

“Onyabo”, Madanwo, and “Amotekun”: Urban People’s Interpretation of Community Policing and Internal Security Management in Lagos State.

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ABSTRACT

Cult killings, urban violence, and political unrest have become some of the major trademarks of Lagos, a rapidly growing West African megacity with an estimated population of over 20 million. At least if anything has changed in the management of public safety and security of Lagos, we have seen incremental deployment of the police to Lagos and additional support to the Nigeria Police Force. However, the crime problem persists in some of the dark spots of the state. For instance, between 2016 and 2017, a deadly cult group, Badoo, killed and injured people in the Ikorodu area of Lagos, spreading the fear that ritualists had invaded the city of Lagos. This study investigates young people's interpretation of community policing in Lagos and the symbolic use of "Madanwo" and "Onyaabo" in deterring criminals. The study adopts the General Deterrence Theory and Symbolic Interactionism to drive home the issue. Using the qualitative method of social research covering Lagos Island, Mushin, Ikorodu, Oworoshoki and Eti-Osa to sample a total of 30 participants for the In-depth and Key Informant Interviews, the study found that it is really not the use of the names that scared criminals and offenders of the law but the determination to get criminals punished for the offences. In Oworoshoki, the study found that people have come to believe in the "Madanwo Community Police" because they have helped cleanse the community of cultism and cult killing that made the community unsafe in the past. In the Ikorodu area of Lagos, community leaders held that the use of the names provided additional impetus to what the government is capable of doing when culprits or offenders of the law are apprehended. In the Eti-Osa area of Lagos, people believe that the crime rate has drastically reduced now that community vigilantes are involved in the security of the community, compared to when members of the Nigerian Police Force were solely involved in the management of the internal security of the community. Though the code names are increasingly accepted across Lagos, some people feared that the corruption, lack of sincerity, and public trust that incapacitated the Nigeria Police Force in combating crime may turn out to hinder the growth and sustainability of the existing community policing security networks in Lagos State.

Keywords: Community Police, Onyaabo, Madanwo, Security, Lagos

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Introduction

Lagos, an ex-colonized British West African and Nigerian city, has in recent times been confronted by multiple security challenges ranging from cult killings, urban violence, to ritual killings. At least if anything has changed in the management of public safety and security of Lagos, we have seen incremental deployment of the police to Lagos and additional support to the Nigeria Police Force. Still, the crime problem persists in some of the dark spots of the state. For instance, between 2016 and 2017, a deadly cult group, Badoo, killed and injured some people in the Ikorodu area of Lagos, spreading the fear that ritualists had invaded the city of Lagos (Tade, 2023). Some have argued that the criminal and security problem of Lagos is a reflection of the endemic nature of organized crimes in the West African sub-region, where terrorists, drug traffickers, illicit arms traders, and bandits have had control of the region for decades (Onuoha, 2013; Onuoha, 2016; Mazittelli, 2007; Sincox, 2014). For instance, since the end of the Cold War, the Islamist terrorist organizations and other organized criminal networks have waged relentless war against people and the governments in the region, killing thousands of people. Boko Haram alone is believed to have killed more than 30 people and displaced hundreds of people from their ancestral homes.

Unlike the past when Lagos was known for its armed robbery and Area Boys phenomena due to the rising influence of urbanization in the ancient West African city, the rise of the influence of the globalization of youth crimes, today, has increased and complicated the security situations in Lagos leading to a surge in the rate of youth crimes. Young people battered by the challenges of urban poverty, rising cost of living, and homelessness have continued to pose a threat in Nigeria's

commercial nerve center (Aljazeera, 2020; Jonathan, 2023; Okojie, 2023; Oloniniran, 2023; Tade, 2023). From the Awawa cult group in the Ajegunle Area of Lagos to one million boys in Surulere and Agege areas, Lagos has become one of the epicenters of deadly cult groups in Nigeria.

Of course, Lagos is not the only Nigerian city that is confronted by multiple security threats, the city of Maiduguri in Borno State, Nigeria was once the epicenter of the activities of the Nigeria's Islamist terrorist organization, Boko Haram—a group that has wrecked havoc on the nation's security architecture (Adisa, 2019; Walker, 2012; Thurston, 2016) and killed more than 20 million people. Boko Haram's decade-long religious extremism has left the Northern part of Nigeria with casualties in states such as Adamawa, Kastina, Kogi, Nasarawa, etc. In Rivers, cult groups and gangs have been on each other's necks, killing and maiming in the midst of fragile Nigerian politics and political system.

