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The Amotekun Corps and Internal Security in Ondo State: An Assessment of Community-Based Policing

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Abstract

Nigeria's growing incidence of kidnapping, armed robbery, farmer–herder conflict and related violent crimes has exposed significant limitations in the country's conventional security architecture and intensified interest in community-based security arrangements. Established in 2020, the Western Nigeria Security Network (Amotekun) represents an attempt to complement formal security institutions through community-oriented and intelligence-led policing. This study examines the role and effectiveness of the Amotekun Security Outfit in addressing security challenges in Ondo State, focusing on its operational strategies, crime-control capacity and contribution to local security governance. Guided by Community Policing Theory, the study adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining questionnaire data and key informant interviews with relevant secondary sources. Data were obtained from 380 respondents across the three senatorial districts, comprising security personnel, Amotekun operatives, traditional rulers, farmers, traders and other community stakeholders. The findings indicate that Amotekun has strengthened local security through intelligence gathering, patrols, community engagement and collaboration with conventional agencies. Respondents also reported high awareness of the Corps and perceived improvements in the control of kidnapping, armed robbery, farmer–herder conflict and related crimes. The study concludes that Amotekun constitutes an important complementary security institution, although operational and logistical constraints persist. It recommends stronger institutional support, improved welfare and logistics, enhanced inter-agency coordination and sustained community participation.

Keywords: *Community Policing; Amotekun; Internal Security; Crime Prevention; Ondo State; Nigeria.*

Introduction

The growing complexity of contemporary security threats has prompted a shift from conventional state-centred policing towards more collaborative and community-oriented security approaches. Across both developed and developing societies, community policing has increasingly been recognised as an important strategy for preventing crime, strengthening public trust, and enhancing the legitimacy of security institutions. Rather than relying exclusively on reactive law enforcement, community policing promotes sustained partnerships between security agencies and local communities, emphasising intelligence sharing, early threat detection, and collective responsibility for public safety (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 1994). Consequently, it has become a central component of contemporary security governance and conflict prevention.

Beyond the local level, community policing has increasingly been integrated into broader regional security arrangements. Such integration facilitates intelligence exchange, coordinated responses to transboundary threats, and greater community participation in security management. The effectiveness of these arrangements, however, is influenced by several factors, including political commitment, institutional capacity, resource availability, and the socio-cultural context within which they operate. Consequently, security governance has increasingly evolved towards hybrid arrangements that combine formal state institutions with locally embedded security structures capable of responding to context-specific threats.
Nigeria exemplifies this transition. Over the past decade, the country has witnessed a significant deterioration in internal security arising from kidnapping, armed robbery, banditry, farmer-herder conflicts, terrorism, and other forms of violent crime. Despite the efforts of conventional security agencies—including the Armed Forces, the Nigeria Police Force, the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps, and other law enforcement institutions—the persistence and geographical spread of these threats have exposed important operational and institutional limitations, particularly at the grassroots level. This security deficit has stimulated the emergence of complementary community-based security initiatives designed to strengthen local intelligence gathering, rapid response, and collaboration between communities and formal security agencies.

Within this context, the governments of the six South-West states established the Western Nigeria Security Network, popularly known as *Amotekun*, on 20 January 2020. The initiative was conceived as a regional security outfit to complement existing security agencies through community-based policing, intelligence-driven operations, and greater familiarity with the local terrain and socio-cultural environment. Since its establishment, Amotekun has become an integral component of the security architecture across the South-West, particularly in addressing kidnapping, armed robbery, farmer-herder conflicts, and other forms of violent crime that disproportionately affect rural and semi-urban communities.

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Although Amotekun has attracted considerable public attention and policy debate, empirical evidence regarding its operational effectiveness remains relatively limited, particularly at the state level. Existing studies have largely examined the legal, political, or constitutional dimensions of the initiative, with comparatively less attention devoted to assessing its practical contributions to internal security outcomes within individual states. Against this background, this study examines the role of the Amotekun Security Outfit in addressing security challenges in Ondo State. Specifically, it evaluates the operational strategies employed by the Corps, assesses the extent to which its activities have contributed to addressing insecurity, and analyses its overall contribution to crime reduction within the state.

Conceptual Clarifications

Security

Security is a multidimensional concept that extends beyond the traditional protection of territorial integrity and state sovereignty to encompass the protection of individuals, communities, institutions, and socio-economic livelihoods from threats capable of undermining peace, stability, and development. Contemporary security scholarship increasingly adopts a human-centred perspective, viewing security as the condition in which individuals and societies are free from fear, free from want, and able to pursue lives of dignity (Burgess & Tadjbakhsh, 2010). Accordingly, security encompasses crime prevention, risk management, conflict mitigation, intelligence gathering, and the protection of lives and property through effective governance and responsive security institutions. Within the context of this study, security is conceived as the capacity of the state, in collaboration with community-based security institutions, to prevent, deter, and respond effectively to criminal activities while ensuring the safety, confidence, and well-being of the people of Ondo State.

