

Analysis of Online Newspaper Readers' Comments on *Amotekun*'s Formation

GUANAHA, Jammy Seigha, PhD
Department of Mass Communication
University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria

Abstract

The issue of insecurity in Nigeria has arisen to an alarming level that hardly any day passes without the media reporting cases of security breaches. Lives and property are not safe due to the activities of armed robbers, bandits, assassins, terrorists, kidnappers and insurgents. The various security agencies in the country tend to be overwhelmed with the security situation to the extent that individuals and groups are now reverting to self-help measures. This has brought about the formation of the Western Nigeria Security Network (WNSN), codenamed Operation *Amotekun* (Leopard) by the states in the South-West region of Nigeria. Mixed reactions greeted its formation. This paper, therefore, analysed the comments made by commenters in reaction to the formation of *Amotekun* based on reports about it in the online versions of *The Nation*, *The Sun* and *Daily Trust* newspapers. The research was guided by the Classical Rhetoric Theory. The Content Analysis research method was used for this study. The findings showed that the comments which bordered on security, *Amotekun* formation and other issues bothering the minds of Nigerians were in support of the formation of *Amotekun* (70.08%). It was recommended that the federal government should do more in ensuring the security of citizens' lives and property as well as allow states and regions to form their security outfits which must be properly regulated and monitored. Also, newspapers should desist from publishing reports that can jeopardise the security of citizens and the nation.

Keywords: *Amotekun*, Commenters, Insecurity, Online Newspapers, Self-Help, Security

Introduction

The fact that security has become a major issue of discourse in the Nigerian space is glaring. Insecurity is high in most parts of the country and this is a source of worry to many who want to live secured. The security issues bedeviling Nigeria include terrorism, kidnappings, armed robberies, assassinations, extra-judicial killings, herder/farmer clashes, cattle rustlings, rivalry cult clashes and activities, inter-security fights, abduction, insurgency, human trafficking, banditry and other organised crimes. SBM Intelligence in its 2020 report notes that "insecurity is increasingly becoming a profitable venture for its merchants which looks set to rival the illegal arms running businesses" (Daniel, 2020, p. 3). Exclusive report by *Vanguard* newspaper, as cited by Ndujihe (2020) shows that, from reported cases, no fewer than 1,525 people were lost

to insecurity in the first two weeks of 2021. The figure shows that every day Nigeria loses 34 persons to insecurity and if the trend remained the country may lose 12,370 persons by the end of 2021. According to new data published by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, Nigeria's military expenditure has risen to over 29 per cent. Nigeria's Federal Government has reportedly spent N198.84bn on the fight against terrorism in the country since 2019 (Adepegba, 2021).

It is the fundamental responsibility of government to protect the lives and properties of the citizens. Section 14 sub section 2 of Nigerian constitution states that "the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government..." (Nigeria 1999 Constitution, 2008). It is on the strength of this constitutional provision that civil activist lawyer, Femi Falana, called on Nigerians who pay ransom to secure freedom for their abducted loved ones to feel free to approach the courts to compel the federal government to refund same because the responsibility for protecting lives and properties lies squarely with the government (*PM News*, 2020). Meanwhile, a report by SBM Intelligence shows that between 2011 and April 2020, Nigerians lost at least \$18.34 million to kidnapers as payments made for ransom (Daniel, 2020). Therefore, one cannot agree less with the two some of Thomas Hobbes and John Locke, who although, often argued in opposite directions on the issue of absolute kingship (Indiana University Northwest, 2002), yet, as a matter of universal principle, agreed that the primary responsibility of government all over the world is to protect, provide and promote the welfare of her citizens. A government that fails in this responsibility is always categorised as irresponsible and inconsequential.

Due to the palpable and worsening security situation in Nigeria, self-help security measures are being put in place, and this made the Lagos, Ondo, Oyo, Ogun, Osun and Ekiti State governments to jointly form the *Amotekun* security outfit, to compliment the efforts of the conventional security apparatuses. Ebonyi has 'Neighbourhood Watch,' Kwara State has 'Operation Harmony,' Kano State has 'Hisbah,' Borno State has 'Civilian Joint Task Force (JTF),' Igbo National Congress (INC) launched 'Operation Lion Walk' (Ebubeagu), Cross River State has "Operation Akpakwu," Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) has "Eastern Security Network," Miyetti Allah KautalHore has "Miyetti Allah Vigilante nationwide." Despite these self-help measures from the states, there is still very strong clamour for the creation of regional/state security/ policing outfits. Benue State Governor, Samuel Ortom, also hinted that his State was planning a security outfit similar to *Amotekun* to combat security challenges confronting the state while the South-South Governors' Forum has agreed that there was a need for a regional security outfit to combat crime in the region (Ahon, 2020).

Jackson Lekan Ojo, a security expert and a certified golden member of the International Security Association, Switzerland, declares that "*Amotekun* is a function of a loss of confidence in the security apparatus of the state and when the public lose confidence in the state, they will resort to self-help" (*Vanguard*, 2020b, p.2). The official formation of *Amotekun* on 9 January 2020, generated divergent reactions across the country and beyond. Commenters categorised as individuals, groups and sections of the country applauded and kicked against the formation; thus, providing a leeway for this study.

Individuals, governments and media owners do benefit from comments made in the comments` sections of various news items due to the divers and unreported views expressed by informed members of the audience. Such platforms and the comments they generate also provide a form of feedback on the issues covered and serve as new stories and depths to be explored (World Editors Forum, as cited in Oyedele & Agberu, 2018). Hence, this paper took a critical look at, and analysed the comments of readers in the online editions of *The Sun*, *The Nation* and *Daily Trust* newspapers. After the formation of *Amotekun*, the first regional body set up in the country in response to the damning security situation in the region. These three newspapers were selected because of their national outlook and their availability and accessibility online, also, according to Nwabueze (2020), they are among the first ten of the top 50 Nigeria newspapers accessed online. Moreover, *Amotekun* is a regional outfit; therefore, there was the need to pick *The Nation* newspaper that circulates around the region and other parts of the country.

