

GUARANTEEING CITIZENS' SECURITY: THE COMPLEMENTARITY AND WORKABILITY OF SPIRITUALLY-BAKED CULTURAL WEAPONS AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL INSIGHTS

By

ABIODUN MOSES JINADU, PhD

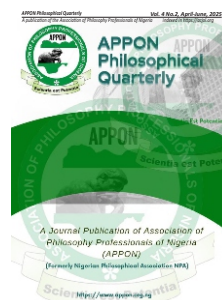
Department of Philosophy,
Adekunle Ajasin University,
Akungba Akoko, Ondo State, Nigeria

Email: abiiodun.jinadu@aaau.edu.ng, abbeyjinadu2015@gmail.com

Phone Number: +2348038462656



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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the spate of insecurity in today's ecosystem, aiming to deploy a knowledge-driven approach and spiritually baked cultural panaceas to curb its surge. It argues that the same spiritually grounded cultural weapons can restore security in a typical African society. Owo in Ondo State, Nigeria, is used to buttress this point. The paper discusses the concept of security synchrony by exploring how political aspirants, security agencies, and the general populace can collaboratively construct and sustain a framework of communal safety that extends into the secondary school system through mentorship rites, elder supervision, and community-sanctioned moral codes drawn from the same cultural-spiritual repertoire. The study is set against Owo's escalating violent crime, ritual killings, and armed attacks, and against a pattern of secondary school delinquency that is both a symptom and consequence of a fractured security architecture. Methodologically, the study adopts qualitative and discourse-analytic approaches, drawing on observation and relevant scholarly literature. The findings reveal that effective security requires institutional reform, political commitment, and reorientation of community consciousness, which is achievable through spiritual weapons, a participatory, and knowledge-driven approach. Practical strategies towards realising this are proposed accordingly.

Keywords: Security Synchrony, Spiritually-Baked Cultural Weapons, Complementarity, Owo, Secondary School Delinquency.

Introduction

There are towns in Nigeria that carry history like a crown, worn with pride but weighted with the burden of all it signifies. Owo, in Ondo State, is one such town. Situated in the northern senatorial district of Ondo State, Owo has long distinguished itself as a seat of traditional governance, an incubator of intellectual talent, and a confluence of Yoruba cultural magnificence. The Olowo of Owo commands respect that stretches well beyond the town's geographic boundaries,

and the people of Owo have, across generations, produced some of Nigeria's finest minds in law, medicine, engineering, and the arts. Yet, in recent years, this celebrated town has been fighting a quieter but no less devastating war: a war against insecurity, delinquency, political cynicism, and institutional failure. The June 2022 attack on St. Francis Catholic Church in Owo, which claimed the lives of over forty worshippers, was one of the most horrifying acts of violence in recent Nigerian memory

and threw the entire nation into mourning. But even before that singular atrocity, Owo was already witnessing ritual murders, cultism, armed robberies, and corrosive delinquency among its secondary school youth.

What does it mean for a community to lose its sense of safety? When people wake up unsure whether they will return home by evening; when mothers take their children to school and spend the day in anxious prayer; when students find it more exciting to affiliate with cult groups than to engage with books, then a community is no longer merely confronting a law enforcement problem. It is confronting a civilisational crisis, one that demands not simply more policemen on the streets but a deeper, more philosophically grounded engagement with the nature of community, responsibility, and shared human dignity.

In this paper, the concept of security synchrony, a term used here to describe the coordinated, purposive, and mutually reinforcing engagement of all social actors, namely political aspirants, security agencies, and the general public, in the project of community safety, is examined. The paper also interrogates the peculiar challenge of secondary school students' delinquency in Owo, tracing its causes, its consequences, and the strategies by which it may be effectively curtailed. Throughout, the paper draws on the insights of Nigerian scholars, whose work on security, governance, and education provides a richly contextualised foundation for this inquiry. The paper is arranged as follows: after this introduction, a theoretical framework for understanding security synchrony is presented; Owo is then situated within its specific socio-political and security context; the roles of each key stakeholder group are analysed; the problem of student delinquency and the strategies for addressing it are then examined; and the paper concludes with reflections on the path forward.