Amotekun

The Western Nigeria Security Network, popularly known as Amotekun, is a regional security initiative established by the six South-Western states of Nigeria in January 2020 in response to the growing incidence of kidnapping, armed robbery, farmer-herder conflicts, and other forms of violent crime that exposed gaps in the country's conventional security architecture (Sekpe, 2022). Established under enabling laws enacted by the respective state governments, Amotekun functions as a community-based security outfit mandated to complement existing security agencies through intelligence gathering, surveillance, patrol operations, rapid response, and collaboration with local communities, traditional institutions, and other law enforcement agencies (Ondo State Security Network Agency and Amotekun Corps Law, 2020). Its operational philosophy is rooted in the principles of community policing, drawing on local knowledge, cultural familiarity, and grassroots participation to strengthen crime

prevention, public safety, and intelligence-led security operations. Rather than replacing constitutionally recognised security agencies, Amotekun operates as a complementary institution designed to bridge existing security gaps, particularly in rural and underserved communities where conventional policing has encountered operational limitations (Sekpe, 2022). Within the context of this study, Amotekun refers specifically to the Ondo State Amotekun Corps and its contribution to addressing security challenges through intelligence-led, community-based policing and collaborative security operations.

Review of Related Literature

Community Policing and Internal Security

The growing complexity of contemporary security threats has stimulated renewed scholarly and policy interest in community policing as an alternative and complementary approach to conventional law enforcement. Unlike the traditional model of policing, which is largely reactive and centralised, community policing emphasises sustained partnerships between security agencies and local communities in identifying, preventing, and responding to crime. The underlying philosophy is that public safety is a shared responsibility requiring active citizen participation, mutual trust, and collaborative problem-solving. Consequently, community policing has increasingly been recognised as an effective strategy for strengthening intelligence gathering, improving public confidence in security institutions, and addressing the root causes of insecurity rather than merely responding to criminal incidents after they occur (Cordner, 2014; Skogan, 2006). This broader conception of policing has become particularly relevant in countries experiencing complex and decentralised security challenges, where conventional policing structures often struggle to provide adequate security coverage.

Within the Nigerian context, the increasing incidence of kidnapping, armed robbery, banditry, communal conflicts, farmer-herder violence, and other forms of organised crime has exposed the limitations of the country's highly centralised policing system. Several scholars argue that the inability of the Nigerian Police Force to effectively respond to these evolving security threats has renewed calls for greater community participation in policing and the institutionalisation of decentralised security arrangements (Zumve, 2012; Audu, 2022). Community policing has therefore been advanced as a mechanism for improving intelligence collection, enhancing police-community relations, and promoting preventive rather than reactive security management. Studies further demonstrate that successful community policing depends not only on community participation but also on adequate institutional support, legal backing, professional training, accountability, and sustained collaboration among security stakeholders.

Emergence of Amotekun and Regional Security Governance

The establishment of the Western Nigeria Security Network, popularly known as Amotekun, represents one of the most significant institutional responses to Nigeria's contemporary internal security challenges. The initiative emerged in January 2020 through the collective efforts of the six South-Western states in response to the increasing prevalence of kidnapping, armed robbery, violent attacks on farming communities, and other organised criminal activities that had overwhelmed conventional security agencies. The creation of Amotekun reflects broader debates surrounding decentralised policing, regional security governance, and the need to complement the existing federal security architecture with locally driven security institutions capable of responding more effectively to peculiar regional threats.

Existing scholarship generally agrees that Amotekun was established to fill operational gaps created by inadequate manpower, poor local intelligence, and the limited presence of conventional security agencies in many rural and forested communities. Nwoko (2024), for instance, argues that the emergence of Amotekun reflects the South-West's pragmatic response to the perceived failures of Nigeria's centralised policing system and represents an important step towards strengthening community participation in security governance. Similarly, Agbaje, Adeyeye and Omodunbi (2022) contend that the effectiveness of Amotekun derives largely from its utilisation of indigenous knowledge, community intelligence, and local familiarity with geographical terrain, thereby enhancing its ability to prevent and respond rapidly to criminal activities. Other scholars equally observe that the establishment of regional security outfits reflects increasing demands for security sector reforms capable of accommodating Nigeria's socio-cultural diversity while improving grassroots security delivery.

Empirical Studies on the Performance of Amotekun

Empirical evidence on the effectiveness of Amotekun presents largely positive but nuanced findings. Existing studies consistently report improvements in intelligence gathering, community engagement, crime prevention, and collaboration with conventional security agencies. Research examining community policing initiatives in Nigeria indicates that security arrangements involving active community participation generally record higher levels of public trust and more effective crime reporting than conventional policing structures operating in isolation. These findings reinforce the argument that locally embedded security institutions possess comparative advantages in intelligence generation and early detection of criminal activities.

Studies focusing specifically on Amotekun similarly conclude that the security outfit has contributed to reducing incidents of kidnapping, armed robbery, rural banditry, and farmer-herder conflicts across several South-Western states. The Corps' operational effectiveness has been attributed to its familiarity with local communities, collaboration with traditional

institutions, and integration with other security agencies during intelligence-led operations. Nevertheless, scholars also identify several operational challenges confronting the organisation. These include inadequate funding, shortage of logistics and operational equipment, legal ambiguities regarding prosecutorial authority, insufficient personnel, political interference, concerns relating to accountability, and varying levels of inter-agency cooperation. Consequently, while Amotekun has generally been acknowledged as an important innovation in regional security governance, many scholars argue that its long-term sustainability depends on institutional strengthening, continuous training, adequate funding, and improved legal and administrative frameworks.