Statement of the Problem

Recently, a former Defence Minister, General Theophilus Danjuma (rtd.) told Nigerians that, "you must rise to protect yourselves from these people, if you depend on the armed forces to protect you, you will all die.... You must be watchful to guide and protect yourselves because you have no any other place to go; I ask all of you to be on the alert and defend your country, defend your State" (Mkom, 2018, p. 2). This call for self-defence clearly portrays the worsening state of insecurity in the land.

The new media (online newspapers inclusive) have brought a variety to the security discourse because they enable citizens to air their views about the situation. Commenters used the platform created by online newspapers to express their opinion on the state of insecurity. Sometimes these comments are fraught with solutions, and at other times, they are the percussor of further security concerns as the comments raised are likely to fuel another round of security concerns. In essence, these comments have character, identity, tone, functionality and dysfunction. It is on the bases of this, therefore, that this study analyse these comments made by commenters of the online newspapers as it pertains to the formation of *Amotekun* as a self-help security organisation.

Objectives of the Study

The study sought to:

1. Determine the character/identity of the comments made by commenters on the formation of the *Amotekun* as a self-help mechanism.
2. Evaluate the slant/tone used by the commenters under stories on the formation of *Amotekun* as a self-help mechanism.
3. Determine the length of the comments made on the *Amotekun* formation by commenters as a self-help mechanism.

Theoretical Base

The study is anchored on rhetorical theory, which is primarily concerned with the examination of various forms of discourses, of which there are many, depending on the

definition of "rhetoric." This study was guided by the Classical Rhetoric Theory. The theory can be traced back to Ancient Greek philosophers like Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, who recognised early on that spoken and written texts might influence and convince listeners and readers in distinct ways. The goal, according to Pettersson (2021), was to learn how language works and how to use it effectively for discussion and persuasion. According to Communication Theory (2012), all types of language usage have some element of persuasion. The classical rhetorical theory, on the other hand, lacks the universality of other theories, owing to the fact that it was only recently identified as a theory that has existed since mankind first began to talk. The speaker, the speech and the listener are the three factors that Aristotle defined as necessary for effective communication. He recognised that the speaker may effect change in the listener by his or her words. This is how the first communication theory came to be. Persuasion is a component of all effective language usage.

According to Communication Theory (2012), rhetorical education primarily focuses on the following five canons: *Inventio* (Invention), *Dispositio* (Arrangement), *Elocutio* (Style), *Memoria* (Memory) and *Actio* (Action) (Delivery). It was critical in Ancient Greece to be able to persuade others via speech. They followed a democratic system, and in a democracy, it is critical to have good communication skills since we must communicate and impress others in order to obtain our rights. As a result, Hellspong (1992) asserts that the ability to talk well was the most important political talent. The history of classical rhetoric theory is as old as the history of any language in the world today. Classic rhetoric theory is reflected throughout the history of rhetoric. Rhetoric is meaningless without a grasp of classical rhetoric theory, and in order to comprehend classical rhetoric theory, we must first understand rhetoric, as the two are almost identical. The theory is suitable here because the purpose of rhetoric is to investigate the techniques writers or speakers employ in their communication in certain settings and this study looked at what, where and how readers commented, as well as who made the comments.

Conceptualisation and Fundamentality of Security

Security is perceived in different ways by different people. Buzan (1991) refers to security as an 'underdeveloped concept' which needs habilitation because "it has never been in proper working order" (pp. 2-3).

However, Akinterinwa (2013) and Imobighe (2013) identify the two main types of security that exist as the classical (State) security and the human security (New thinking). The former is associated with huge military build-up and the state of preparedness and determination to protect national sovereignty as well as territorial integrity of the nation (Akinfenwa, 2013). This is what Golwa (2013) refers to as national security that has the "aggregate of the security of all individuals, communities, ethnic groups, political entities and institutions which inhabit the territory of Nigeria" (p.108). Classical security has to do with dealing with military threats to security through various forms of military responses to the management of such threats (Imobighe, 2013). The latter (human security) addresses all human vulnerabilities and impact positively on the general well-being of all the people. To Imobighe (2013), security means "the elimination of threats to all the human inhabitants in the state, their ecosystems, their socio-cultural values, as well as their political and economic

structures” (p.74). It means the presence of a conducive environment for individuals’ collective self-improvement and self-actualisation.

Therefore, it is pertinent to note that this work focuses more on human security, while not excluding the fact that every effort at undermining or enhancing human security usually have a corresponding influence on national security. Human security is concerned with living a peaceful life that is relatively free from any form of threat or endangerment to one’s life and possessions. It is the very essence of being shielded and protected from any form of harm like armed robbery attacks, terrorism, banditry, hunger (food security) and so on. Though individuals have their roles to play in security matters, but the bulk of security responsibility rests on the shoulders of the government in place in any society. Citizens trust the government with their security because it is in control of the different security agencies. They trust and believe that no evil shall befall them no matter the ravaging activities of perpetrators of insecurity. Government is supposed to ward-off all forms of intruders all around the clock and bring them to book when caught. However, the prevailing circumstances are contrary to these expectations. The hope of the people on government is being dashed. Government tends to have failed in this responsibility; hence, people are up with various self-help activities to protect their lives and property.

Lamenting the increasing rate of insecurity in Nigeria, Ikechukwu Amaechi whose 79-year-old mother was abducted by three gunmen right inside her living room in his village, and had to pay ransom to secure her freedom, feels that Nigeria is a failed, not failing state. Amaechi (2020) presumes that those who are living in denial over the level of insecurity by claiming that Nigeria is the safest place to live on earth simply because they are in government today and have security agents at their beck and call should remember that there is always a day after. The Jama’atu Nasril Islam, JNI, led by the Sultan of Sokoto, Muhammed Sa’ad Abubakar 111, has, therefore, told the Federal Government that Nigerians have a right to express their feelings over the spate of killings in the country, especially in the north (Deji, 2020).

Causes of Insecurity in Nigeria

The upsurge in insecurity in Nigeria can be attributed to many reasons- the chief being the high rate of unemployment in the country. This may be due to government’s inability to create the enabling environment for job creation and the teeming jobless youth around. In societies like Nigeria where the government is the highest employers of labour, there are likely to be endemic challenges like corruption, nepotism, lack of productivity and the likes. It is a poor economic policy. These can trigger insecurity.