In Benue, Plateau, Zamfara, Kaduna and Kastina and Adamawa States of Nigeria, the story has been that of the ravaging herder-farmers conflicts and armed bandits abducting innocent travellers and extorting money from rural inhabitants of Northcentral and Northwestern Nigeria in the midst of the excruciating poverty in Nigeria (Aljazeera, 2022; International Crisis Group, 2022). In Ibadan, Abeokuta, and Osogbo in Osun state of Nigeria, cult groups and gangs have continually exchanged gunfire while struggling for superiority. Since Lagos is not immune to the security crises in other regions and Nigeria, its internal security management has been exposed to the activities of cultists, bandits, kidnappers, robbers, and ritualists typical of a Southwest city of the 21st century. This development, though, has

witnessed the swift deployment of security operatives like the police to the scenes of the crimes. In recent times, crimes in the city have been combated, and the significant involvement of local security networks - Onyabo, Madanwo, and Amotekun- has been witnessed. Onyabo is a Yoruba word for flooding. It means something is coming in en masse, while Madanwo means "do not do it". Amotekun is the name adopted by the Southwest Security network, which was launched in January 2021 to confront the menace of armed banditry in Southwest Africa. It is a name that is developed to denote the presence of a Tiger-like security system in the community and deter criminals from committing crime.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Internal security management is the primary constitutional duty of the Nigerian Police as stipulated in sections 214 and 215 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Part of the responsibilities of the Police is to secure the lives and property of Nigerians and safeguard national assets from internal attacks by organized criminal groups. Since 1999, the Nigerian Police Force has tried to fulfill this constitutional mandate by showing resilience in the war against terrorism in Nigeria. However, research indicates that several factors have undermined the level of effectiveness of the Police in combating different organized crimes that are currently facing Nigeria. One of these is the perennial problem of corruption in the Police and public life (Aborishade, 2023; Adisa, Adejoh, and Alabi, 2018). The ineffectiveness of the police is evidenced in citizens' resort to community police to combat banditry, herder-farmers conflicts, and kidnapping for ransom.

Community police, as the name implies, is police-community cooperation to combat crime, end insurgency, and create an atmosphere of peace and security for the

state. Still, over the years, the Police Community Relations Community (PCRC), which is supposed to be an intermediary between the police and people, has struggled with the problem of trust and confidence in the police (Aborishade, 2023). It was in the face of this problem of distrust that Nigerians have resorted to the use of local vigilante groups to find solutions to the rising incidence of crime, cultism, and violence in Nigerian cities. Vigilante groups, notwithstanding their ability to combat crime using local knowledge, charms, and community cooperation, have faced backlashes, one of which is the ethnicisation of the groups. This article is designed to discuss young people's interpretation of community policing and internal security management in Lagos State, Nigeria, especially the involvement of local security networks such as Onyabo, Madanwo, and Amotekun. The article, which is an outcome of research carried out between August and September 2023, is intended to theoretically and empirically contribute to the development of robust security networks for Lagos using local security networks, languages, symbols, and ideas.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The main aim of the study was to investigate the role of local vigilante groups in combating cultism and crimes in Lagos State, Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study are to;

1. Establish the nature of internal security threats faced in the city of Lagos
2. Describe factors leading to the emergence of vigilante groups in Lagos
3. Discuss urban people's interpretations and meanings associated with vigilante groups
4. Analyze the operational strategies and level of effectiveness of the vigilante groups, such as Onyabo and

Mandanwo, in the management of internal security of Lagos.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Lagos in the Midst of Cult Wars, Community Banditry, and Urban Violence

Crimes and their occurrence have always been a universal characteristic of most world cities. This is because of the influence of urbanization, which is usually accompanied by rapid transformation of social life and the supportive systems hitherto experienced in rural areas (Brennan-Galvin, 2002). In modern urban society, there is hardly any city in the world where the development of urbanization, the rise of urban life, an increase in population size, and the shrinking of access of urban people to communal coexistence and facilities would not result in crimes. The degree or extent to which a city or a country experiences this structural growth and the rise in urban crimes often varies from one country to another. In the developed capitalist societies, the emergence of democracy, industrialization, and advanced technology has helped to play down the rate at which people experience crime. Criminals can now be tracked, traced, and deterred using modern technologies, but in Sub-Saharan African societies, the deployment of technologies to combat crimes is still limited. Mazitteli (2007) noted that since the end of the Cold War in 1989, there has been a dramatic rise in the rate of organized crimes in the West African sub-region. These crimes include: transnational organized terrorism, drug trade, sex trade, armed conflict, and insurgency in poverty-stricken West African societies.

