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ASSESSING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TRADITIONAL SECURITY INSTITUTIONS IN COMBATING YOUTH RESTIVENESS IN MINNA METROPOLIS

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Abstract

Minna, the state capital of Niger State, has experienced numerous instances of youth restiveness characterized by thuggery, theft, violence, and other social vices over the years. Although conventional security institutions have made efforts to curtail the menace of youth restiveness, these efforts have not yielded the desired results. This study assesses the effectiveness of the traditional security institutions with emphasis on the Vigilante Group of Nigeria (VGN) and the Abidoka security outfits in mitigating youth restiveness within the Minna Metropolis, Niger State. The study is grounded in John Locke's perspective of the Social Contract Theory, examining how these traditional institutions fill the contemporary security vacuum created by the operational limitations of formal state institutions. The study departed from existing literature by rejecting the monolithic treatment of traditional security, instead focusing on the operational nuances of state-sanctioned outfits in an urban context. A descriptive cross-sectional research design was adopted, utilizing a structured survey to gather primary data from respondents within the urban landscape of Minna, drawn using a multi-staged sampling technique. With the aid of the Taro Yamane formula, a total of 400 respondents were selected from a total population of 346,700 residents living in Minna. Quantitative data were analyzed using mean, standard deviation, and an Independent Samples t-test.

We found in our empirical analysis that the mean score on the effectiveness of the VGN was statistically higher than the mean score for the Abidoka security outfit. In our analysis, the result of the t-test revealed that there is a highly significant difference between the effectiveness of VGN and Abidoka security outfit, demonstrating that the VGN remain significantly effective due to its embedded cultural capital and localized conflict resolution capacity. Conversely, the Abidoka outfit excelled in operational response times but suffered from a severe deficit in community trust. The analysis of constraints identified restricted access to technology as the VGN's primary hurdle, while a deficit in professional training was found to be the foremost constraint for the Abidoka outfit. In light of the above, the study therefore concludes that while traditional security outfits are vital components of security in Minna, Niger State, their operational effectiveness is context-dependent and differentiated rather than uniform. Based on these findings, we therefore recommend that modern communication technology be integrated into the traditional security institution framework to mitigate technological constraints, while standardized capacity-building programmes should be institutionalized for the security outfits to bridge the gap between grassroots cultural legitimacy and professional field efficiency.

Keywords: Youth Restiveness, Vigilane Group of Nigeria, Abidoka, Traditional Security, Minna Metropolis.

1.1 Introduction

The global demographic landscape is increasingly dominated by young people, a unique cohort possessing qualities that can either catalyze socioeconomic growth or precipitate societal decline. Youths possess a fluid psychological perspective, making them highly susceptible to both internal and external stimuli (Usang, 2021). Consequently, they represent an essential pillar of any societal structure. As noted by Anansi (2010), a disciplined, motivated, and law-abiding youth population is the cornerstone of a nation's prosperous future; conversely, a lawless and aggressive youth demographic poses an existential threat to national peace and security. Youth restiveness, a psychological trait often manifested in antisocial behaviors and indiscipline, frequently disrupts the security architecture and undermines national economic stability.

Minna, the capital of Niger State, Nigeria, has recently emerged as a focal point for these challenges. Like many urban centers in Nigeria, Minna has witnessed a surge in violence, political thuggery, and criminal activities driven by high unemployment, limited economic opportunities, and social marginalization. These factors have driven many young people toward disruptive behaviors, ranging from civil unrest to violent confrontations with state apparatuses. The escalating incidence of this restiveness, coupled with the perceived limitations of conventional security agencies like the Nigeria Police Force in addressing the localized root causes of these conflicts, has necessitated a shift toward traditional and community-led security interventions (Akinwumi, 2009).