People get frustrated and take to arms when they see those who endanger other peoples’ lives left off the hook even when caught in the act of security breach. The case is even worse when those who are known to commit atrocities are walking around freely (Pulse Nigeria, 2017). A case is that of the silence and inaction against marauding killer Fulani herdsmen who go about with AK47 guns wreaking havoc around Nigeria (*Vanguard*, 2017; Opera News 2020), and the rehabilitation of ‘repentant’ Boko Haram members. These set of people are bound to commit more crime since they feel they can get away with their criminal acts. Governor of Kaduna State, Mallam Nasir Ahmad el-Rufai, has reiterated his resolve not to dialogue or negotiate with bandits as he has zero-

tolerance for banditry and would instead grant them passage to their maker (Sobechei, 2020). Again, on another occasion, El-Rufai declared that "...we don't negotiate with bandits, we kill them, so either they stop banditry or be ready to die" (Benjamin, 2020).

According to Ikhide (2020), a bill meant to cater for "repentant terrorists," which is officially known as 'A Bill for the Establishment of the National Agency for the Education, Rehabilitation, De-radicalisation, and Integration of Repentant Insurgents in Nigeria and for Other Connected Purposes', has passed the first reading in the Senate. He said the bill posits its funding will come from the Universal Basic Education Commission, the Tertiary Education Trust Fund and donations, grants, annual subventions from the government and counterpart funding from the six North-East states of Borno, Bauchi, Yobe, Adamawa, Taraba and Gombe.

The plans for the 'repentant terrorists' include sending them to foreign lands for training in various fields of human endeavour is in top gear; meanwhile, the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) who are fallouts from the nefarious activities of the terrorist and bandits are languishing in pain, lack, poverty, and penury. Widows of soldiers slain by the bullets of the Boko Haram members have come out several times to protest against these moves. This can further exacerbate the security situation in Nigeria, and result into a case of "anger supplies the arms" (Virgil, as cited in Sobowale, 2020).

Major-General Ibrahim Bata Haruna (rtd.), a former General Officer Commanding (GOC), 3 Division Onitsha, and Chairman, Executive Council, of Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF), bemoaned the grave consequences of absorbing repentant terrorists into the military. In a report by Umoru (2020), Major-General Haruna opined that these insurgents are "indoctrinated with the ideas which you judge them and having been repentant does not necessarily mean that they have changed their ideology. The foundation of their crisis is ideological" (p.3). The Governor of Borno State, Babagana Zulum, also said the concept of deradicalisation of Boko Haram terrorists is not working as expected because deradicalised terrorists rejoin Boko Haram after spying on communities. As a confirmation of the Governor's claims, Borno State Senator, Ali Ndume, said that a 'repentant' Boko Haram member was responsible for the murder of an army colonel, D. C. Bako. The Senator said the repentant terrorist gave out information to the terrorists regarding the movement of the colonel (Iroanusi, 2020).

Increase in poverty can aid insecurity. Some poor and unemployed youths like the Almajiris in the northern part of Nigeria are recruited by politicians to foment trouble, cause mayhem, fight political opponents, intimidate voters, and totally disrupt on-going electoral process. According to Taft & Haken (2018), such violence are encouraged by religious, ethnic, and regional lines which creates an environment in which youth may be manipulated by violent groups and political leaders to engage in political and electoral violence. At the end of the day the "...male young almajiris are joining bandits and kidnappers in droves. They are no longer satisfied with the pittance dropped into their beggar's bowls. They want more. All it takes is the first successful operation fetching thousands of naira at once and a bandit or kidnapper is born" (Sobowale, 2020, p.2). The whole discussions on poverty have benefitted the discourse on commenting on self-help security measures because poverty and joblessness tend to

be major brewers of insecurity in the country. More so, the comments ensued because of the formation of *Amotekun* to tackle insecurity in the western region of Nigeria.

Increase in notorious cult gangs and the consumption of banned substances and illicit drugs make them to commit atrocities without showing remorse or human feelings. They can do anything when they are under the influence of heavy doses of these drugs that make them feel 'high' and merciless. Some other activities they engage in to provoke hallucination and 'get high' include drinking prepared concoction they get after boiling and filtering used sanitary pads (Akinleye, 2020), inhaling pit latrines smell, smell from strong gum and glue, Gadazi, Zakami, lizard pooh, comorado, codeine, cocaine, heroin, speed, AZT, ecstasy, roxyfenol, fentanyl, meth, oxy, marijuana, Paste, dry lemon grass, and all sorts of bizarre activities. The National Security Adviser to President Muhammadu Buhari, Maj-Gen Babagana Monguno (rtd.) attributes the rise in insecurity in the North to sale and consumption of hard drugs which has assumed a dangerous and worrisome dimension (Agbakwuru, 2020).

Formation and Controversy around *Amotekun*

The security challenges in the South-West region of Nigeria, made the governors of the region to meet on January 9, 2020, to form the Western Nigeria Security Network (WNSN), also known as *Amotekun*, to address the security issue in the region. According to Kabir (2020), earlier on, under the agenda of Development Agenda for Western Nigeria Commission (DAWN), the governors held a regional security summit in Ibadan, Oyo State in June 2019.

In order to assist the operatives of *Amotekun* in carrying out their duties, governors Gboyega Oyetola (Osun), Rotimi Akeredolu (Ondo), Dapo Abiodun (Ogun) and Babajide Sanwo-olu (Lagos) donated 20 vehicles each while Seyi Makinde (Oyo) contributed 33 vehicles. The governors also procured 100 units of motorcycles for each state. Members of the *Amotekun* were drawn from local hunters, the Oodua Peoples' Congress (OPC), Agbekoya, Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) and vigilante groups. While some people and groups like National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS), Odua Peoples' Congress (OPC), hunters and others held solidarity rallies across Southwest to show support for the formation of the security outfit, the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association, the federal government of Nigeria, Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF) and others kicked against it vehemently. On January 13 2020, the Nigerian police also threatened to arrest any *Amotekun* operative that carries illegal arms.