Studies have equally demonstrated that the degree to which citizens get vulnerable to crimes is a function of the crime prevention environment, citizens lifestyles, urban space,

criminals' ability to explore the weakness of the urban environment to their advantage as well as the presence of the police (Adisa, Ayodele, Alabi et al, 2021; Brenna-Galvin, 2002). Cheng and Chen (2021) held that "60% of urban residents in developing countries have been victims of crimes, and the rate of victimization has reached 70% in some cities in Latin America over the past five years. In Lagos, the cumulative changes in the size and structure of urban life are believed to have significantly altered the nature and types of crimes that Lagosians are exposed to in their everyday world. For instance, it has been argued that the dramatic change in the population of Lagos from 6 million in 1991, 9 million in 2006, to more than 20 million in 2022 is responsible partly for the rate of crimes in the city. As the commercial hub of the nation, Lagos plays host to virtually all the ethnic groups in Nigeria. It is also a significant attraction for many West African people who come for trade and seek permanent residence in the city. While the rise in the incidence of urbanization is expected, the rate at which new crimes such as community cultism infiltrate the city's life is really unexpected. For instance, Lagos is believed to face its security challenges due to the poor state of the Nigerian economy, high level of unemployment among the youths, globalization of crime, and the illicit drug and arms trade that makes drugs and illicit weapons available for criminals.

1. The Notoriety of Armed Robbery in Lagos after the Military

One notorious crime that dominated a post-military Lagos was armed robbery. The period not only produced armed criminal gangs, but it also paved the way for the emergence of one-chance robbery. The two crimes leaned on the chaotic situations of Lagos that were characterized by decayed urban infrastructure, bad roads, traffic congestion, poor law enforcement, and a

complacent society that was ready to report crimes due to fear of repeat victimization or the inaction of the government. For instance, in 2013, the Nigerian Police Force, through its Special Anti-Robbery Squad, led by a Police boss, Aba Kyari, was able to arrest a notorious armed robber in Lagos named Godogodo. Before his arrest, Godogodo had confessed to having taken part in many operations in Lagos that had led to the deaths of many people. In one of his confessions reported in the Vanguard of November 29, 2013, Godogodo stated that;

On that fateful day, I called one of my boys, Sayeed Omolopa, to meet me at Alfa Beach in Ajah, and some other boys, led by Kasali and Ejike. They were about seven, and my boys were five. Yemi Boss, who came with Ejike, said we should go to Agege and rob some bureau de change operators. The agreement was that everyone will get what he lays his hands on. We used AK-47 rifles. When we got to Agege, some bureau de change operators who saw us ran to us thinking we wanted to change money, and we opened fire on them and ran into their shops to pack all the money we found. In fact, we robbed from shop to shop and we also shot sporadically to scare people. We shot at people who tried to block the road and prevent us from moving (Okojie, 2013).

2. Kidnapping for Ransom and Evans Kidnapping Gangs

Before the rapacious rise in the incidence of community kidnapping for ransom was a significant problem that Lagosians had to

contend with in the 2010s, kidnapping for ransom was the criminal abduction of innocent persons by organized criminal gangs in anticipation of monetary benefits from the abduction. The crime, which originated in the Niger Delta area during the struggle for the emancipation of the rights of the people of Niger Delta, found its way into Lagos during the 2010s. In 2017, Evans made the headlines with the bursting of his alleged kidnapping criminal gang in the Festac area of Lagos (Ezeamalu, 2017).

3. Lagos in the Midst of Cult Wars and Ritual Killings

Violence allegedly perpetrated by deadly cult groups has been a recurring phenomenon in Lagos. Previously regarded as a campus phenomenon, cultism spread to different communities and schools in Lagos and eventually led to the deaths of innocent persons and those of rival cult gangs (Tade, 2023). In 2016 and 2017, the barbaric acts of the deadly cults assumed a new dimension with the emergence of Badoo Cultism in the Ikorodu area of Lagos. Badoo cult was a different cult group, more deadly than others, because it often targeted innocent persons for ‘blood rituals’ using ‘grinding stone’ and ‘blood stain’ of their victims. In 2018, the Nigerian Police succeeded in arresting their leader and eventually brought the activities of the group to a halt (Tade, 2023). Though Badoo cultism ended, attacks by Aiye, Eye, and other confraternities continued until recently, when the Lagos State Government, the Nigeria Police Force, and Community Vigilantes significantly halted the activities of the groups in the state.

THE POLICE, INTERNAL SECURITY MANAGEMENT AND THE EMERGENCE OF VIGILANTES IN LAGOS

In Nigeria, like in Britain, the UK, and the United States of America, the police are very central to the management of internal

security. Internal security is the security of the nation that focuses on the protection of lives and property within the nation. While the army or the military handles the external security of the nation, the police in Nigeria are empowered to secure the nation from internal aggressors, including criminals (Alemika, 1993; Aborishade, 2022). The police alone can not carry out this task; it is assisted by the Department of State Services, the Nigerian Civil Defence Corps, and the Nigerian Legion, but most responsibilities of prosecuting offenders of the law are conferred on the police.