In the context of Niger State, the government has increasingly relied on traditional security mechanisms to bridge the gap in community policing and rapid response (Mustapha, 2019). Central to this study are two specific traditional security outfits that have become integral to the security framework in Minna: The Vigilante Group of Nigeria (VGN) and the Abidoka security outfit. The VGN operates as a grassroots-led paramilitary organization that leverages local intelligence and community familiarity to identify and neutralize security threats before they escalate. Parallel to this, the Abidoka serves as a specialized, community-sanctioned outfit often recognized for its direct intervention in street-level crimes and its role in mediating local disputes. These outfits are deeply embedded within emirate system and are empowered by the state to provide first-line responses to youth-related unrest, utilizing a blend of modern surveillance and traditional methods such as mediation, arbitration, and communal reconciliation (Ekeh, 2019).

Despite the strategic integration of the VGN and Abidoka into the state's security architecture, there remains a critical debate regarding their actual efficacy. While these mechanisms are designed to complement conventional forces by providing localized intelligence and cultural legitimacy, the phenomenon of recurring youth restiveness within the state presents an analytical point of departure for assessing existing peace-building models. It suggests that while traditional and conventional security strategies are operational, there is a vital need to empirically evaluate their implementation. This study, therefore, examines how the traditional security vis-à-vis VGN and Abidoka function in practice to understand their potential in addressing youth restiveness and foster stability in Minna, Niger State.

1.2 Research Questions

The following research questions were asked based on the above research objectives;

1. To what extent do the Vigilante Group of Nigeria (VGN) and the Abidoka security outfit differ in their perceived effectiveness in mitigating youth restiveness in Minna Metropolis?
2. What are the specific operational constraints that mitigate the effectiveness of the Vigilante Group of Nigeria (VGN) and the Abidoka security outfit in combating youth restiveness in Minna Metropolis**?**

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of the study is to assess the Effectiveness of Traditional Security Institutions in Combating Youth Restiveness in Minna Metropolis. However, the specific objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To compare the perceived effectiveness of the Vigilante Group of Nigeria (VGN) and the Abidoka security outfit in mitigating youth restiveness within Minna Metropolis.
2. To examine the differences in the operational constraints affecting the effectiveness of the Vigilante Group of Nigeria (VGN) and the Abidoka security outfit in combating youth restiveness in Minna Metropolis.

2.0 Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1 Conceptual Review

2.1.1 Youth Restiveness

Youth restiveness is conceptualized in contemporary sociological and criminological literature as a combination of multi-layered behavioral reactions, socio-economic frustrations, and collective actions characterized by disruptive behavior among young demographics (Onuoha, 2014). Within the urban context of developing nations, and specifically in Nigerian metropolitan centers, youth restiveness is rarely an isolated phenomenon; rather, it manifests as a structural reaction to institutional failures, systemic unemployment, poverty, and a lack of constructive socio-economic engagement (Egbefo, 2012). In Minna Metropolis, this restiveness has increasingly transitioned from spontaneous civil agitation into institutionalized street misconduct, localized cultism, and Thugs (Area Boys) violence (Imhonopi & Urim, 2016). This behavioral pattern poses a direct challenge to metropolitan public safety, urban commerce, and local governance, creating an urgent demand for persistent community surveillance and localized security interventions (Umar & Othman, 2017).

2.1.2 Traditional and Informal Security Outfits in Nigeria

Traditional and informal security outfits refer to community-derived, non-conventional policing structures that emerge to augment or substitute for formal law enforcement agencies, particularly where state machinery faces operational overstretch (Baker, 2008). In Nigeria, these outfits represent a decentralized tier of public safety that derives its primary legitimacy from local community acceptance, cultural proximity, and geographical familiarity (Fourchard, 2011). This study evaluates two distinct models within this architecture operating in Niger State:

The Vigilante Group of Nigeria (VGN): The VGN operates across many states in Nigeria, providing neighbourhood watch services, intelligence gathering, and supporting the police in crime prevention and control. The group has a presence in both urban and rural areas, contributing to community safety and security nationwide.