Research Gap

Although considerable scholarly attention has been devoted to the emergence, constitutional implications, and operational philosophy of Amotekun, important empirical gaps remain. Much of the existing literature adopts descriptive or documentary approaches that primarily examine the legal debates surrounding the establishment of the security outfit or evaluate its operations across the South-West region as a whole. Relatively fewer studies provide state-specific empirical assessments of Amotekun's operational effectiveness using evidence drawn simultaneously from security personnel, community leaders, traditional institutions, civil society organisations, and residents directly affected by insecurity.

Furthermore, previous studies have devoted limited attention to assessing the specific operational mechanisms through which Amotekun contributes to internal security, the extent to which its activities have reduced insecurity, and public perceptions of its effectiveness within Ondo State. This study addresses these gaps by undertaking an empirical assessment of the role of the Ondo State Amotekun Corps in addressing contemporary security challenges through the integration of questionnaire data, key informant interviews, and documentary evidence. In doing so, the study contributes to the growing scholarship on decentralised security governance and community policing in Nigeria by providing state-level evidence capable of informing both policy and future research.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Community Policing Theory, which provides an appropriate analytical framework for examining collaborative approaches to crime prevention and internal security management. Community Policing Theory emerged as an alternative to traditional policing models that emphasise centralised authority, reactive law enforcement, and crime control through coercive state institutions. Instead, it advocates a decentralised and partnership-based approach in which the police, local communities, and other stakeholders jointly identify, prevent, and address security challenges (Skogan, 2006; Cordner, 2014).

The central proposition of the theory is that effective policing depends not only on the enforcement capacity of formal security institutions but also on active community participation, mutual trust, and sustained collaboration between citizens and law enforcement agencies. The theory argues that public safety is a collective responsibility requiring continuous information sharing, local problem-solving, and proactive interventions rather than reactive responses to criminal incidents. It further posits that decentralised policing structures are better positioned to understand local socio-cultural dynamics, generate actionable intelligence, and respond more effectively to context-specific security threats.

The relevance of Community Policing Theory to this study lies in its capacity to explain the establishment, operational philosophy, and public acceptance of the Amotekun Security Outfit in Ondo State. As a community-based security initiative, Amotekun embodies the fundamental principles of the theory by relying on local intelligence, community participation, collaboration with traditional institutions, and operational synergy with conventional security agencies to prevent and combat crime. The theory, therefore, provides a useful framework for analysing how locally embedded security institutions can complement formal policing structures in addressing contemporary security challenges. It also offers an appropriate basis for assessing the extent to which Amotekun's community-oriented approach has enhanced crime prevention, strengthened public confidence, and contributed to improved internal security in Ondo State.

Methodology

This study adopted a mixed-methods case study design, integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches to examine the role of the Amotekun Security Outfit in addressing security challenges in Ondo State. The mixed-methods approach was considered appropriate because it facilitated the triangulation of evidence from multiple sources, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of the operational effectiveness, public perception, and institutional contributions of the Amotekun Corps. The study was conducted in Ondo State, located in Nigeria's South-West geopolitical zone. The state comprises eighteen Local Government Areas (LGAs) distributed across three senatorial districts: Ondo North, Ondo Central, and Ondo South. Owing to the widespread operations of the Amotekun Corps across the state and the varying security challenges experienced within the senatorial districts, one Local Government Area was selected from each of the three senatorial districts to ensure adequate geographical representation of the study area.

The target population comprised key stakeholders involved in, or directly affected by, community-based security initiatives in Ondo State. These included personnel of the Amotekun Corps, the Nigeria Police Force, the Nigerian Army, the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), traditional rulers, youth leaders, farmers, traders, market women, and representatives of civil society organisations. These categories of respondents were selected because of their direct involvement in security governance or their experiences with

the operations of the Amotekun Corps. A total of 380 respondents participated in the questionnaire survey, while Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were conducted with selected stakeholders possessing specialised knowledge of community policing and internal security within the state. Primary data were generated through the administration of structured questionnaires and Key Informant Interviews, while secondary data were obtained from relevant books, peer-reviewed journal articles, official government publications, policy documents, legal instruments, newspapers, and other credible documentary sources relating to community policing, regional security, and the operations of the Amotekun Corps.

The questionnaire was designed to elicit information on respondents' socio-demographic characteristics, awareness of Amotekun, perceptions of its operational strategies, and its effectiveness in addressing security challenges within the study area. The interview guide provided opportunities for participants to offer detailed insights into the operational experiences, institutional challenges, inter-agency collaboration, and public acceptance of the Amotekun Corps. To ensure the quality of the research instruments, the questionnaire and interview guide were carefully reviewed to ensure clarity, relevance, and alignment with the objectives of the study before field administration.

Quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire were analysed using descriptive statistics, particularly frequencies and percentages, and presented in tables. Qualitative data generated through the Key Informant Interviews were analysed using thematic content analysis and integrated with the quantitative findings to provide richer explanations and strengthen the interpretation of the results. Ethical principles guiding social science research were observed throughout the study. Participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained from all respondents before data collection, and participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Information obtained during the course of the study was used strictly for academic purposes.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1: Gender Distribution of the Respondents

Serial	Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Male	220	57.9%
2.	Female	160	42.1%
	Total	**380**	**100%**

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 1 shows the gender distribution of the 380 respondents who participated in the study. Out of the total, 220 (57.9%) were male, while 160 (42.1%) were female. This slight gender imbalance reflects both the demographic realities of community participation in security matters and the composition of stakeholders willing or available to respond to the questionnaire. The relatively high number of male respondents is consistent with gender roles often associated with security-related discourse and involvement in community policing initiatives such as Amotekun. However, the female participation rate remains substantial, providing important gender-balanced perspectives in the analysis of internal security and grassroots policing in Ondo State.