Though, the Nigeria Police Force has since the return to civil rule in 1999 introduced different reforms that are aimed at strengthening the capacity of the Nigeria Police Force, research has shown that the overwhelmed problems of insecurity in different parts of Nigeria have necessitated the introduction of local security networks to complement the services of the police. First, the Nigerian police is believed to lack the required human capacity to police a population of 200 million Nigerians. As a result of a lack of the required workforce, the Nigeria Police Force is unable to police the nooks and crannies of the nation, thereby making it possible for different organized criminals to dominate the Nigerian security space. A second factor, but very germane to the discussion of the role of the police in internal security management, is the force's incremental loss of reputation over the years. The Nigerian Police is believed to have lost its reputation as a result of corruption. Corruption, extortion of citizens, and the force's penchant for the rule of law and procedural justice have, over the years, reduced public acceptance of the police (Adisa, 2021; Mbaku, 2016). Like in most West African societies, the police in Nigeria are believed to be enmeshed in predatory policing wherein a police officer leans on

the bribes they are able to extort from the citizens before they deliver their official responsibilities. Police corruption coupled with elites' manipulation of the force has incrementally reduced the efficiency of the police in combating modern crimes in Nigeria (Aborishade, 2023; Agbiboa, 2022). This is why Nigerians have sought alternatives in community policing and community-oriented policing.

COMMUNITY POLICING, ONYABO, MADANWO, AND AMOTEKUN IN LAGOS, NIGERIA

Community policing is part of the policing strategies that the Nigeria Police Force has adopted to strengthen crime prevention and criminal apprehension. The system, though, is an age-old practice; the community policing system in Nigeria is built on an American legacy—the 1972 Kansas City Experiment. The experiment was to test the extent to which the police responded to distressed calls from citizens.

Today, Nigerians have infused cultures and traditions into the community policing system in Nigeria. For instance, in Yoruba society, it is not uncommon to find vigilante groups that are either given local names or names with symbolic meanings that are capable of deterring offenders of the law. One of such names that reverberate across Southwest Nigeria is the Amotekun—a Security Network formed by all the six Southwest Governors in January 2021 in the wake of bandit attacks in the region. Before then, there had been the ethnic militia group, Oodua People's Congress (OPC), whose interest was to fight for the liberation of the Yoruba race. The Agbekoya was also in Ibadan, Osun, Ondo, and Ekiti, where the mandate was to use local knowledge to protect the interests of the Yoruba race, especially farmers.

With these socio-cultural organizations on the ground, it was not difficult for Lagosians to form their peculiar vigilante groups named "Onyabo", "Madanwo", "Digboolu" in local government areas that are battered by cultism, armed robbery, and ritual killings. Onyabo is the local name for the local security network in Ikorodu LGA of Lagos State. Onyabo, which symbolically means "it is flooding," is metaphorically designed to send a message that the number of officers outnumber them and that they shall be decisively dealt with if they commit a crime. The local security network is patterned after the community police system and neighborhood security in Lagos, where the police or the available security network in the community uses intelligence and community cooperation to identify criminals and their hideouts.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This work adopted a meta-theoretical perspective. Metatheorizing is the use of two or more theories to explain a phenomenon. In this work, the researchers adopted the Broken Windows Theory, Symbolic Interactionism, and General Deterrence Theory. The broken windows theory holds that when some windows are broken and nobody cares, more windows will be broken (Ren, Zhao & He, 2016; Welsh, Braga, Bruinsma et al, 2015). As a social control theory, the Broken Windows Theory is relevant to this work because it views the people as those who have decided to see the issue of insecurity as a collective problem, and in order to solve the problem, everyone must take part in the process. The theory believes that problem-solving policing and community policing do have greater impacts on insecurity in a developing society like Nigeria.

Insecurity in Lagos. The General Deterrence Theory believes that solutions are in deterring criminals from carrying out their

The second theory, which is Symbolic Interactionism, holds that symbols, signs, gestures, and languages carry deeper meanings in our everyday world. Such meanings can only be diagnosed correctly in the course of the lived world. The theory views cultism as a resort to tradition to solve the problem of frustration in modern society. Frustration over job losses, injustice at home, in school, and at work is believed to have led to the emergence of cultism in Nigeria. In order to solve the problem, symbolic interactionism supports seeking the proper meanings of human actions and digging out solutions within. It sees the use of traditional symbols and languages in community policing as a resort to the meanings that languages carry in typical Yoruba society. For instance, in Yoruba society, the elders often state that there is power in language. The terrestrial powers of language are often expressed in words like "Oun," "Oro," "Ase," "Gbolohun," "Ofo". Theoretically, this theory will see the use of Oyaabo, Madaawo, and Amotekun in contemporary Yoruba society as a resort to "reflective Yoruba society" for solutions.

The third theory, General Deterrence Theory, is a social control theory. The theory holds that actions, strategies, and societal reactions to crime tend to deter offenders of the law. Complicity in crime compounds the problem of crime, and therefore, society should not tolerate it. Instead, society should rise to the challenge of crime by punishing offenders and providing different forms of deterrence.

In this work, the General Deterrence Theory is amplified to explain the use of local languages, community policing, and local solutions to solving the problem of crimes by resorting to the use of spiritual powers and indigenous languages.