The Abidoka Security Outfit: A highly localized, state-sanctioned, and culturally rooted security initiative specific to Niger State. The Abidoka framework relies heavily on traditional authority structures, indigenous intelligence networks, and localized rapid response mechanisms designed to address municipal crimes and behavioral disruptions directly at the neighborhood level.

2.2 Empirical Review

Recent studies on the operational dynamics and effectiveness of non-conventional security architectures in Nigeria remain scanty. While the related studies in the academic domain revealed distinct thematic focus areas, yet they present critical geographical and methodological gaps that necessitate the current study. The geographic and thematic limitations of current literature are evident in baseline studies. For instance, Ajayi and Adesote (2019) conducted a historical and qualitative analysis of local vigilante structures in Southwest Nigeria, focusing on the *Oodua Peoples Congress* (OPC). Similarly, Nweke and Okorie (2022) utilized a descriptive survey design involving 384 respondents to examine the *Ebubeagu* security outfit in Southeast Nigeria. While both studies provided valuable insights by concluding that informal security outfits suffer from an operational deficiency model characterized by low technological adoption and a lack of formal human rights training their findings are geographically restricted to the socioeconomic realities of the southern region. Furthermore, their thematic focus remains bound to rural and semi-urban community defense, failing to account for the unique ethno-religious and cultural dynamics that influence the operational legitimacy of outfits like the Vigilante Group of Nigeria (VGN) and the Abidoka in North-Central Nigeria, specifically within Minna Metropolis.

This rural-centric bias is further compounded by the work of Ogundele and Omoren (2018) and Kolawole (2020). Ogundele and Omoren (2018) employed a qualitative case study approach across selected agrarian communities in Benue and Nasarawa States to investigate informal policing during communal conflicts. Their findings revealed that while traditional mechanisms are effective for localized, low-level rural arbitration, they falter against heavily armed, organized criminal groups. Kolawole (2020) reinforced this finding through a mixed-methods study of local hunters (Yan Sa Kai) in rural domains of the core North-West, highlighting their success in tracking kidnappers due to spatial familiarity.

However, these studies suffer from profound thematic generalization by treating traditional security as a monolithic entity designed primarily to counter agrarian threats like farmer-herder crises. They fail to examine how state-sanctioned traditional security structures operate within a highly dense, urbanized environment to manage non-agrarian, socio-behavioral crises such as urban youth restiveness, *Thugs* (Area Boys) violence, and localized cultism in an urban center like Minna.

Regarding the operational hurdles faced by these groups, Chukwuma (2020) executed a cross-sectional survey evaluating the administrative challenges of community vigilantes across three geopolitical zones. The study's key findings identified systemic political interference and extreme resource scarcity as universal impediments to informal policing

efficiency. Correspondingly, Adebayo (2021) utilized key informant interviews (KIIs) with formal security personnel to argue that institutional friction between the Nigerian Police Force and local vigilantes stems from a lack of clear legal frameworks.

While these authors successfully identified these macro-level hurdles, their discussions remain generalized. They fail to present empirical evidence on how a localized, state-recognized traditional outfit specifically the unique *Abidoka* framework in Niger State navigates these constraints in real-time while balancing accountability to both formal state actors and informal community leaders.

2.3 Social Contract Theory

This study is anchored primarily on the Social Contract Theory, specifically adopting the perspective propounded by John Locke (1689). Locke's interpretation of the social contract posits that political society is formed when individuals conditionally delegate a portion of their natural rights to a central authority. Crucially, this delegation is not absolute; it is a reciprocal agreement where the primary obligation of the state is to guarantee the protection of lives, liberties, and property. According to Locke, if the sovereign fails to provide this fundamental security, the state forfeits its moral authority, and the citizens retain the inherent right to devise alternative mechanisms for self-preservation and social order.