On January 14, Nigeria's Attorney-General, Abubakar Malami, declared 'Operation *Amotekun*' as an illegal entity because it is not backed by the Nigerian constitution. Malami said the constitution only allowed a unitary police structure to be controlled by the federal government. The pan-Yoruba socio-political organisation, Afenifere, described the position of the federal government as a joke taken too far. The group encouraged the South-West governors to ignore the Attorney-General, challenging the federal government to go to court. However, based on a meeting that was later held between the South-West State governors and Vice President Yemi Osinbajo, a resolution for the South-West states to put in place legislation to back the formation of *Amotekun* was reached (Adebayo, 2020). Meanwhile, the houses of

assembly of Lagos, Osun, Ondo, Oyo, Ogun and Ekiti have passed bills for the establishment of Amotekun and the states governors have assented to them. *Premium Times* (2020) reports that barely a month after the South-West governors established *Amotekun*, their colleagues in the South-East have come up with a similar arrangement. Chairman of the South-East Governors' Forum, David Umahi, said the region will form its own security outfit to protect lives and properties of citizens in the area, and in April 2021 *Ebubeagu* regional security to fight terrorism in the zone was formed.

Methodology

This paper adopted the quantitative research method of content analysis. Online versions of *The Nation*, *The Sun* and *Daily Trust* newspapers were purposively selected for the study, taking into consideration the fact that they have their highest circulation bases located in different parts of Nigeria; *The Nation* (South-West region), *The Sun* (South-East region) and *Daily Trust* (Northern region). These online newspapers, according to allnetinfo.com, cited by Ogunwande, Kur & Babalola (2019) are rated among "the top ten Nigerian online newspapers" (p. 486).

The study population of 190 comprised all the number of specific comments on *Amotekun* made by readers (commenters) based on the news stories about *Amotekun* published on the websites of the three newspapers between January and March 2020. The researcher downloaded the news stories and comments on *Amotekun* from the websites of the three newspapers, and the snipping tool application was used to capture readers' comments and reactions to *Amotekun* news for analysis. A sample size of 127 was used in this study as derived through the use of the Creative Research System Calculator (1982) at 95% level of acceptance (confidence level) and 5% confidence interval (margin of error).

Under normal circumstances, this sample size would have been evenly divided among the three newspapers, but since *Daily Trust* newspaper had just 4 comments, and *The Sun* newspaper had 55 comments, the whole for the two newspapers were selected, while the balance of 68 comments to make up the sample size of 127 were picked through systematic sampling technique from *The Nation* newspaper. The unit of analysis was restricted to readers' comments. Different classifications were generated from the comments; they were coded and categorised

1. Key variables being studied

To examine if the comments (dominant theme) were strictly focused on **Security/Amotekun Formation, Security/Amotekun and Other Issues or Other Issues** entirely outside security or *Amotekun* formation.

2. Tone/Slant of the comments

This has to do with the Slant/Tone the commenters used in their comment. The tone is **Positive** when it is in support of the formation of *Amotekun*; **Negative** when it is against the formation of *Amotekun* and **Neutral** when it is in-between, that is, neither here nor there.

3. Length of the comments

This has to do with the sentence length and structure of the comments. The comment is considered **Short** when it is one line or between 1 and 10 words; it is **Medium** when it is more than one line, or between 11 and 25 words, and it is categorised as **Long** when it is more than 5 lines or more than 26 words.

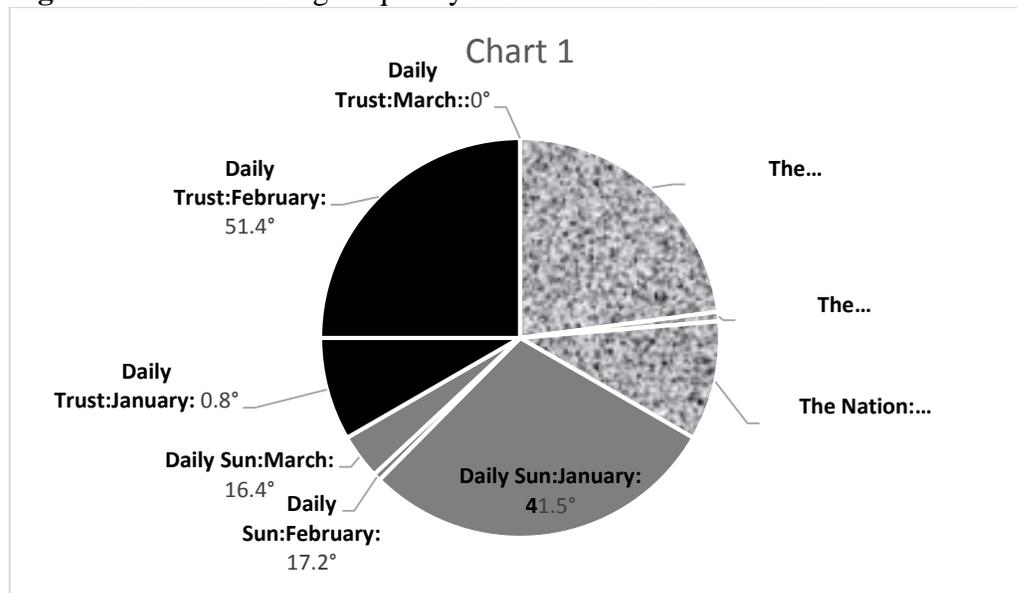
Inter-coder Reliability and Validity

The data collection instruments were coding sheets and coding guide. This researcher served as a decoder and also trained one decoder to be familiar with the coding sheet and coding guide, after which they carried out a pilot study to determine the inter-coder reliability. The two coders did not participate in the main study. The inter-coder reliability was calculated using Ole Holsti's (1969) formula as cited in Wimmer & Dominick (2000). Each of the two coders identified 17 units and agreed on 13 coding decisions. The reliability co-efficient was thus computed to be 0.76, indicating acceptable inter-coder reliability of 76%. Face validity was used for the instruments. The coding sheet and coding guide were assessed by experts who certified them fit to be used.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Pie-Charts, and simple percentages were used to analyse the data. This is a unit of presentation/description.