METHODS

This study investigated young people's interpretation of community policing in Lagos and the symbolic use of "Madanwo" and "Onyabo" in deterring criminals. Using historical and qualitative methods, the study covered five local governments: Lagos Island, Mushin, Ikorodu, Eti-Osa, and Kosofe LGAs. A total of 30 participants were sampled from 10 locations through in-depth interviews.

Study Locations¹

S/N	Local Government Area	Communities
1.	Eti-Osa	Ajah
		Obalende
2.	Mushin	Idi-Oro
		Idi-Araba
3.	Lagos Island	Isale-Eko
		Campus
4.	Ikorodu	Ikorodu Garage
		Igbogbo
5.	Kosofe	Oworoshoki
		Ketu

SAMPLE SIZE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

A total of 30 participants were purposively sampled. This comprised 20 young persons,

¹ Five Local Government Areas and 10 locations were selected based on the reported incidents of crimes and violence in these locations.

The study adopted a qualitative method of social research because it was primarily driven by interpretative social science philosophy. Interpretivism requires that people recall their deep understanding of a social phenomenon or phenomena through reflectivity and social construction of reality. Though a mixed method may still be helpful, a qualitative approach will help to unveil how the notion of "Oyaabo" was constructed.

10 community leaders, and security personnel (including members of the local security networks). Inclusion Criterion: In order to be qualified to be included in the study, you must be a young person between the ages of 18 and 30 years, and you must be a resident of any of the identified "Dark Spots" included in the study.

DATA ANALYSIS

Data was analyzed using ethnographic content analysis. This was necessitated by the urgency of writing the report of this exploratory study and the need to expand the scope to a large number that will require the use of NVIVO. For instance, the research team has now extended from two to six, with two senior Professors joining the team to carry out a more descriptive study of internal security in Lagos, Nigeria.

RESULTS

EXPERIENCES OF INSECURITY

Security of lives and property is the primary obligation of the government, but not every citizen is likely to enjoy it. In an attempt

To determine citizens' vulnerability to insecurity, the researcher asked them to share their crime and victimization experiences. One participant described the state of insecurity in the Mushin area of Lagos.

Insecurity caused by different members of cult groups in Lagos has become a nightmare for the government. Except for the recurring Area Boys phenomenon that one may say has beclouded Lagos, I think the soul of Lagos is now in the hands of different cult boys who struggle for the control of the streets (Male, 25 years, IDI, Mushin, Lagos, Sept. 2023).

Another participant in the Oworoshoki area of Lagos also made a similar remark when she stated that:

In the past, cult boys used to collect levies from us as if they had carved out Oworoshoki from other parts of Lagos. The way they do it is that, in the evening around 6-7:00 pm, they would go round the shops to collect money; those who failed to give them were often beaten mercilessly, though not in all cases. It was really sad selling goods then in this

area, but now I can leave my shops widely open for customers without fear (Female, Igbo, IDI, Oworoshoki, September 2023).

NATURE OF CRIMES EXPERIENCED AND FREQUENCY OF CRIMINAL ATTACKS

The study found that residents of Lagos are routinely faced with multiple security challenges ranging from theft of property, night robbery, thuggery, to violence orchestrated by cult groups. In Mushin, the study found that the crisis of street violence has subsided significantly compared with the past. This is also similar to the findings in the Ketu area of Lagos, where participants noted that cultism and cult-related killings have subsided due to the presence of the police. A participant who narrated his experience about crime and security had this to say;

In this community, criminal attacks used to be very common, especially before the ban on Okada riders. It was almost an everyday thing, with people reporting that their phones were stolen or robbed in the morning, afternoon, and night. However, after the restriction on Okada riders

(motorcyclists), these incidents have reduced a bit. It is no longer an everyday occurrence, but perhaps it happens once or twice in a week, unlike the past when there could be 3 or 4 cases in a single day. It is worth noting that the issue is not restricted to just one area; the motor park still experiences such cases almost every day, including phone theft and others (Male, 32 years, IDI, Yoruba, Ketu, Kosofe, Lagos, October 2023).

In Mushin, Idi-Araba, and Idi-Oro, which were equally studied in the course of the research, participants noted that cultism and cult related killings have reduced. However, some criminally minded young persons still engage in petty crimes such as theft of mobile phones, robbery, and attacks on passersby, especially at night. A participant, in the course of the study, had to warn one of the research team members to desist from entering the main community, "Adugbo". When asked to state the reason, he noted that "Those boys are ready to listen to stories like this. They believe you have come to investigate them and expose them to the government. If care is not taken, they will beat you mercilessly and throw you out of the community (Male 48 years, IDI, Mushin, Lagos, 2023).