The relevance of Locke's perspective to this study lies in its capacity to explain the institutional realities of localized security in Nigeria. In the Nigerian context, and specifically within the Minna Metropolis of Niger State, the state's inability to decisively curb youth restiveness represents a partial breach of the formal social contract, creating a distinct "security vacuum." Locke's theory provides the theoretical justification for the emergence and state-recognition of informal and traditional security structures like the Vigilante Group of Nigeria (VGN) and the Abidoka security outfit. Rather than representing an anarchist collapse of order, the operations of VGN and Abidoka signify a localized, grassroots renegotiation of the social contract. Communities, recognizing the limitations of the formal state security apparatus, conditionally delegate local policing legitimacy to these traditional outfits to restore the public safety that the conventional state has struggled to deliver.

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive cross-sectional research design. This design is uniquely justified for this study because it face-validates the gathering of primary data from a diverse cross-section of residents at a single point in time, allowing for the simultaneous description of patterns, community perceptions, and the prevalence of youth restiveness across Minna Metropolis. Because this study does not manipulate variables over an extended temporal window but rather seeks to capture an accurate, real-time diagnostic snapshot of how the community perceives the relative effectiveness of the Vigilante Group of Nigeria (VGN) and the Abidoka security outfit, a cross-sectional approach is both methodologically efficient and logistically appropriate.

3.2 Study Population

The target population for this study comprised the adult residents of Minna Metropolis, which spans Chanchaga Local Government Area (LGA) and parts of Bosso LGA in Niger State. According to the National Population Commission (NPC, 2006) census projections

extrapolated for local administrative planning, the estimated population of the metropolitan area stands at approximately 346,700 (National Population Commission, 2023). This urban population provides an ideal baseline for the study due to its high density and the documented occurrences of localized youth restiveness and *Thugs* (Yan Daba) activities within the state capital.

3.3 Sample Size Determination and Sampling Technique

To determine a statistically representative sample size from the total population of 346,700, Yamane's (1967) formula for finite populations was utilized. This mathematical framework is strictly justified because it calculates the minimum required sample size necessary to yield a specified level of precision when the total population parameter is known. The formula is expressed as:

$n = \frac{N}{1+N(x)^2}$ …….equation 1

Where: n = Sample size, N = Population size and x = precision level of 0.05 given the population size.

$n = \frac{346,700}{1+346,700(0.05)^2}$ ..... equation 2

$n = \frac{346,700}{1+346,700(0.0025)}$ ..... equation 3

$n = \frac{346,700}{1+866.75}$ .....equation 4

n = 399.54. Applying this formula yields an ideal sample size of approximately 400 respondents.

To select the 400 respondents, a multi-stage probability sampling approach was utilized to minimize selection bias. Initially, the study area was stratified and clustered into two clusters across Chanchaga and Bosso Local Government Areas, including Bosso, Maitumbi, Anguwar Daji, Limawa, Tunga, the Central Market, New Market, Sabon Gari, Kpakungu, Dutsek Kura, Tayi, Sauka Kahuta Fadukpe and Chanchaga Areas respectively. The final stage employed the random sampling approach. This approach ensures that every eligible household within the selected clusters has an equal chance of being studied, thereby enhancing the validity and generalizability of the findings to the entire study area.

3.4 Instrument for Data Collection

The primary data collection instrument was a structured, researcher-designed questionnaire titled "Assessing the Effectiveness of Traditional Security Institutions in Combating Youth Restiveness *Questionnaire (AETSICYRQ).*" The instrument was structured into distinct sections using a 4-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (4) to Strongly Disagree (1).

3.5 Validity and Reliability

To establish the psychometric properties of the researcher-designed Assessing the Effectiveness of Traditional Security Institutions in Combating Youth Restiveness *Questionnaire (AETSICYRQ),* the instrument was subjected to validity and reliability protocols. Face and content validity were determined by submitting the initial draft to 2 research experts from the Department of Political Science, Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida

University, Lapai, Niger State who evaluated the items to ensure they accurately operationalized the core variables and refined the phrasing to align with localized security vocabulary. Following these structural adjustments, the internal consistency and reliability of the instrument were evaluated via a pilot study administered to 40 respondents in a comparable suburban community outside the primary sampling frame. The resulting field data were subjected to a Cronbach's Alpha (α) analysis via statistical software, which yielded robust coefficients of 0.82 for the effectiveness subscale and 0.79 for the operational constraints subscale; because both values comfortably surpassed the standard academic reliability threshold of 0.70, the research instrument was deemed highly stable and psychometrically sound for final field deployment.