Table 2: Occupation Distribution of the Respondents

Serial	Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Security Personnel	80	21.1%
2.	Civil Servant	85	22.3%
3.	Traditional Leader	45	11.8%
4.	State HQ Amotekun Corps	80	21.1%
5.	Farmer	50	13.2%
6.	Trader	40	10.5%
	Total	380	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 2 presents the occupational distribution of the 380 respondents who participated in the study. The data reveal a diverse sample drawn from key segments of the population that are either directly involved in or affected by community policing in Ondo State. Civil servants constituted the largest group of respondents with 85 individuals, representing 22.3% of the total sample, providing insights from those involved in the public sector that may interact with Amotekun through policy implementation or administrative coordination. Security personnel made up 21.1% of the respondents (80 individuals), and similarly, the Amotekun corps with the same number, highlighting the importance of incorporating the views of those who are directly engaged in policing and security operations. Their perspectives are valuable in evaluating the operational effectiveness, challenges, and inter-agency cooperation of the Amotekun Corps. Traditional leaders, who play crucial roles in local governance and conflict resolution in many rural communities, made up 11.8% of the respondents (45 individuals). Their inclusion adds depth to the analysis, particularly in understanding the cultural and communal context in which Amotekun operates.13.2% of the respondents (50 individuals) are farmers, while 10.5% (40 individuals) are traders. Their high participation reflects the study's community-focused approach, aiming to assess the public's experience and perception of Amotekun operations from the grassroots level.

Table 3: Educational Qualifications of the Respondents

Serial	Educational Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
1.	WASSCE/NECO/GCE	40	10.5%
2.	ND/NCE	70	18.4%
3.	HND	60	15.8%
4.	Bachelor's Degree	90	23.7%
5.	Postgraduate Diploma	30	7.9%
6.	Master's Degree	65	17.1%
7.	PhD	15	3.9%
8.	Others	10	2.6%
	Total	**380**	**100%**

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 3 reveals a well-educated and diverse sample population, with qualifications ranging from secondary school certificates to doctoral degrees. A significant proportion of the respondents, 90 individuals (23.7%), possess a Bachelor's degree, making this the most represented educational category. This is closely followed by those with a Master's degree (65 respondents or 17.1%) and ND/NCE holders (70 respondents or 18.4%), showing a strong presence of tertiary-educated individuals in the sample. These groups possess a deeper understanding of public policy, governance, and security issues, thereby contributing informed responses to the study.

Respondents with HND qualifications also formed a substantial portion, accounting for 15.8% of the sample. Meanwhile, WASSCE/NECO/GCE holders constituted 10.5%, indicating participation from individuals with only secondary education, many of whom are grassroots community members directly impacted by local security initiatives. The presence of PhD holders (3.9%) and Postgraduate Diploma holders (7.9%) further enriches the diversity of academic perspectives in the dataset. Additionally, the "Others" category (2.6%) likely includes vocational training, foreign certifications, or informal education, showing inclusivity in capturing non-traditional educational backgrounds. Overall, the varied educational qualifications of respondents reflect the inclusiveness and representativeness of the survey. It ensures that the findings on Amotekun's operations and the broader themes of community policing and internal security are shaped by a wide array of viewpoints from grassroots citizens to academic and professional elites. This diversity enhances the credibility, depth, and applicability of the study's conclusions and recommendations.

Ways in which Amotekun addresses Security Challenges in Ondo State

Table 4: Measures taken by Amotekun in addressing internal security challenges in Ondo State

Serial	Modus Operandi	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Patrolling	127	33.4%
2.	Intelligence gathering	105	27.6%
3.	Assisting the police to apprehend crime	138	36.3%
4.	Others	10	2.7%
	Total	**380**	**100%**

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 4 shows the responses of the respondents to the measures taken by Amotekun in addressing internal security challenges in Ondo State. From their responses, 127 individuals (33.4%) agreed that the measure taken by Amotekun is patrolling. 105(27.6%) said it is intelligence gathering, 138(36.3%) said it is by assisting the police to apprehend crime while 10(2.7%) are of other opinions. On the other hand, in an interview granted by a Police officer, he said:

> Amotekun's measure, put into consideration in addressing internal security challenges in Ondo State, is basically on how to prevent and combat crime in the Southwest of Nigeria through local intelligence gathering and the use of technology to address issues like highway robbery and kidnappings. The security outfit works to complement the Nigeria Police Force, carrying out directives from state governors to maintain public order and safety in their respective states (Interview, 2025).

According to one of the interviewees:

> Amotekun is only an intelligence-gathering outfit that will complement the efforts of the Police without any sinister motive. Perhaps it was this intelligence- gathering objective that motivated the choice of a Leopard as its image. Leopards have very unique characteristics. Firstly, Leopards do not need much water as they survive from the moisture they get from consuming their prey (Interview, 2025).

An Officer in Amotekun briefly observes that:

> Amotekun was created to complement the work of other security agencies by focusing on localised intelligence and community-based policing where they could not effectively operate (Interview, 2025).