In Ikorodu Garage and Igbogbo areas of Ikorodu, where the study was extended to, some participants held that cultism has reduced significantly compared with the past due to the presence of the OPC and Onyabo, who have helped to check the activities of the cultists. A participant related his experience in the area this way;

CAUSES OF CRIME, CULTISM, AND URBAN VIOLENCE

The study found that the causes of crimes in Lagos are primarily related to the nature of the Nigerian society. It was believed that, over the years, the successive governments have not been able to plan for the youth. Unemployment, excruciating poverty, and apparent evidence of neglect of young people are the factors that have continually driven them into crimes. For instance, in the Eti-Osa area of Lagos, some participants noted that there has been an increase in the population of people living in the area. Whereas the urban population has continued to grow, there have not been commensurate plans by the Lagos State Government to accommodate the swelling population of Lagos in the Ajah, Okere Nla, and Addo communities. This challenge has consequently led to the emergence of slum settlements in the Abraham Adesanya axis of the area and uncontrollable incidence of crimes.

However, a participant in the area noted that the Lagos State Government has, through collaborative policing, brought order to the area. He made this remark about the area.

Crime used to be a significant problem in this area in the past, particularly on the Okera Nla-Ajah Addo roads. Criminals, robbers, and those cult boys used to rely on the heavy traffic to perpetrate their crimes. There was a time when some boys entered the area through the Lagos Lagoon, robbed a popular shopping mall in this area, and carted away some property. Such a thing can no longer occur because of the presence of a local vigilante

group known as "Digboolu, The Police, OPC, DSS, NDLEA. All of these security agencies and vigilante groups now work together today in order to ensure that this place is kept free of crimes (Male, 48 years, KII, Traditional ruler, Eti-Osa, Lagos, October 2023).

POLICE INVOLVEMENT IN INTERNAL SECURITY MANAGEMENT

The study found that the police still play a significant role in internal security management in Nigeria, including Lagos. It found that the Lagos State Government has one of the most robust internal security systems in the country, with the State Government playing an active role.² In the funding of the police, the study, however, found that citizens have increasingly lost confidence in the police because of their inability to control crime and prosecute criminals effectively. The Police in Nigeria are believed to have lost public confidence because of their complacency in crime, corruption, and extortion of young people. These findings reverberated across almost all the communities studied. This is one of the remarks made by a participant in the Iketu area of Lagos.

I don't feel secure, and the police are not reliable. Saying I am secure would be a

² The Lagos State Government has Lagos Security Trust Fund through which corporate organizations contribute their own quota to the funding of the security of Lagos. It also has the Lagos State Neighbourhood Corps that helps manage community security. In Lagos State, there is Rapid Response Squad that helps the State Government curtail violent crimes and bring normalcy to communities that are vulnerable to violent crimes.

complete lie and a fallacy in my perspective. There are numerous illegal activities involving police officers. If you seek their help when you are being harassed, molested, or extorted, instead of rescuing you, you might end up being arrested. The police may claim you are a suspect, and in no time, you will find yourself in a van heading to a police station. It has reached a point where even the police are not trusted. You can't be sure of the exact truth, and sometimes, a police officer might just pull up beside you and arrest you, taking you to the station under suspicion. The outcome is often the same- you end up in a cell, and your family has to pay for your freedom, so it is clear that I don't feel safe here in Ketu (Male, 32 years, IDI, Ketu, Kosofe, Lagos, October 2023).

INTERPRETATION OF COMMUNITY POLICING AND INTERNAL SECURITY MANAGEMENT

The way young people interpret the community policing system in a state usually determines the way they support it. Giving his interpretation of community policing in Lagos, a young man of 20 years made this remark;

The origin of Onyabo is in the cult war that enveloped the Ikorodu area of Lagos in the wake of Badoo cultism. Then, Ikorodu used to be the den of cultism -each one struggled for supremacy over who would dominate killings. The situation was so pathetic

that the cult boys used to count their losses and the number of members killed. The police and the government were helpless because it was alleged that some politicians had a hand in their activities (Male, 20 years, Yoruba, IDI, Ikorodu, September 2023).

An estate secretary who witnessed the rise and fall of some of the deadly cult groups in Oworoshoki community had this to say about the origin of the Madanwo community vigilante in Oworoshoki ;

Madanwo is a code name for 'don't try it'. It was formed in the Oworoshoki area of Lagos by the Community Leaders who were keen on ending cultism in Oworoshoki. When the cult violence was at its height about two years ago, those boys used to kill at will. There was a day when a barber was killed in his shop. Someone said that the day he was killed was the second day he joined cultism, and that the rival group used him as a scapegoat. Now, everywhere is calm. Many of those boys have been flushed out of Oworo (Male, Estate Secretary, IDI, Oworoshoki, Lagos).

THE USE OF LOCAL NAMES TO CREATE VIGILANTE GROUPS AND CRIME PREVENTION

The study found that it is really not the use of the names that scares criminals and

offenders of the law, but the determination to get criminals punished for the offences. In Oworoshoki, the study found that people have come to believe in the "Madanwo Community Police" because they have helped cleanse the community of cultism and cult killing that made the community unsafe in the past.