3.6 Method of Data Analysis

The quantitative data generated from the fieldwork were cleaned, coded, and analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics via statistical software. Descriptive statistics, specifically the mean and standard deviation, were utilized to analyze and interpret the baseline responses of the respondents regarding the individual performance metrics and constraints of the security outfits. For the four-point Likert scale, the theoretical cutoff mean was set at 2.50, where items with a mean score equal to or greater than 2.50 indicated positive agreement, and scores below 2.50 indicated disagreement. The standard deviation served as the metric of dispersion to evaluate respondent consensus; adhering to established methodological conventions for four-point ordinal scales, a standard deviation of less than 1.00 signified a high level of consensus and tight clustering around the mean, while a standard deviation equal to or greater than 1.00 indicated wider data dispersion and a lower level of agreement among the sampled residents. Accordingly, inferential statistics specifically the t-test was employed to determine whether or not the effectiveness of Vigilante Group of Nigeria and Abidoka Security Outfits differs in combating youth restiveness in Minna Metropolis. This parametric test is mathematically justified because the study compares the mean scores of a continuous variable across two distinct, independent categorical groups (VGN vs. Abidoka). The statistical significance of the difference was evaluated at a 95 percent confidence level (= less than or equal to 0.05). A calculated P-value less than 0.05 ($p < 0.05$) was used as determine whether or not the security outfits significantly differs in their effectiveness to mitigating youth restiveness within Minna Metropolis.

4.1 Result and Discussion

Research Question One: To what extent do the Vigilante Group of Nigeria (VGN) and the Abidoka security outfit differ in their perceived effectiveness in mitigating youth restiveness in Minna Metropolis?

Table 4.1 Effectiveness of traditional security institutions in combating youth restiveness

S/No	Items: Effectiveness of traditional security outfit in combating youth restiveness	VGN Mean	VGN STD	Abidoka Mean	Abidoka STD
1	The outfit is effective in resolving conflicts in my community	3.34	0.77	1.41	0.55
2	The outfit fosters community cohesion and local trust among the people	2.57	0.91	1.33	0.60
3	The outfit works effectively in synergy with Nigerian Police Force and other conventional securities	3.01	0.79	2.81	0.81

4	The outfit is proactive in identifying early warning signs and preventing threats before they escalate.	2.46	0.66	2.29	0.73
5	The outfit demonstrates a quick response time when security incident is reported	2.46	0.62	3.01	0.71
6	The outfit is resourceful in its security operations	2.51	0.68	2.26	0.67
7	The outfit effectively leverage indigenous knowledge and traditional practices to handle youth restiveness	3.68	1.02	2.81	0.81

Source: Authors' Field Survey (2026)

The study examined the extent to which VGN and Abidoka security outfits differ in their perceived effectiveness in mitigating youth restiveness in Minna Metropolis. The mean scores for each item reflect respondents' varying levels of agreement on how well each outfit performs in tackling youth unrest. For VGN, the highest mean score was recorded for the items 7 (leveraging indigenous knowledge and traditional practices), item 1 (conflict resolution) and item 3 (working in synergy with the Nigerian Police Force and other conventional security structures) with mean scores 3.68, 3.34 and 3.01 respectively. Other items such as item 2, 4 and 5 have a mean score rating of 2.57, 2.46 and 2.46 respectively. From the result, the value of the standard deviation of the items for the VGN security outfit ranges from 1.02 to 0.62 indicating that the responses of the respondents are cluster to each other since the value of the standard deviation is less than 1.9. however, for the Abidoka security outfits, the highest mean score was reported in items 5 (quick response time when incidents are reported), item 5 (working in synergy with the Nigerian Police Force and other conventional security structures) and item 7 (leveraging indigenous knowledge and traditional practices) with mean score 3.01, 2.81 and 2.81 respectively. However, respondents expressed low agreement to item 1 (conflict resolution), 2 (community cohesion), 4 (proactiveness in identifying early signs) and 6 (resourceful in security operation) with their mean score 1.41, 1.33, 2.29 and 2.26 respectively. The standard deviation value of the all each of the item is less than the 1.90 threshold thus, indicating that the responses of the respondents is not farther away from each other.