Mr Dapo Ogunniyi added that:

> Amotekun's modus operandi covers intelligence gathering, collaboration with other security agencies, community engagement, and tactical patrols. It is worthy of note that these patrols are most at times conducted with local hunters who know the terrain, to deter criminals and protect areas like forests, schools, and border towns (KII, 23 May 2025, 4:00 PM).

To shed more light on the above, Sekpe (2022) argued that as a local collaborative measure, Amotekun will gather information about crimes and suspicious activities for interpretation and proper action, including prevention, management or counteraction. The operation module of the local security outfit will include undertaking routine patrols on parts of highways in the region, which police are unable to adequately cover day and night. Working with traditional rulers, its activities will also permeate local communities to keep an eye on suspicious residents, visitors and non-residents coming for business or related activities. However, there were strong indications that intrigues among Southwest governors and interference by the Federal Government were threatening the security outfit at a summit organised by the Development Agenda for Western Nigeria (DAWN Commission, 2019).

Amotekun's measures for addressing internal security challenges in Ondo State are consistent with its modus operandi and statutory mandate to provide community-based security support across the South-West geopolitical zone by complementing the police and other formal security agencies. In Ondo State, the Corps addresses internal security challenges through measures aimed at combating kidnapping, armed robbery, farmer–herder conflicts and other forms of criminality; preventing illegal mining and the destruction of farmlands; gathering and sharing intelligence; and safeguarding lives and property. It also responds to distress calls, supports the apprehension of suspected criminals, and works with conventional security agencies and local communities in responding to emerging security threats. These measures reflect Amotekun's community-oriented approach, which places local intelligence, rapid response and collaboration at the centre of its contribution to internal security management in the state.

This is in affirmative to the theory of community policing, which assumes that decentralisation of police authority enhances effectiveness, as local units can tailor their strategies to the unique needs of their communities.

The Extent to which Amotekun Operations addressed Insecurity in Ondo State

Table 5: Responses on the Awareness and Effectiveness of Amotekun Operations

Serial	Question	Response Option	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
1	Awareness of Amotekun in Ondo State?	Yes	360	94.7%
		No	15	3.9%
		Not sure	5	1.3%
		Total	**380**	**100%**
2	Do you know what they do?	Yes	340	89.5%
		I Don't Know	25	6.6%
		Indifferent	15	3.9%
		Total	**380**	**100%**
3	Has Amotekun reduced crimes in Ondo State?	Yes	310	81.6%
		No	50	13.2%
		Indifferent	20	5.2%
		Total	**380**	**100%**

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 5 provides a summary of respondents' awareness and perception of the operations of the Western Nigeria Security Network, popularly known as Amotekun, in Ondo State. The findings indicate a high level of public awareness and engagement with the security outfit. Out of the 380 respondents, 94.7% reported being aware of Amotekun's presence in Ondo State. This overwhelming awareness suggests that the organisation has achieved significant visibility and recognition among the public since its inception. Only 3.9% stated they were unaware of Amotekun, while a minimal 1.3% were unsure, reflecting effective public sensitisation and perhaps the visibility of the corps' patrols, uniforms, or community engagements. Regarding knowledge of Amotekun's functions, 89.5% of respondents indicated that they understand what Amotekun does. This demonstrates not just general awareness, but also a broad and informed understanding of the corps' core mandate, particularly its role in community policing, local intelligence gathering, and crime control. Such awareness reflects successful communication of Amotekun's purpose and activities, likely through public engagements, media presence, and visibility of personnel in various communities. The relatively low percentage of respondents who either did not know (6.6%) or were indifferent (3.9%) may suggest existing gaps in outreach to certain subgroups, such as rural dwellers, non-literate populations, or marginalised communities where information dissemination and security coverage may be weaker. This highlights a need for more

targeted community engagement strategies and localised sensitisation campaigns to ensure no demographic is left uninformed or disconnected from security initiatives.

Perhaps most importantly, 81.6% of the respondents believe that Amotekun has contributed to reducing crime in Ondo State, a strong endorsement of its operational impact and a reflection of growing public trust in the corps. This perception affirms Amotekun's emerging role as a credible force complementing conventional security agencies such as the NPF and NSCDC, especially in addressing insecurity at the grassroots level. However, 13.2% of respondents felt there was no reduction in crime, while 5.2% were indifferent. These dissenting views reflect localised challenges such as persistent security threats, delayed response times, lack of presence in certain areas, or unmet expectations by the populace. It could also point to structural limitations within the Amotekun Corps, such as inadequate personnel, logistics, or inter-agency collaboration in some zones. These findings align with Social Contract Theory, which posits that individuals surrender certain freedoms to a governing authority or institution in exchange for protection and the assurance of order. In this context, the legitimacy and effectiveness of Amotekun depend heavily on the extent to which it fulfils its part of this contract by ensuring the safety and security of the communities it serves. Where security is perceived to be effective, trust in the institution is strengthened; where it is lacking, legitimacy may be questioned.

Corroborating this perspective, a Comrade emphasises that:

> The general perception among the youth regarding Amotekun is largely positive. Many young people view the Corps as a vital force for safeguarding neighbourhoods, especially in combating cult-related violence, street crimes, and petty theft, which have historically affected urban and semi-urban communities. Their visible presence in towns like Akure and Ondo has reassured many that local security challenges are being taken seriously. However, it's important to acknowledge that a minority of youths remain sceptical, largely due to past incidents involving misunderstandings, wrongful arrests, or allegations of excessive use of force. These isolated events have caused distrust in certain quarters, but overall, the sentiment is that Amotekun represents a homegrown solution to local security problems (Interview, 2025).