In the Ikorodu area of Lagos, community leaders held that the use of the names provided additional impetus to what the government is capable of doing when culprits or offenders of the law are apprehended. In the Eti-Osa area of Lagos, people believe that the crime rate has drastically reduced now that community vigilantes are involved in the security of the community, compared to when members of the Nigerian Police Force were solely involved in the management of the internal security of the community.

Although code names are increasingly being accepted across Lagos, some people feared that the corruption, lack of sincerity, and public trust that incapacitated the Nigeria Police Force in combating crime may hinder the growth and sustainability of the existing community policing security networks in Lagos State.

EFFECTIVENESS OF ONYABO, MADANWO, AND AMOTEKUN IN THE SECURITY OF LAGOS AND YORUBA SOCIETY

Amotekun Southwest Security Network has remained a popular security network since January 2021, when the six Governors of the Yoruba-speaking Western states launched the security outfit in the city of Ibadan, Oyo State Capital. The idea and the philosophy behind the security network were well received at the time because the ravaging herder-farmers conflicts were threatening the Southwest region, and kidnapping allegedly perpetrated by Fulani herders and

bandits (Tade, 2023). Amotekun, which means "Leopard," is taken to be a Yoruba metaphor for strong security against ravaging herders whose presence in the region has continued to threaten the farming activities of the people of the Southwest.

This study found that, though the SouthWest Security Network "Amotekun" has taken off effectively in all the other five states of the Southwest, in Lagos, it is yet to take a similar place in neighborhood and community security. Instead, what we have witnessed in Lagos is the retention of the Lagos State Neighborhood Corps as an integral part of legal community security. Additionally, in the past few years, the State has witnessed the emergence of different local vigilante groups with Yoruba names that are designed to deter criminals and apprehend offenders of the law.

The study found that these local vigilante groups are more effective than the police because they can combat crime and bring normalcy to the community in the face of cult attacks. The research also found that, though they enjoy relative support from the police and the local government, there is no concrete legal framework supporting their establishment, a development that may affect both the future and sustainability of the vigilante groups. One of the participants interviewed expressed this feeling of satisfaction in the Ketu area of Lagos.

The active presence of Madanwo and the OPC group has had a significant influence on the rate of rival gang fights in the Ketu area of Lagos. Their efforts have been helpful in combating cultist and cult clashes in our community. While they may not have completely

eradicated these issues, they have made a substantial difference in enhancing safety in our community. They team up with the police to tackle the security challenges in the community. They discuss with the people and encourage them to report any criminal cases. They even blow whistles while they are patrolling at night, which helps keep them coordinated and shows a sense of security presence. Their night patrols have really helped to reduce the crime level in our community (Male, 28 years, Igbo, IDI, Ketu, October 2023).

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Cultism, cult killings, and urban violence have become some of the significant problems of insecurity in postcolonial Lagos. Unlike the 1980s and 1990s when Lagos battled to end the challenge of armed robbery, highway robbery, and robbing of banks, the emergence of technology and the increased use of intelligence-led policing in this West African city have reduced robbery.

Though pockets of street robberies and highway robberies still occur in Lagos, robbers are now operating in a tight environment with multiple security networks. With the disbandment of campus cultism and the rising influence of globalization, the city of Lagos has now welcomed a new crime: community cultism or community banditry.

The study found that young people's interpretation of community policing and internal security management in the last two years is that solutions to the multiple problems of crime facing Lagos are in the

tradition and the community. A good number of them held that the formation of local vigilante groups like Onyabo, Madanwo, and Digboolu.³ Has had a significant impact on reducing violent and organized crimes in Lagos, especially after the COVID-19 lockdown. This research's findings correspond with those of Adejoh & Ajayi (2020) and Adelagun & Akinlotan (2023), which established that community policing and police responsiveness are responsible for reducing crimes in Lagos.

With the use of Onyabo to curb criminality, the people interviewed in Ikorodu held that sanity is gradually returning to the ancient city. However, cult groups continue to unleash their mayhem in areas perceived to enjoy limited police presence (Omoregbe, 2022).

The research found that today, Lagos is enjoying more collaborative policing than in previous years when the police struggled to bring community policing projects to the doorsteps of citizens. It found that the change is due to the renewed efforts of the government, the Police, the DSS, the NDLEA, and other security agencies to work in unison to keep Lagos safe. A traditional ruler in the Eti-Osa East LCDA specifically stated that both the police and community police are working together to end the problem of cultism in Eti-Osa East. This finding supports British Council, 2023; Ikuteyijo, 2009; Moore (1992) emphasizes working and partnering with community members to create peace.

³ Digbolu is a local security network that is used in Eti-Osa East to curb incessant cult killings and street violence. The vigilante is similar to Onyabo and Madanwo security networks because they rely largely on local knowledge and community participation in neighborhood security.