Research Question Two: What are the specific operational constraints that mitigate the effectiveness of the Vigilante Group of Nigeria (VGN) and the Abidoka security outfit in combating youth restiveness in Minna Metropolis?

Table 4.2 Specific operational constraints of traditional security institution

S/No	Items: Specific operational constraints of traditional security outfit in combating youth restiveness	VGN Mean	VGN STD	Abidoka Mean	Abidoka STD
1	Budgetary constraints and limited financial resources	2.91	0.79	1.81	0.82
2	Restricted access to modern technology	3.27	0.82	2.16	0.72
3	Insufficient manpower and personnel density relative to the community population	2.28	0.91	1.20	0.61
4	Deficit in professional training and institutional capacity building	3.14	0.76	3.34	0.82
5	Gender disparities within the outfits hindering comprehensive surveillance	3.09	0.84	2.45	0.78
6	Operational interference from external agencies	2.78	0.68	2.48	0.91
7	Logistical constraint and geographical isolation	3.12	0.71	1.97	0.61

affecting response time

Source: Authors' Field Survey (2026)

The most significant constraint for VGN security outfit was item 2 (restricted access to modern technology) with a mean of 3.27. Closely followed was item 4 (deficit in professional training and institutional capacity building) with a mean of 3.14, and item 5 (gender disparities hindering comprehensive surveillance) with a mean of 3.09. These findings suggest that respondents perceive VGN's effectiveness to be greatly challenged by limited access to modern security technology, inadequate professional training and institutional capacity, and gender-related limitations that may affect full surveillance coverage. Also, other constraints recorded moderate mean scores for VGN, including item 6 (operational interference from external agencies) with a mean of 2.78 and item 1 (budgetary constraints and limited financial resources) with a mean of 2.91. Meanwhile, item 3 (insufficient manpower and personnel density relative to the community population) had a relatively lower mean score of 2.28, implying that respondents considered manpower density as less severe compared to technology access, training deficits, and gender-related surveillance challenges. The standard deviation values for VGN ranged between 0.68 and 0.91, indicating that respondents' opinions on the constraints were closely grouped and relatively stable. This suggests a high level of agreement among respondents regarding the constraints affecting VGN.

For Abidoka, the highest mean score was observed on item 4 (deficit in professional training and institutional capacity building) with a mean of 3.34, indicating that respondents view training and capacity-building deficits as the most critical factor limiting Abidoka's effectiveness. The next highest mean score was on item 1 (budgetary constraints and limited financial resources) with a mean of 1.81; however, the standout comparison within Abidoka's table is that item 4 (3.34) and item 2 (2.16) reflect stronger perceived impacts, while several other constraints were rated comparatively lower. In particular, respondents expressed relatively low agreement on item 3 (insufficient manpower and personnel density relative to the community population) with a mean of 1.20, and also rated item 1 (budgetary constraints) and item 7 (logistical constraint and geographical isolation affecting response time) with mean scores of 1.81 and 1.97 respectively. Constraints such as item 5 (gender disparities) (mean = 2.45) and item 6 (operational interference) (mean = 2.48) were perceived to have moderate influence, though still below the highest-rated item (training and institutional capacity). The standard deviation values for Abidoka's items were all below the 1.90 threshold, indicating that respondents' responses were generally consistent and not widely spread. This suggests that the constraints identified as affecting Abidoka were perceived in a fairly uniform manner by respondents.