Figure 1: Chart showing frequency of Comments on *Amotekun*



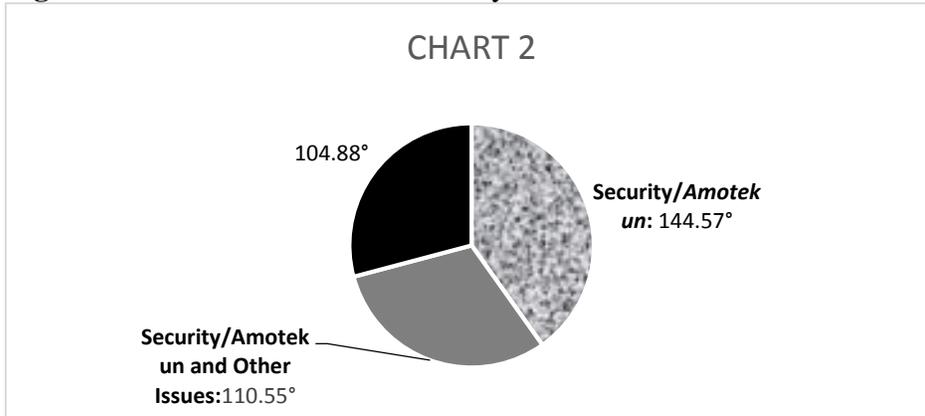
KEY: The Nation: [Pattern] Daily Sun: [Pattern] Daily Trust: [Pattern] Scale: 1% = 3.6° .

Source: Content Analysis, 2020.

Figure 1 shows that though the newspapers had 190 stories on *Amotekun* (*The Nation*: 131(68.95%)=248.21°, *The Sun*: 55(28.95%)=104.21° and *Daily Trust*: 4 (2.10%)=7.58°), yet the high volume of comments,131 (68.95%) in *The Nation*

newspaper, tend to indicate that the commenters are residents of, or mostly from South-West Nigeria who remotely face the problem of insecurity in the region where *Amotekun* was formed and their comments will benefit the work because they know what they are talking about.

Figure 2: Direction of the comments by commenters

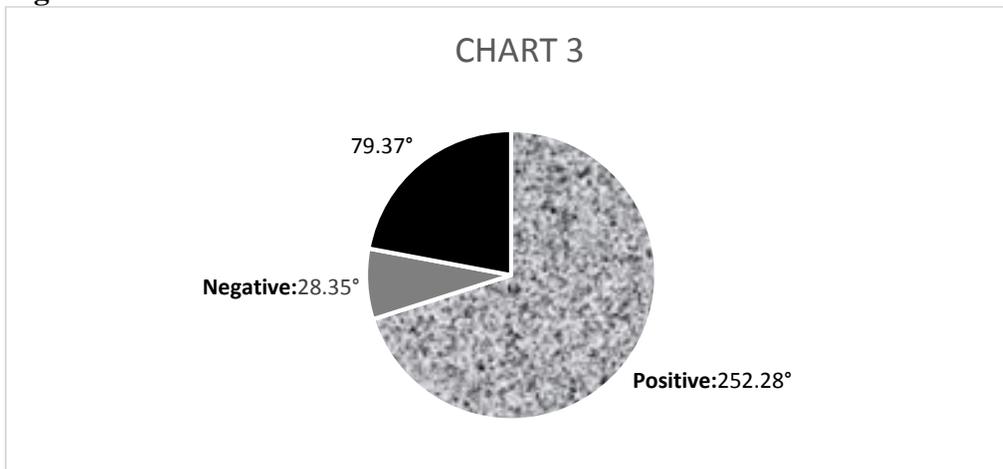


KEY: Security/Amotekun: [Pattern] Security/Amotekun and Other Issues [Pattern] Other Issues [Pattern]
 Entirely: Scale: 1% = 3.6⁰

Source: Content Analysis, 2020

The information in figure 2 indicate that security issue is not the only problems Nigerians are worried about, there are a lot more other issues agitating their minds and they used the newspapers' comments platforms to voice out their opinions even though the stories were on *Amotekun* formation and security.

Figure 3: The tone of the comments made on the formation of *Amotekun*

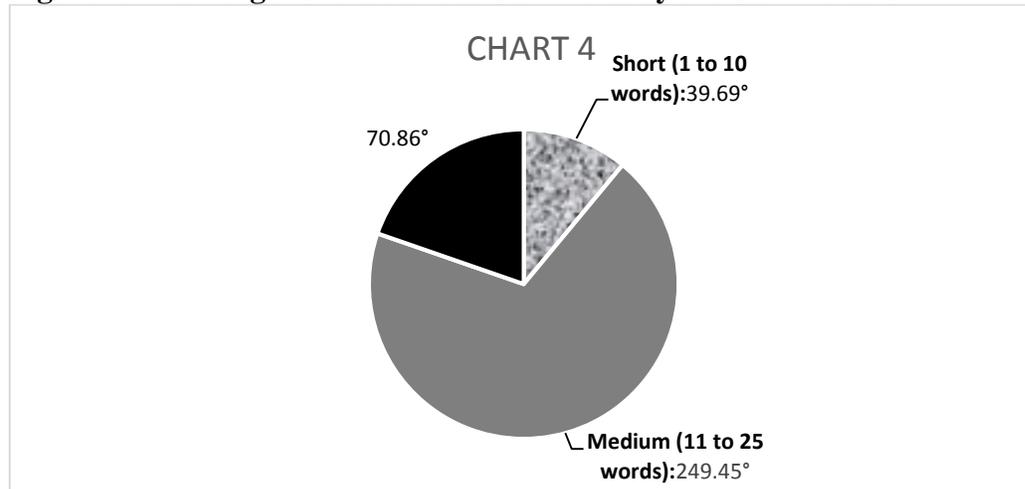


KEY: Positive [Pattern] Negative [Pattern] Neutral [Pattern] Scale: 1% = 3.6⁰

Source: Content Analysis, 2020.