CONCLUSION

Cult attacks and youth-related crimes have remained some of the significant incidents of crime in the city of Lagos since the return to democracy in May 1999. While the Lagos State Government and the Federal Government of Nigeria have been unrelenting in combating crimes, youth-related crimes have not significantly reduced due to a combination of several factors-some of which are dwindling economic resources, unemployment, high level of poverty, globalization, increased rate of urbanization, drug use, arms proliferation, poor policing system, police corruption and the breakdown of the family system. This study investigated young people's interpretation of community policing and internal security management in Lagos State, Nigeria. The study found that, generally, Lagos has witnessed in the last ten years a resurgence in violent crimes such as kidnapping, cultism, Area Boys phenomenon, cybercrime, and ritualism. The study, however, found that in the last two years, the Lagos State Government, the Nigeria Police Force, and the local security networks such as Onyabo, Madanwo, OPC, and street vigilantes have been able to bring the situation under control.

The study established that the main factor that prompted the formation of the local security networks, such as Onyabo and Madanwo, was the failure of the police to prevent and control cultism and violence in Lagos effectively. The people felt that the police were unable to prevent the crimes because they had lost public support in effectively managing the security of the state due to corruption, extortion of motorists, extra-judicial killings, illegal arrest of young people, and alleged culpability of some officers of the force in the cult activities in the state.

The study found that community-oriented policing has increasingly become an acceptable policing system in Lagos, Nigeria. However, there are variations in the pattern of local security networks adopted by people across the states covered by the study. To make these local security networks more effective, the research

suggests that the Lagos State Government must put in place a robust neighbourhood security law that recognizes the cultures of the people, protects human rights, and enshrines procedural justice in the prevention and control of crime in the state.

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APPENDIX I

Table showing the distribution of Participants in the IDI and KII Interviews

S/N	Sex	Age	Marital Status	Education	Ethnicity	Religion	Local Government Area	Type of Participant	Type of Interview
1.	Male	25	Married	Secondary	Yoruba	Islam	Eti-Osa	Young	IDI
2.	Female	32	Married	Secondary	Yoruba	Islam	Eti-Osa	Young	IDI
3.	Male	49	Married	B.Sc.	Yoruba	Islam	Eti-Osa	Adult	KII
4.	Male	22	Single	Secondary	Yoruba	Islam	Eti-Osa	Young	IDI
5.	Male	32	Married	Secondary	Yoruba	Islam	Ikorodu	Young	IDI
6.	Male	27	Single	HND	Yoruba	Christianity	Ikorodu	Young	IDI
7.	Female	57	Married	OND	Yoruba	Christianity	Ikorodu	Adult	IDI
8.	Male	32	Single	BSc.	Yoruba	Islam	Kosofe	Young	IDI
9.	Male	57	Married	BSc.	Yoruba	Islam	Kosofe	Adult	IDI
10.	Male	28	Single	OND	Igbo	Christianity	Kosofe	Young	IDI
11	Female	40	Married	Secondary	Igbo	Christianity	Ikorodu	Young	IDI
12	Female	57	Married	HND	Edo	Islam	Ikorodu	Adult	IDI
13.	Female	18	Single	Secondary	Yoruba	Islam	Lagos Island	Young	IDI
14.	Female	21	Single	Secondary	Igbo	Christianity	Mushin	Young	IDI
15	Male	25	Single	Secondary	Yoruba	Christianity	Mushin	Young	IDI
16	Male	45	Married	B.Sc.	Yoruba	Islam	Kosofe	Adult	KII ⁴
17.	Male	48	Married	B.Sc	Yoruba	Christian	Kosofe	Adult	KII ⁵
18.	Male	25	Single	Secondary	Igbo	Christian	Mushin	Young	IDI
19	Female	37	Married	Secondary	Igbo	Christian	Kosofe	Young	IDI
20.	Male	37	Married	Secondary	Yoruba	Islam	Lagos Island	Young	IDI
22	Male	35	Married	Secondary	Yoruba	Islam	Lagos Island	Young	IDI
23	Male	25	Single	Secondary	Yoruba	Islam	Mushin	Young	IDI

⁴ Estate Secretary in Oworoshoki

⁵ Chairman of an Estate in Oworoshoki

24	Male	27	Single	N D	Yoruba	Islam	Mushin	Young	IDI
25	Male	25	Married	Secondary	Yoruba	Islam	Mushin	Young	IDI
26	Female	33	Single	B.Sc.	Yoruba	Islam	Mushin	Young	IDI
27	Male	31	Single	HND	Yoruba	Islam	Mushin	Young	IDI
28	Male	53	Married	ND	Igbo	Christian	Eti-Osa	Police	KII
29	Male	46	Married	Secondary	Yoruba	Islam	Ikorodu	Vigilante	KII
30	Male	56	Married	Secondary	Yoruba	Islam	Ikorodu	Vigilante	KII