Conceptualisation of Operational Terms

Complementarity: is the state or characteristic of being complementary. It is a semantic relationship between two words wherein negative use of one entails the affirmation of the other with no gradability.

Spiritually-Baked Cultural Weapons:

connotes discussion of how culture, religion, and spirituality are used as instruments of power, influence, and conflict; that is, the use of cultural symbols, narratives, and norms to gain advantage or undermine an opponent. It signals when religious concepts, institutions, or practices are deployed strategically to control, delegitimise, or mobilise people, for instance, declaring opponents "heretical" or "godless" to exclude them, using prophecy or apocalyptic narratives to justify actions, framing secular policies as spiritual attacks, or using rituals or sacred sites in political or security disputes.

"Weapon": does not mean a literal weapon. It means taking something that normally functions to build cohesion and deliberately using it to gain advantage over another group.

Spiritual Weapons: These are such tools as sacralisation, ritual and sacred space, together with specific instruments drawn from Owo's indigenous spiritual repertoire: "Kanako", "Egbe", "Ofa", "Tutu", "Ebo", "Ata", "Afose", "Ibo Ode Ere", and "Ere E g b a". Sociologically and anthropologically, each carries a precise disciplinary function. "Egbe" designates the heavenly peer-group or spiritual double to which every person is bound before birth; invoking it as a security instrument extends surveillance beyond the visible community, since the individual is held answerable to an unseen fraternity as much as to living kin. "Ofa", literally the arrow, symbolises swift and targeted retribution, representing a judgment that, once loosed, cannot be recalled. "Etutu" is a propitiatory rite performed to "cool" a breach in the moral

order; it functions as a restorative-justice mechanism that compels the offender's household to undertake visible, costly atonement before the community, thereby reintegrating the wrongdoer while publicly reaffirming the violated norm. "Ebo" is a sacrifice prescribed through divination and performed before witnesses and a ritual specialist; because it converts private wrongdoing into a matter of open communal record, it functions historically as a mechanism of public accountability rather than private piety alone. "Afose", the spoken word of power invoking the authority of Ifa/Orunmila, illustrates the performative force of ritual speech: its efficacy is understood to depend on utterance by a recognised specialist, which reinforces that specialist's standing as gatekeeper of communal order. "Kanako", "Ata", "Ibo Ode Ere", and "Ere Egba" belong to Owo's own ọẹḍẹ (hunters') guild and warrior-fraternity tradition, a class of guild-based initiatory and protective ritual complex documented among hunters' associations elsewhere in West Africa, most notably Sierra Leone's Kamajor societies; as terms whose precise local usage is best specified by Owo's own custodians of that knowledge, they are retained here in the sense in which the town's elders and native doctors currently apply them. These tools are recommended for use by the native men and women of Owo to tackle the menace of insecurity. Historically, tools of this kind performed at least four interlocking functions of social control. First, they extended surveillance beyond what any human institution could achieve, since the sanctioning agency, whether an ancestor, an orisa, or a heavenly double, was believed to observe conduct even where no living witness was present. Second, they publicised accountability: rites such as "Ebo" and "Etutu" were, by design, performed before priests and community witnesses, so that private wrongdoing became a matter of open communal record rather than a secret to be privately managed. Third, they harnessed the performative

power of ritual speech and symbol, "Afose" and "Ofa" being cases in point, so that the mere invocation of judgment carried social weight independent of any subsequent physical enforcement. Fourth, guild-based initiation of the kind associated with "Kanako", "Ata", and the hunters'-fraternity terms cultivated internalised discipline through graduated secrecy, oath, and hierarchy, binding the initiate's conduct to the fraternity's standing rather than to fear of external punishment alone. It is this same cluster of mechanisms — surveillance beyond sight, publicised accountability, performative sanction, and guild discipline — that comparative scholarship on cultural and spiritual security architectures elsewhere in Africa and beyond has documented in structurally similar institutions, as later sections of this paper show.