The data in figure 3 show that majority of the comments support the formation of the *Amotekun* security outfit.

Figure 4: The Length of the various Comments by the Commenters



KEY: Short: [Pattern] Medium: [Pattern] Long: [Pattern] Scale: 1% = 3.6⁰

Source: Content Analysis, 2020.

From figure 4, it can be seen that most of the commenters had a lot to say because their comments were not short.

Discussion of Findings

The examination of the first objective of this study revealed that the comments on Security/*Amotekun* Formation were 40.16% (144.6⁰) of the total comments while 30.71% (110.5⁰) were on Security/*Amotekun* and other issues, and 29.13% (104.9⁰) were on other issues entirely outside security or *Amotekun* formation. These show that, apart from the security problems the people are confronting, there are sundry other matters they feel should be discussed along with security, hence the comments that centered outside security.

For instance, speaking solely on Security and *Amotekun* Formation, a commenter, Peter Okeke, while commenting in *The Sun* newspaper of 15th January, 2020, under a story titled “*Amotekun*: Leopard comes to Nigeria” said, “This is a most welcome development, this *Amotekun*, that should be encouraged by the federal government for other regions to emulate. If you come in peace in any locality, peace will go with you but if you come with a sinister motive to harm the people in any way, they have the right to resist and protect themselves.”

While commenting on the story entitled “FG, S’Westgovs strike deal on *Amotekun*,” and concentrating his comments on security/*Amotekun* and other issues, a commenter by the name Fdee Nice in the *Daily Trust* newspaper of January 24, 2020, asserts that a modified *Amotekun* and NPF will end up being the same. He comments that “Under PMB, Fulani herdsmen will continue to be allowed to go about with unlicensed arms and ammunition to perpetuate banditry, terrorism and kidnapping of unarmed Nigerian citizens in farms and forests throughout the country as they roam about freely feeding their cows and cattle and other animals with impunity” and that

only enforcement of ban of open grazing and basic education of ranching of the animal owners can control them.

Also, "bearing in mind that, sometimes, netizens' reactions are different from issues of discourse at each point in time" (Guanah, 2019, p. 455), this study discovered that other issues outside Security and *Amotekun* were raised in comments, as can be seen in the comments made by Chukwudi8 in *The Nation* newspaper of March 17, 2020. He said "Democracy is government of the people, by the people, and for the people. It is therefore, in this case, government of the Yoruba people, by the Yoruba people, and for the Yoruba people. Democracy is not government of the Yoruba people by the Fulani people, and for the Fulani people. No, and Nigeria is not "the people" within the purview of the definition of democracy...." This comment do not in any way relate to the story which was entitled, "Anti-*Amotekun* protest rocks Ekiti."

In the second objective that intended to find out the Slant/Tone the commenters adopted in their comments, it was found that most were positive (70.08%=252.3⁰) while 7.87% (28.3) were negative, and 22.05% (79.4⁰) were neutral. This clearly shows that most people are in support of the formation of *Amotekun*. This assertion is given a boost by the statement of the Deputy Chairman, Nigeria's House of Representatives Committee on Army, Tajudeen Adeyemi Adefisoye, who represents Idanre/Ifedore Federal Constituency of Ondo State, and sees *Amotekun* as a child of necessity, and therefore anyone that is against its establishment is likely to have deals with criminal elements.

The Member of Parliament (MP) maintains that *Amotekun* is a welcome initiative that enjoys the support of virtually all the people that are resident in the South-western part of Nigeria. Ajayi (2020) quotes the MP, who, while commending the resolute determination of all the six South West governors, and the six Houses of Assembly speakers in the region and their lawmakers on the establishment of *Amotekun* said, "It is now expected that the spate of crime, particularly kidnapping and robbery in the South-West will begin to get reduced with the establishment of *Amotekun*" (p.2).

From the enquiry to determine the length of the comments with which the commenters made their comments on *Amotekun* formation, it was discovered that most of the comments were medium (69.29%=249.4⁰) in length, 19.69% (70.9⁰) were long, and 11.02% (39.7⁰) were short. This indicate that the commenters had a lot to say. This aligns with the position of McMillen (2013) that "online comments, more than 'letters to the editor', offer an unlimited amount of space for readers to present their feedback and respond to the news they receive" p.6). This agrees with the position of Awodi, Gambo, Etudaiye, Ssni, Mohammed & Ezeaghasi (2019) that the comments platform of newspapers guarantee large amount of space and minimal censorship to make comments more than the space the print newspapers offer to readers that may want to react to any published story.

This third finding of the study is in conformity with the technological determinism theory that modern technology causes social change, has made communication easier, and that technology is the force which shapes society. The reason being that it has also made it possible for readers to react and comment on stories that catch their attention extensively, this was not the case. When this technology was not available in Nigeria, the only option readers had was to write a rejoinder, or a

‘Letter to the Editor.’ There was even no guarantee that it would be published. However, technological advancement has now made it possible for newspaper readers to comment on stories without any form of effective gatekeeping and restriction to the length of their comments. The fact that media comment sections allow their content consumers to freely share their thoughts and opinions on different issues is a plus. It indicates that they now share power with the media, which, before now, only dish out their contents without the consumers’ input. This empowers the consumer as a co-creator and “co-disseminator” of information with the media.

Conclusion

No doubt, the gargantuan nature of the security challenges confronting Nigeria was the center of the comments made by commenters. The fact that majority are in support of self-help security as an alternative to security, as can be seen from the formation of *Amotekun* and the lengthy comments made by newspaper readers, signals that Nigeria has a problem. Good governance can be a panacea to the recurring problems of insecurity in the country and this can guarantee the protection of lives and property when it is got right through the enhancement of education, skills acquisition, provision of employment, and massive investments.