Table 4.3 Analysis of Independent T-test

Security Outfit	N	Mean (X)	Std. Deviation	t-value	df	p-value (2-tailed)
VGN	382	2.81	0.51	-4.82	762	.001
Abidoka	382	2.64	0.48			

Source: Authors' computation from SPSS

The empirical results presented in Table 4.3 reveal that the mean effectiveness score for the Vigilante Group of Nigeria (X = 2.81, SD = 0.51) is higher than the mean score for the Abidoka Security Outfit (X = 2.64, SD = 0.48). Evaluate whether this observed mean

difference of 0.17 was statistically meaningful or simply a result of sampling error, the data were subjected to an Independent Samples t-test. The analysis revealed a highly significant test statistic: $t(762) = -4.82$, $p = 0.001$, indicating that the p-value is less than the conventional level of significance threshold of 0.05, this means that there is a statistically significant difference in how the public perceives the effectiveness of these two outfits in combating youth restiveness in Minna Metropolis. Specifically, the residents perceive the VGN as significantly more effective than the Abidoka security outfit. Furthermore, the standard deviations for both groups are tight all less than 1, indicating a high level of consensus among the 382 respondents regarding the superior operational performance and grassroots impact of the VGN relative to Abidoka within the metropolitan area.

4.2 Discussion of Findings

The empirical findings regarding the effectiveness of the Vigilante Group of Nigeria (VGN) and the Abidoka security outfit within the informal security architecture of Minna Metropolis lend strong empirical support to the central assumptions of John Locke's (1689) perspective of the Social Contract Theory. While classical theorists like Thomas Hobbes argued that individuals absolute and irreversibly surrender their rights to a sovereign to escape a chaotic state of nature, Locke posited a conditional social contract. Under Locke's framework, political authority is a fiduciary trust; if the formal state struggles to decisively secure its citizens, it creates what contemporary security literature defines as a "security vacuum" an operational and spatial governance deficit where formal policing machinery is functionally absent or overstretched. The findings indicate that when this contract is fractured at the grassroots level, citizens do not lapse into absolute disorder, but rather rely on localized, non-conventional mechanisms to preserve community safety.

The descriptive results demonstrate that the VGN partially mitigates this security vacuum by drawing heavily on what can be termed "sociological legitimacy." This is strongly corroborated by high mean scores for the VGN in leveraging indigenous knowledge ($X = 3.68$) and local conflict resolution ($X = 3.34$). These results suggest that the VGN functions as a localized negotiator of the social contract, utilizing cultural proximity and shared identity to restore public order. Conversely, Abidoka's significantly lower scores in conflict resolution ($X = 1.41$) and community trust ($X = 1.33$) suggest that while they possess top-down state sanctioning, they have yet to fully secure the horizontal "popular consent" that Locke identifies as a prerequisite for institutional legitimacy.

When evaluated against existing empirical literature, these results qualify the "deficiency model" advanced by Nweke and Okorie (2022), who argued that informal security outfits are structurally ineffective due to a lack of formal training. The result from this study reveals a more complex reality: while Abidoka exhibits superior technical responsiveness, outperforming the VGN in operational response times ($X = 3.01$ vs 2.46), they lack the localized community cohesion required for long-term mitigation of youth restiveness. This finding aligns with the propositions of Ogundele and Omoren (2018), confirming that the success of non-conventional security structures in managing localized urban crimes depends far more on their embedded "cultural capital" and community integration than on raw technical or paramilitary speed.

The empirical analysis of operational constraints further illustrates how these institutional deficits impact local security governance. For the VGN, the most statistically prominent hurdle is restricted access to modern technology ($X = 3.27$), which is consistent with the

findings of Ajayi and Adesote (2019) regarding the widening technological asymmetry between informal community policing and sophisticated urban crime patterns. For the Abidoka outfit, the primary constraint is a deficit in professional training (X = 3.34). This severe training deficit provides an empirical explanation for their low community trust scores; without institutional capacity building in civil engagement, their field interventions risk being perceived by metropolitan youth as coercive rather than protective, thereby undermining their local legitimacy.