According to an Amotekun Officer:

> Since its establishment in 2020, the Amotekun Corps has played a pivotal role in enhancing internal security across Ondo State, particularly at the grassroots level. Our presence has contributed to a sharp decline in incidents of kidnapping, armed robbery, herders' attacks and illegal logging, particularly in rural communities, forests and border areas that were

> previously underserved by conventional security structures. By deploying operatives familiar with local terrains and community dynamics, we have been able to bridge the security gap and foster public trust. Our intelligence-led operations have also enabled early detection and disruption of criminal activities, resulting in improved public safety across the state (Interview, 2025).

A community leader of the opinion that:

> The establishment of Amotekun was a strategic response to the growing security challenges that plagued Ondo State and the wider Southwest region in the late 2010s. A surge in farmer-herder clashes, frequent incidents of highway kidnappings and the unchecked activities of armed bandits highlighted a critical gap in the security architecture, especially in rural and forested areas where federal security agencies often lacked reach and cultural familiarity. The state recognised that a localised force composed of personnel who understand the language, terrain, and customs of the people was necessary to fill this vacuum. Amotekun was thus conceptualised not just as a reactive force, but as a proactive community-based outfit capable of working in synergy with traditional institutions and residents to address security concerns from the grassroots level. It was born out of necessity, driven by the imperative of safeguarding lives, livelihoods, and local economies (Interview, 2025).

Also, a businesswoman holds that:

> Before Amotekun was established, many of us, especially women and elderly farmers, were constantly afraid of venturing into our farms, particularly after mid-morning. I personally avoided staying on my farm past 10 a.m. because of the fear of encountering herders or being attacked on the way home. We heard frequent stories of people being assaulted, their crops destroyed, and sometimes even kidnapped. But with the presence of Amotekun operatives patrolling the rural roads and bush paths, I now feel safer. I can go to my farm as early as 6 a.m. and stay till late afternoon without worrying. Their patrols have discouraged those criminal elements that used to roam the area freely (Interview, 2025).

However, to buttress the primary data, Shaibu et al. (2024) presented the table below:

Table 6: Extent of Insecurity Reduction Rate

Insecurity Indicators	High	Low	Totals	% High	% Low
Kidnapping	89	291	380	23.4	76.6
Armed Robbery	86	294	380	22.6	77.4
Rape	60	320	380	15.8	84.2
Drug Trafficking	94	286	380	24.7	75.3
Arms Trafficking	100	280	380	26.3	73.7
Ritual Killings	74	306	380	19.5	80.5
Farmer-Herders Crisis	305	75	380	80.3	19.7

Source: Shaibu et al., 2024

A detailed analysis of the table above reveals a significant drop in insecurity levels across multiple threat areas. The most notable achievement is evident in the resolution of farmer-herder crises, with 80.3% of respondents affirming high-impact reduction. Adeleye (2025) linked this outcome to Amotekun's strategic positioning of operatives in farming corridors and forest borderlands of Owo, Akoko, and Ose LGAs. Their deployment of community-based intelligence officers and early warning systems enabled swift identification and neutralisation of threats before escalation. Also, reductions in kidnapping (76.6% low), armed robbery (77.4% low), and ritual killings (80.5% low) also reflect strong operational outputs by the Corps. Adeleye (2025) attributes these declines to routine stop-and-search patrols, arrest-led interventions, and coordinated night raids in known hotspots. Similarly, Amotekun's success in drug trafficking (75.3% low) and arms trafficking (73.7% low) illustrates its capacity to effectively patrol transit corridors such as the Araromi-Ifon axis and adjoining forests along the Kogi and Edo state borders.

A Supt of Corps in NSCDC stated that:

> Amotekun and the NSCDC have collaborated on at least 85 joint operations between 2021 and 2025. Their joint intervention in resolving a border dispute in Ifon and their successful effort in securing a vandalised gas pipeline in Akoko. Such partnerships have not only expanded coverage but also improved inter-agency intelligence flow and resource efficiency (Interview, 2025).

Further highlighting the operational intensity of the period under review, a popular officer in Amotekun disclosed that:

> The Amotekun command received over 500 distress calls from members of the public, spanning issues from suspected abductions to community invasion alerts. Importantly, each of the calls was responded to with urgency and professionalism, a feat made possible by the increased mobility, inter-agency communication and grassroots intelligence support made available through Operation Dada. These swift interventions helped to disrupt several planned attacks and assured rural dwellers of the corps' unwavering commitment to their safety. In a complementary effort aimed at forestalling future security threats. Also, 114 individuals were intercepted while loitering in forests across the state without any verifiable mission or destination. This preventive measure formed part of the state's broader strategy to tighten internal security controls and reduce the chances of sleeper cells forming in the guise of displaced persons or wandering labourers within sensitive areas (Interview, 2025).

A secondary school Principal added that:

> The presence of Amotekun operatives around school environments has made a significant difference in improving the general sense of safety among both students and staff. Before their deployment became more regular, we occasionally witnessed incidents of cult-related activities, harassment of students by hoodlums, and suspicious loitering near the school gate, especially after school hours. These issues created fear and anxiety, affecting students' focus and attendance. However, with Amotekun actively patrolling our area and maintaining visibility during critical times such as school closing hours, such activities have drastically reduced. Their patrol vans and personnel stationed near the school during peak periods deter miscreants and give students and parents confidence. Teachers now feel safer staying behind after school hours for extracurricular activities or meetings. In short, Amotekun's presence has brought peace of mind to the entire school community and contributed to a more stable learning environment (Interview, 2025).