As pointed out by the former Vice-Presidential candidate of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Peter Obi, Nigeria desperately needs investment now, especially Foreign Direct Investment, to reboot her declining economy and create employment for her teeming unemployed youths. This he says can only be achieved if there is guaranteed security in Nigeria because “nobody will be attracted to invest in an unsecured or lawless environment” Vanguard (2020c, p.2). Insecurity is making Nigeria unattractive to investors. The government must seriously handle the many security challenges in the country by dealing decisively with the offenders of security breaches, because there appears to be a sense in which individuals learn, internalise, perpetrate, and perpetuate crime/violence against others. This will go a long way to erase the feelings in some quarters that cases of some committers of security breaches are being handled with kids’ gloves. Hence, Ojoniyi (2015) explains that national security is better guaranteed in an environment of justice, fairness, and the supremacy of the rule of law where there is a clearly defined sanction against every societal vice and crime” (p. 629).

Recommendations

The following recommendations are hereby given:

1. The federal government should do more in ensuring that citizens’ lives and property are secured.
2. Government should allow states and regions to form their security outfits, but such groups should be properly regulated and monitored.
3. Prospective members of security outfits should be well profiled with a view to ensuring that they do not have criminal backgrounds.

4. Also, newspapers should desist from publishing reports that can jeopardise the security of citizens and the nation. They must be careful with language while reporting security stories, so they do not stoke anxiety and scare in the citizens.
5. Newspapers should educate people on how to apply simple security tips that could keep them safe.
6. Citizens should make more use of the comment sections of online newspapers to express their opinions of varied matters.

References

- Adebayo, A. (2020). *Amotekun* similar to Hisbah, Civilian JTF, South – West Speakers say. Retrieved from <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/regional/ssouth-west/374197- amotekun-similar-to-hisbah-civilian-jtf-south-west-speakers-say.html>.
- Adepegba, A. (2021). Insecurity: Nigeria, Chad, others spend \$18.5bn on arms, hardware in 2020, says report. Retrieved from <https://punchng.com/insecurity-nigeria-chad-others-spend-18-5bn-on-arms-hardware-in-2020-says-report/>.
- Agbakwuru, J. (2020). NSA Monguno attributes rise in insecurity to use of hard drugs. Retrieved from <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2020/08/nsa-monguno-attributes-rise-in-insecurity-to-use-of-hard-drugs/>
- Ahon, F. (2020). South-South: Why we are setting up regional security outfit–Okowa. Retrieved from <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2020/03/south-south-why-were-setting-up-regional-security-outfit-%e2%80%95-okowa/>
- Ajayi, O. (2020). Insecurity: My fears for *Amotekun* -Rep Adefisoye. Retrieved from <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2020/03/insecurity-my-fears-for-amotekun-rep-adehisoye/>
- Akinterinwa, B. (2013). The cultural dimension to peace and security in Nigeria: The role of Local Government Chairmen. In O. Obafemi & B Ayakoroma (Eds.). *Culture, Peace and National Security in Nigeria: The Role of Traditional Rulers and Local Government Chairmen* (pp. 53-68). Ibadan: Kraft Books Limited.
- Akinleye, O. (2020). Shocking: Women boil used sanitary pads, drink the water to get high. Retrieved from <https://allnews.ng/news/shocking-women-boil-used-sanitary-pads-drink-the-water-to-get-high>.
- Amaechi, I. (2020). Yes, my 79- year- old mother was kidnapped. Retrieved from <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2020/03/yes-my-79-year-old-mother-was-kidnapped/>
- Awodi, S., Gambo, A., Etudaiye, M., Ssni, H., Mohammed, M. & Ezeaghasi, P. (2019). A content analysis of *Vanguard* online readers' comments on T.Y. Danjuma's self-defence speech in Nigeria. In: A. M. Adeyanju, B., Jimoh & H. M. Suliman (Eds.). *Research, Theories and Practice. A Book in Honour of Professor*

- Suleiman Salau. (Pp. 471-489). Kuru-Jos: National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS).
- Barthes, R. (1977). *The rhetoric of the image. In image, music, text and essays (S. Heath Trans.)*. London, UK: Fontana.
- Benjamin, I. (2020, June 9). We Don't Negotiate With Bandits, We Kill Them – el-Rufai. *Leadership*, p. 2.
- Buzan, B. (1991). *People, state, and fear: An agenda for international security studies in the post-cold war era*. London: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- Communication Theory. (2012). Classical rhetorical theory in interpersonal communication, psychology, behavioural and social science. Retrieved from <https://www.communicationtheory.org/classical-rhetorical-theory/>
- Creative Research Systems Calculator. (1982). Sample Size Formulas for our sample size calculator. Retrieved from <https://www.surveysystem.com/sscalc.htm>.
- Daniel, O. (2020). How Nigerians paid \$18.34million ransom to kidnappers in 9 years. Retrieved from <https://www.naijaloaded.com.ng/news/how-nigerians-paid-18-34million-ransom-to-kidnappers-in-9-years>.
- Deji, O. G. (2020). Nigerians have right to complain about insecurity– Sultan of Sokoto tells Federal Government. Retrieved from <https://www.naijaloaded.com.ng/news/nigerians-have-right-to-complain-about-insecurity-sultan-of-sokoto-tells-federal-government>.
- Golwa, J. (2013). Cultural re-orientation and the challenges of national security in Nigeria. In: O. Obafemi & B. Ayakoroma (Eds.). *Culture, Peace and National Security in Nigeria: The Role of Traditional Rulers and Local Government Chairmen* (pp. 103-115). Ibadan: Kraft Books Limited.
- Guanah, J. S. (2019). Analysis of Netizens' reactions to religious leaders' comments on political issues in selected Nigerian online news platforms. *University of Uyo Journal of Humanities*, 23 (2): 435-462.
- Hellspong, L. (1992). *Konstenattala. Handbokipraktiskretorik*. Lund, Sweden: Studentlitteratur.
- Ikhida, E. (2020). Buhari as terrorists negotiator and his 'repented terrorists.' Retrieved from <http://ireporteronline.com.ng/buhari-as-terrorists-negotiator-and-his-repented-terrorists/>
- Imobighe, T. (2013). Peace and security in Nigeria: The role of traditional rulers. In: O. Obafemi & B. Ayakoroma (Eds.). *Culture, Peace and National Security in Nigeria: The Role of Traditional Rulers and Local Government Chairmen* (pp. 69-82). Ibadan: Kraft Books Limited.
- Indiana University Northwest. (2002). Locke and Hobbes, two contrasting views of the English Revolution. Retrieved from http://www.iun.edu/~hisdc1/h114_2002/Locke%20and%20Hobbes.htm
- Iroanusi, Q. (2020). 'Repentant' Boko Haram member responsible for Army Colonel's death Senator. Retrieved from <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/n>