Additionally, the moderate to high synergy scores recorded between these outfits and the Nigerian Police Force (VGN = 3.01; Abidoka = 2.81) introduce a significant conceptual nuance that this study labels a "hybrid social contract." This concept refers to an unwritten operational framework where informal, community-derived security actors do not act as autonomous competitors to the sovereign, but rather function as intermediate, state-aligned extensions that bridge the gap between formal legal structures and grassroots cultural expectations. This empirical observation qualifies the universal assertions of Chukwuma (2020), who argued that institutional friction and operational interference are inevitable hurdles in informal policing. Instead, the findings suggest that localized collaborative frameworks such as the domesticated security arrangements has potential to foster functional institutional synergy, demonstrating that context-specific partnerships can refine and complement formal policing outcomes rather than directly contradicting them.

Furthermore, the analysis of the t-test presented in Table 4.3 revealed a highly significant test statistic, with a p = 0.001 less than the 0.05 threshold of the conventional 0.05, hence, the study found that there is a statistically significant difference in how the effectiveness of these two outfits in combating youth restiveness in Minna Metropolis are perceived by the public.

5.0 Conclusion

The study concludes that the emergence and operationalization of the Vigilante Group of Nigeria (VGN) and the Abidoka security outfit in Minna Metropolis represent a localized, functional modification of the social contract. As the formal state apparatus faces operational overstretch in managing urban youth restiveness, these informal structures have stepped in to mitigate the resulting security vacuum, albeit with differing operational specializations and degrees of public acceptance.

The empirical findings demonstrate that effectiveness within a complex urban security landscape is multi-dimensional rather than monolithic. On one hand, the VGN operates with high sociological legitimacy, drawing on deeper public integration as evidenced by its statistically superior mean effectiveness score (X = 2.81, SD = 0.51) and its strong capacity to leverage indigenous intelligence. On the other hand, the Abidoka outfit functions with an emphasis on tactical mobilization, maintaining a lower but statistically relevant mean effectiveness score X} = 2.64, SD = 0.48). This difference indicates that while the VGN relies heavily on community-anchored mediation and cultural capital to maintain order, Abidoka's operational profile is driven primarily by visible, state-sanctioned rapid deployment, despite its documented deficits in community trust and localized conflict resolution.

5.1 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Since restricted access to modern technology was statistically identified as a primary constraint for the Vigilante Group of Nigeria (VGN), targeted public-private partnerships and state-level interventions should be directed toward equipping the outfit with basic communication gadgets, localized radio networks, and surveillance equipment. This will enable personnel to transition from manual monitoring to more proactive, real-time threat detection within the metropolis.
2. To address the severe professional training deficits and low community trust scores recorded for the Abidoka security outfit, the state government should institutionalize mandatory capacity-building modules focusing on human rights, community relations, and civil conflict mediation. Enhancing these professional skills is critical to improving their grassroots legitimacy and reducing reliance on coercive deterrence.
3. The state government should establish an explicit legal framework that clearly defines the operational boundaries, statutory roles, and regularized funding mechanisms for informal security outfits within the state's safety architecture. Providing stable budgetary allocations will mitigate the financial and logistical constraints highlighted in the findings, reducing operational vulnerability and improving personnel retention.
4. In alignment with the empirical identification of institutional and demographic gaps in localized monitoring, both security outfits should intentionally integrate and deploy female operatives. Expanding the inclusion of female personnel is essential for enhancing intelligence collection within domestic and gender-segregated spaces that are often inaccessible to male-dominated patrols.
5. Given the high collaborative synergy scores recorded between the informal outfits and the Nigerian Police Force, local security policies should focus on institutionalizing these collaborative workflows. This should involve setting up regularized inter-agency communication protocols to ensure that informal intelligence is systematically channeled to formal commands, thereby sustaining public safety through a coordinated plural policing model.

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