Epistemological Ideas: is used within this context to mean the knowledge-driven contributions of the stakeholders in Owo (the people of Owo) towards tackling the scourge of insecurity. Epistemology, in a nutshell, means the theory of knowledge. The pulling together of the ideas of the people can be used in combating the spate of insecurity in Owo and its adjoining towns and villages.

Culture: Culture, as used here, is contextualised within the ambit of Owo cultural heritage and belief system.

Conceptualising Security Synchrony: A Theoretical Framework

Security synchrony is not merely a bureaucratic metaphor for inter-agency collaboration. It is a deeply philosophical concept rooted in the recognition that safety is not a commodity to be delivered by the state to passive citizens but a living, dynamic condition that must be continuously co-produced by all members of a community. To say that security must be synchronised is to say that it must be harmonic; that is, it must involve multiple

actors playing different but complementary roles, each attuned to the others, each contributing its unique strength to a shared, symphonic goal.

In recent years, Nigerian scholars have begun to develop frameworks adequate to this understanding. Femi Adekunle, writing on the security architecture of southwestern Nigeria, argues that “the conventional state-centric model of security provision has proven catastrophically insufficient in the Nigerian context, where the state itself is frequently the author of insecurity rather than its remedy.” This observation resonates powerfully with the Owo experience. When political officeholders divert security funds into private pockets; when police patrol vehicles are grounded for lack of fuel; when community vigilante groups are disbanded rather than integrated into a coherent security framework, then the synchrony advocated here becomes not a luxury but an urgent necessity.

Kemi Aborisade, in her seminal work on community policing in Nigeria, offers a compelling articulation of a synchronised security approach. She insists that “security, properly understood, is a social contract renewed daily through the active vigilance, moral commitment, and civic participation of every member of a community.” This formulation is philosophically elegant because it removes the excuse of passivity from every stakeholder: it tells the political aspirant that a promise of security must be concrete, funded, and monitored; it tells the security agency that professionalism must be non-negotiable; and it tells the citizen that silence in the face of danger is not neutrality but complicity.

Theoretically, this paper draws on elements of the social contract tradition as inflected through the African communal philosophy of Ubuntu, which affirms that the well-being of one is inextricably tied to the well-being of all. In Yoruba tradition, this finds expression in the proverb “Agbajo owo la fi n soya erin”, meaning it is with a collective embrace of hands that a feat no single hand can achieve is accomplished.

Security synchrony, then, is the institutional operationalisation of this communal wisdom.

The Nigerian literature engaged above roots security synchrony firmly in home soil. But the claim that spiritually-baked cultural weapons can complement formal security is not a parochial one, and the paper’s theoretical contribution is strengthened by situating Owo within a wider, comparative pattern already documented by scholars working on alternative security architectures elsewhere in Africa and beyond — a pattern in which communities facing state absence, corruption, or overload turn to culturally legitimated, spiritually sanctioned mechanisms of protection and social discipline.

Within Nigeria itself, this pattern is well attested outside Owo. Smith shows how the Bakassi Boys of south-eastern Nigeria built their authority on protective charms and oath-taking as much as on physical force, converting ritual legitimacy into a substitute for a discredited police force. Meagher and Harnischfeger trace how these same spiritually anchored vigilante structures, while initially popular and effective, were vulnerable to political capture once politicians recognised their coercive value, an outcome this paper’s insistence on “synchrony”, rather than unregulated parallel authority, is designed to guard against. More recently, Ibrahim documents how Lagos’s Vigilante Group of Nigeria formally incorporates protective charms, “Ayeta” against bullets and “Okigbe” against blades, into its oath-taking induction ritual, demonstrating that spiritually-baked cultural weapons of the kind proposed for Owo already function as recognised, semi-institutionalised security technology in other major Nigerian cities.