Despite the broad successes, the relatively lower impact rating in the area of rape (15.8% high impact) highlights existing gaps. According to a Senior Special Adviser to the Ondo State Governor:

> These gaps call for the expansion of Amotekun's mandate in collaboration with social welfare and gender-based advocacy groups. It is believed that increased public enlightenment and the inclusion of female operatives will increase reporting rates and reduce the stigma around sexual violence cases. Therefore, the assumption that Amotekun's establishment has led to measurable crime reduction in Ondo State is strongly validated by both empirical data and community sentiment. The Corps has transitioned from a

> state experiment into a critical actor in the internal security framework (Interview, 2025).

One of the Amotekun commanders emphasised that:

> Amotekun represents a model of grassroots security success, shaped by strategic foresight, community integration, and policy-driven adaptability. Its continued evolution and institutional strengthening remain vital for the sustained safety and prosperity of Ondo State (Interview, 2025).

Furthermore, a Community Leader maintains that:

> Amotekun has played a critical and commendable role in enhancing the overall security architecture of our community here in Owo. As a grassroots-oriented security outfit, their presence has brought a sense of relief and reassurance to many residents, particularly in rural areas that were previously underserved by conventional security agencies. One of the major advantages Amotekun brings to the table is its deep familiarity with our local terrain, customs, and language. This cultural and geographical knowledge enables them to quickly identify potential threats, recognise strangers or suspicious movement, and engage with community members in a culturally sensitive manner. They have been especially effective in curbing crimes like night robberies, highway ambushes, and herder-farmer clashes. Before their intervention, we had frequent issues where farmers were afraid to access their lands due to threats from roaming herders. However, Amotekun's presence has not only deterred such threats but also created a channel of communication and mediation between conflicting parties. This local intelligence-based policing model has strengthened our trust in community-driven security mechanisms and made people more willing to report suspicious activities without fear (Interview, 2025).

A Market Woman Leader stated in very clear terms that:

> As the leader of the market women in Owo Central Market, I can say with great confidence that the presence of Amotekun has brought tremendous relief and reassurance to us. Before their deployment, we lived in constant fear. Petty crimes were a daily occurrence – bags and wares were being stolen, traders were being harassed by miscreants, and in some cases, we were even extorted by those who posed as revenue collectors. There was a time when traders couldn't even display their goods freely, especially during festive seasons, because of the fear of being robbed. However, since Amotekun began patrolling the market and surrounding areas, the atmosphere has changed significantly. Their regular patrols, both in uniform

> and in plain clothes, have created a visible security presence that deters criminals. They are not like the conventional police who sometimes ignore minor complaints. Beyond that, the traders now feel a sense of ownership and participation in securing the market because Amotekun encourages community input. They meet with market leaders, listen to our complaints, and often act on suggestions we make. Their efforts have restored order, reduced fear, and created an environment where business can thrive. More customers are visiting the market, including those from nearby towns, because they feel safe. This has improved the livelihood of many families who depend solely on daily trade (Interview, 2025).

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study demonstrate that the establishment of the Amotekun Corps has significantly strengthened community-based security governance in Ondo State. The high level of public awareness (94.7%) and understanding of the Corps' functions (89.5%) suggests that Amotekun has become an institutionalised component of the state's internal security architecture. Such widespread public recognition is particularly important because community policing depends largely on public confidence, legitimacy and voluntary cooperation between citizens and security providers. The findings therefore support the argument that locally driven security initiatives are more likely to gain public acceptance when they reflect the social and cultural realities of the communities they serve (Cordner, 2014; Skogan, 2006).

The study further reveals that respondents identified assisting the Nigeria Police Force in apprehending criminals (36.3%), regular patrol operations (33.4%), and intelligence gathering (27.6%) as the principal operational strategies employed by Amotekun. These findings indicate that the Corps functions primarily as a complementary rather than a competing security institution. This collaborative operational model reinforces the original mandate of Amotekun as a regional security network established to bridge operational gaps left by conventional security agencies, particularly within rural and forested communities where policing capacity has traditionally been limited. Similar observations have been made by Sekpe (2022), who argues that Amotekun's effectiveness derives largely from its emphasis on intelligence gathering, community surveillance, and close collaboration with formal security agencies.

Perhaps the most significant finding is that over four-fifths (81.6%) of respondents believe that Amotekun has contributed to reducing crime in Ondo State. This positive perception is reinforced by the qualitative evidence obtained from interviews with security personnel, community leaders, market women, farmers and educational administrators, all of whom acknowledged noticeable improvements in public safety following the establishment of the Corps. Respondents consistently attributed these improvements to increased patrols, rapid

response to distress calls, superior knowledge of local terrain, and effective collaboration with traditional institutions. These findings correspond with the broader literature on community policing, which suggests that security organisations embedded within local communities often enjoy higher levels of trust and possess greater capacity for intelligence gathering than centrally controlled policing institutions (Gill et al., 2014).

