaire included questions about perceptions of safety, experiences with security incidents, and opinions on the effectiveness of Amotekun.

Two trained research assistants administered the questionnaire to the selected respondents. Descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation, were used to analyse the data collected.

Data Analyses

Research Question One: How effective is the implementation strategies of Amotekun corps in mitigating insecurity in Osun State?

Table 1: The effectiveness of Amotekun implementation in mitigating security issues

S/N	Items	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Decision
1.	Amotekun has significantly improved security in Osun State.	69	3.84	.933	Agreed
2.	I have high confidence in Amotekun's ability to respond quickly to security incidents in my community.	69	4.14	0.928	Agreed
3.	Amotekun has substantially reduced the prevalence of crime and insecurity in my area.	69	4.03	0.857	Agreed
4.	Amotekun has effectively deterred criminal activities in my community.	69	3.78	1.174	Agreed
5.	I am very satisfied with the overall performance of Amotekun in ensuring my safety and security.	69	4.22	0.855	Agreed

6	Amotekun's presence has greatly increased my sense of security and safety in my community.	69	3.86	1.061	Agreed
		Grand Mean	3.97		

The study reveals that Amotekun has significantly improved security in Osun State, Nigeria, with an average score of 3.84. Respondents expressed high confidence in Amotekun's prompt response to security incidents, believing it has reduced crime and insecurity. The mean score for deterring criminal activities was 3.78, indicating agreement but some variability. Participants expressed high satisfaction with Amotekun's overall performance in ensuring safety and security, indicating strong approval of the network's efforts. The mean score for increasing their sense of security was 3.86, indicating a positive impact on their community. With the grand mean of 3.97, these findings underscore the importance of community-based security initiatives like Amotekun in addressing security challenges in the region and building trust among residents. This statement corroborates the findings of Feyisipo (2020) and PM News (2020), asserting that Amotekun primarily

serves as a "confidence-building strategy" and, more significantly, as a form of community policing. It is intended to supplement the efforts of established security agencies in the nation, which the author commends but acknowledges as being "overstretched." The implementation of Amotekun is expected to alleviate the workload of these agencies. This also supports why the neighbourhood watch is being presented as territorial defence groups across Nigeria like the Amotekun of the Southwest and the Odua Peoples' Congress (OPC) of the Yoruba decent; the Bakassi of Ibo land; the Egbesu of Ijaw tribe; the PatariSoja in Tiv land; the Yan-banga of the Hausa extraction and many others (Chukwuma, 2003; Dickson, 2007; & Yakubu, 2019).

Research question two: How does community-law enforcement collaboration influence the enhancement of security infrastructure in Osun State?

Table 2: Influence of community-law enforcement collaboration on the enhancement of security infrastructure

S/N	Items	Mean	Std. Deviation	Decision
7.	Community members frequently collaborate with Amotekun in reporting suspicious activities or security concerns.	4.16	1.009	Agreed
8.	Community members actively participate in community policing initiatives alongside Amotekun.	4.23	0.860	Agreed
9.	Collaboration between community members and Amotekun has significantly improved intelligence gathering for	4.29	0.859	Agreed

	enhanced security.			
10.	I am very satisfied with the level of cooperation and communication between my community and Amotekun.	4.16	1.290	Agreed
11.	Community-law enforcement collaboration has played a substantial role in the development of security infrastructure in my area.	4.30	0.810	Agreed
12	Community members are highly likely to support and actively engage in community policing initiatives alongside Amotekun in the future.	3.80	0.719	Agreed
	Grand Mean	4.15		

A survey reveals that community-law enforcement collaboration significantly enhances security infrastructure in Osun State. The survey results show that community members frequently collaborate with Amotekun in reporting security-related issues, and actively participate in community policing initiatives. The collaboration significantly improves intelligence gathering for enhanced security, with a high mean score of 4.29. Respondents are satisfied with the level of cooperation and communication between their communities and Amotekun. Community-law enforcement collaboration is seen as playing a substantial role in the development of security infrastructure, with a high mean score of 4.30. The survey also indicates that community members are highly likely to support and actively engage in community policing initiatives alongside Amotekun in the future, indicating a positive disposition toward future collaboration. The results of the grand mean of 4.15 support the idea that community-law enforcement collaboration plays a substantial role in enhancing security infrastructure in Osun State. According to Odumakin (2020), it is argued that the establishment of Amotekun is crucial due to the prevailing perception

among the populace that they are now confined and lack agency over their own lives and possessions. The operation of federalism, when each level of government has the authority to legislate and enforce laws, is hindered not just in the South west region but also throughout the whole of Nigeria. The whole of Nigeria's framework revolves on the notions of conquest and dominance. There exists a scenario when a collective entity asserts authority over others, so denying them the ability to exercise control over their own matters. Regardless of what Amotekun symbolises, it is imperative to acknowledge and value its significance. The emergence of Amotekun may be attributed to the perceived inadequacy of security authorities in holding accountable those responsible for the prevailing state of insecurity.

Conclusion

Respondents expressed high confidence in Amotekun's ability to respond swiftly to security incidents within their communities. This reflects the trust and reliance placed on Amotekun as a responsive security network. Based on the findings, the study concluded that Amotekun as a community-based security initiative has substantially reduced

the rate of crime in various communities in Osun State. This reduction in crime contributes to an improved quality of life for residents. The study further concluded that the visible presence of Amotekun has acted as a deterrent to potential wrongdoers, ensuring their safety and security.

In conclusion, the study emphasizes the importance of community-based security approaches like Amotekun in addressing security challenges in Osun State. The positive perceptions and experiences of respondents highlight the effectiveness of Amotekun and the crucial role of community-law enforcement collaboration in enhancing security infrastructure.

Recommendations

1. Government of Western states in Nigeria where Amotekun is operative should allocate resources and provide training to enhance Amotekun's operational capacity, ensuring they can effectively respond to security threats.
2. The government and community heads should promote community awareness and active participation in community policing initiatives, emphasizing the importance of collaboration between Amotekun and local residents.
3. The heads of Amotekun should establish effective communication channels between Amotekun and communities, encouraging transparency and feedback mechanisms for continuous improvement.
4. Traditional leaders in the communities should collaborate with the security outfit to secure their support and influence in endorsing

Amotekun's activities within their communities.

5. Government should continue to invest in security infrastructure, develop long-term sustainability plans, and advocate for a legal and policy framework to support and regulate community-based security initiatives like Amotekun, ensuring their effectiveness in mitigating security challenges in Osun State.

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