- ews/top-news/425712-repentant-boko-haram-member-responsible-for-army-colonels-death-senator.html.
- Kabir, A. (2020). *Amotekun*: South-west states pass bill amidst controversy. Retrieved from <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/380320-amotekun-south-west-states-pass-bill-amidst-controversy.html>.
- Mkom, J. (2018). Defend yourselves or you will all die, TY Danjuma tells Nigerians. Retrieved from https://www.vanguardngr.com.cdn.ampproject.org/v/s/www.vanguardngr.com/2018/03/defend-will-die-ty-danjuma-tells-nigerians/amp/?amp_js_v=a2&_gsa=1&usqp=mq331AQFKAGwASA%3D#aoh=15872797043953&referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com&_tf=From%20%251%24s&share=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.vanguardngr.com%2F2018%2F03%2Fdefend-will-die-ty-danjuma-tells-nigerians%2F.
- Ndujihe, C. (2020). We can't afford to lose 34 persons daily, 12,370 yearly to insecurity — Ikokwu, Agbakoba, Okorie, Osuntokun, Shonibare, others speak. Retrieved from <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2021/02/we-cant-afford-to-lose-34-persons-daily-12370-yearly-to-insecurity-ikokwu-agbakoba-okorie-osuntokun-shonibare-others-speak/>.
- Nigeria 1999 Constitution. (2008). *1999 Constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria and fundamental rights (Enforcement Procedure) rules 2008*. Abuja: Federal Government Printing Press.
- Nwabueze, C. (2020). Top 50 Nigeria newspapers. Retrieved from <https://massmediang.com/top-50-nigeria-newspapers-accessed-online-2020/>
- Ogunwande, T. I., Kur, J. T. & Babalola, G. A. (2019). Analysis of interactive features in Nigerian online newspapers. *The Nigerian Journal of Communication (TNJC)*, 16(2),481-497.
- Ojoniyi, B. (2015). The challenges of national security within the culture and the consciousness of crime in Tunde Kelani's Maami. In: F. B. Ayakoroma & D. A. Akoh (Eds.). *Repositioning Nollywood for the Promotion of Nigeria's Cultural Diplomacy & National Security* (pp. 621-630) Ibadan: Kraft Book Limited.
- Opera News. (2020). A letter to President Muhammadu Buhari - Fulani herdsmen are a threat to Nigeria's National unity. Retrieved from https://www.operanewsapp.com/ng/en/share/detail?news_id=89e3f8b3558b2c740d85f0dc56d3c0c9&news_entry_id=s3dd5212200528en_ng&open_type=transcoded&request_id=HOME_PAGE_df288257-d7aa-4967-b518-2e3e6c18b9f1&from=news.
- Oyedele, J. O. & Agberu, A. O. (2018). Analysis of online readers' comments on news stories about Chibok Girls' release published by the Sahara Reporters and the Vanguard newspapers *Fuoye Journal of Communication*, 2, 130-150.
- Pettersson, R. (2021). *ID theories*. Tullinge- Sweden: Institute for Infology.
- PM News. (2020). Insecurity: FG to refund ransom paid for kidnapping -Falana. Retrieved from <https://www.pmnewsnigeria.com/2020/02/20/insecurity-fg-to-refund-ransom-paid-for-kidnapping-falana/>

- Pulse Nigeria. (2017). Apostle Johnson Suleman and the Fulani herdsmen's debacle. Retrieved from <https://www.pulse.ng/gist/mens-roundtable-apostle-johnson-suleman-and-the-fulani-herdsmens-debacle/ygjwv6z->.
- Sobechi, L. (2020). Further strain on Buhari's Presidency as El Rufai echoes northern elders. Retrieved from <https://m.guardian.ng/politics/further-strain-on-buharis-presidency-as-el-rufai-echoes-northern-elders/amp/>.
- Sobowale, D. (2020). A President without luck and a nation on verge of anarchy. Retrieved from <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2020/04/a-president-without-luck-and-a-nation-on-verge-of-anarchy-1/>.
- Taft, P. & Haken N. (2018). *Beyond Hashtags: Leveraging networks for the prevention of election violence in Nigeria*. Washington: The Fund for Peace.
- Umoru, H. (2020). It is confusion everywhere, Nigeria cannot continue this way- IBM Haruna. Retrieved from <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2020/03/its-confusion-everywhere-nigeria-cannot-continue-this-way-ibm-haruna/>
- Vanguard* (2020a). Herdsmen operate from 30 camps in Delta forests. Retrieved from <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2020/04/herdsmen-operate-from-30-camps-in-delta-forests/>.
- Vanguard* (2020b). Insecurity: How govt can win the war- Ojo, security expert. Retrieved from <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2020/03/insecurity-how-govt-can-win-the-war-ojo-security-expert/>
- Vanguard* (2020c). Insecurity: Obi commends Catholic Bishops. Retrieved from <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2020/03/insecurity-obi-commends-catholic-bishops/>
- Vanguard* (2017). The travails of Apostle Johnson Suleman and the inciting words of the Sultan of Sokoto (part1). Retrieved from https://www-vanguardngr-com.cdn.ampproject.org/v/s/www.vanguardngr.com/2017/01/travails-apostle-johnson-suleman-inciting-words-sultan-sokoto-part-1/amp/?amp_js_v=a2&_gsa=1&usqp=mq331AQFKAGwASA%3D#aoh=15900453110353&referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com&_tf=From%20%251%24s&_h=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.vanguardngr.com%2F2017%2F01%2Ftravails-apostle-johnson-suleman-inciting-words-sultan-sokoto-part-1/
- Wimmer, R. D. & Dominick, J. R. (2000). *Mass media research: An introduction (6th ed.)*. Belmont-California: Wadsworth Publishing Company.