The empirical evidence presented in Table 6 further demonstrates that Amotekun has contributed substantially to reducing several forms of insecurity across Ondo State. The most remarkable success was recorded in mitigating farmer-herder conflicts, while considerable reductions were also reported in kidnapping, armed robbery, ritual killings, arms trafficking and drug trafficking. These outcomes underscore the strategic value of deploying locally recruited personnel who possess intimate knowledge of the terrain, language and social networks within their operational environment. The findings lend empirical support to arguments that decentralised security arrangements enhance operational effectiveness by facilitating faster intelligence collection, improved community cooperation and more rapid response to emerging security threats (Adeleye, 2025).

The study equally demonstrates that inter-agency collaboration constitutes one of the major strengths of Amotekun's operational model. Evidence from interviews indicates that the Corps maintains productive working relationships with the Nigeria Police Force, the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), the Nigerian Army and other security organisations through joint patrols, intelligence sharing and coordinated operations. Such collaboration has expanded operational coverage while reducing duplication of security responsibilities. These findings reinforce existing scholarship, which argues that multi-agency cooperation represents an indispensable component of contemporary internal security management, particularly in societies confronted by complex and multidimensional security threats.

Notwithstanding these achievements, the findings also reveal several operational limitations. Although respondents generally expressed confidence in Amotekun's performance, some noted concerns regarding inadequate logistics, insufficient personnel, occasional allegations of excessive use of force, and uneven operational coverage across communities. Furthermore, the relatively limited impact reported in addressing sexual and gender-based violence suggests that certain categories of crime require more specialised institutional responses beyond conventional patrol operations. These findings indicate that while community policing provides an effective framework for combating many forms of violent crime, its effectiveness depends upon adequate funding, continuous personnel training, stronger accountability mechanisms and closer collaboration with social welfare institutions.

The findings strongly validate the assumptions of Community Policing Theory adopted in this study. The evidence demonstrates that decentralised policing structures rooted in local participation enhance public trust, improve intelligence gathering, and strengthen crime prevention. The widespread public acceptance of Amotekun, coupled with respondents' perceptions of improved security outcomes, confirms that community involvement remains a

critical determinant of effective security governance. By integrating indigenous knowledge with formal security institutions, the Amotekun Corps has demonstrated that community-based policing can serve as a viable complement to Nigeria's conventional security architecture. Overall, the findings suggest that Amotekun has evolved beyond an emergency regional intervention into a significant institutional innovation in Nigeria's internal security landscape. Its success illustrates the growing importance of hybrid security governance, where formal state institutions collaborate with community-based structures to address increasingly complex security challenges. While operational challenges remain, the Ondo State experience provides important lessons for strengthening subnational security governance and offers a potentially replicable model for other states confronting similar security threats.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The emergence of the Amotekun Corps represents one of the most significant institutional innovations in subnational security governance in contemporary Nigeria. Established to complement conventional security agencies amidst growing insecurity in the South-West, the Corps has evolved into an important component of Ondo State's internal security architecture. By integrating community participation, indigenous knowledge, and intelligence-led policing, Amotekun has demonstrated the potential of decentralised security arrangements to address security challenges that often exceed the operational capacity of centralised policing institutions.

The findings of this study indicate that Amotekun has made significant contributions to crime prevention and public safety in Ondo State. The high level of public awareness and confidence in the Corps, coupled with respondents' perceptions of reductions in kidnapping, armed robbery, farmer-herder conflicts, and other violent crimes, suggests that community-based security initiatives can substantially enhance local security outcomes when effectively coordinated with conventional security agencies. The evidence further demonstrates that intelligence gathering, regular patrols, community engagement, and inter-agency collaboration constitute the principal mechanisms through which the Corps has improved security across the state. Despite these achievements, the study identifies several operational challenges, including inadequate logistics, funding constraints, manpower shortages, and the need for greater institutional coordination and accountability. Addressing these limitations is essential to ensuring the long-term sustainability and effectiveness of the Corps. Consequently, the study concludes that while Amotekun is not a substitute for Nigeria's conventional security institutions, it has become an indispensable complementary security mechanism whose continued strengthening will contribute significantly to improving internal security in Ondo State and the wider South-West region. The Ondo State experience further demonstrates that appropriately institutionalised community policing can provide a viable model for strengthening subnational security governance in Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Institutionalise community participation. The Ondo State Government should establish Community Security Liaison Committees (CSLCs) at ward and local government levels. These committees should comprise representatives of the Amotekun Corps, traditional institutions, youth organisations, women's associations, religious leaders, civil society organisations, and other relevant stakeholders to strengthen community engagement, intelligence sharing, and public trust.

2. Strengthen institutional capacity. The Ondo State Government should provide adequate funding, competitive remuneration, modern communication equipment, operational vehicles, surveillance technology, and continuous professional training for Amotekun personnel to improve operational efficiency and personnel motivation.

3. Enhance inter-agency collaboration. A formal South-West Regional Security Coordination and Logistics Centre should be established by the governments of the six South-West states to facilitate intelligence sharing, joint operations, standardised training, and coordinated responses to transboundary security threats.

4. Strengthen legal and accountability frameworks. Clear operational guidelines, independent oversight mechanisms, and periodic performance evaluations should be instituted to enhance professionalism, ensure respect for human rights, and improve public confidence in the Corps.

5. Promote policy replication where appropriate. Given the positive outcomes recorded in Ondo State, other states facing similar security challenges should consider adopting context-specific community policing models that complement existing security institutions while reflecting local socio-cultural and security realities, rather than replicating the Amotekun model wholesale.

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