Outside Nigeria, Sierra Leone’s civil defence forces offer perhaps the closest structural parallel to the guild-based tools invoked in this paper’s Operational Terms. The Kamajor hunters’ societies, mobilised during the civil war of the 1990s, drew their cohesion and their claimed battlefield

invulnerability from initiation rites, oaths, and ritual discipline administered by recognised specialists. As with Owo's "Kanakan", "Ata", and hunters'-fraternity tools, Kamajor initiation converted a pre-existing guild of hunters into an accountable security force whose authority rested on communally recognised spiritual sanction rather than state deputation alone, a precedent that lends comparative weight to this paper's proposal.

A structurally similar pattern recurs outside Africa. In rural Guatemala, Handy documents communities that, distrusting a formal judiciary perceived as slow, corrupt, or absent, have relied on customary law, communal sanction, and accusations rooted in indigenous cosmology to police theft and other offences, achieving real deterrent effect but also, in the worst cases, sliding into lynching once communal sanction escaped any coordinating oversight. This is precisely the cautionary edge that motivates the present paper's insistence on complementarity: spiritually-baked cultural weapons are most effective, and least prone to abuse, when synchronised with, rather than substituted for, accountable state institutions.

Pratten and Sen's edited volume, *Global Vigilantes*, gathers cases of this kind, from Nigeria and Sierra Leone to South Asia and Latin America, into a single comparative frame, arguing that recourse to culturally legitimated, often spiritually sanctioned, self-help security is a recurring global response wherever formal state security is perceived as weak, absent, or complicit. Read against this literature, Owo's predicament is not exceptional but a local instance of a well-documented global phenomenon, and the strategies this paper proposes for curbing student delinquency through the same cultural-spiritual repertoire — oath-bound mentorship, elder-supervised rites of passage, and community-sanctioned moral codes — extend that comparative literature into a domain, adolescent moral formation, that the existing scholarship on vigilantism and

customary security has not yet fully addressed.

Owo in Context: History, Politics and the Security Landscape

To understand the security challenge in the town, one must first understand Owo itself. It is a town of approximately three hundred thousand people, governed by a robust traditional institution headed by the *Olowo*, and located at the confluence of several competing political interests within Ondo State. Its geographical position, which sits at the juncture of Ondo, Edo, and Ekiti State borders, makes it a transit hub for both commerce and, regrettably, criminal activity.

Biodun Ogunleye, in his careful study of Ondo State's political development, observes that "the northern senatorial district of Ondo State, of which Owo is the administrative heartbeat, has historically been characterised by intense political competition that has too often translated into the weaponisation of security institutions for electoral ends rather than the genuine protection of lives and property." It is a pointed observation. The deployment of security personnel in Owo during election seasons has often appeared calibrated to intimidate opponents rather than protect citizens; and, ironically, the post-election period, when political attention withdraws, tends to coincide with surges in criminal violence.

The socio-economic profile of Owo is also instructive. Owo has a growing population of educated youth; it also grapples with high unemployment, inadequate social infrastructure, and a widening gap between a politically connected elite and an increasingly frustrated working class. Olu Ajayi, in his comprehensive treatise on crime and governance in Nigeria, identifies this structural inequality as "the most reliable predictor of communal violence and youth radicalisation in Nigerian towns."

The April 2022 church attack, regarded as the bloodiest single event in Owo's

contemporary history, exposed the catastrophic consequences of dis-coordinated security responses. The attackers reportedly operated with military-grade weapons and tactical precision, suggesting either advance intelligence that was ignored or a troubling level of institutional penetration. Chukwuemeka Eze, writing on security agencies and democratic governance in Nigeria, cautions that “the failure to share timely intelligence across security platforms is not a technical malfunction but a political choice, one that routinely costs lives in communities across Nigeria.”

The Role of Political Aspirants in Security Architecture

Political aspirants, which is deliberately distinguished here from ‘politicians’ or ‘officeholders’ because the term captures the critical moment of promising, that season of manifestos and town hall meetings when a candidate stands before the people of Owo and makes pledges that will determine whether lives are saved or squandered, bear obligations that are not merely executive but moral, rhetorical, and foundational.

Bola Dauda, in his incisive analysis of political leadership and public security in Nigeria, argues compellingly that “the language of a political campaign is itself a security document; for it either builds or erodes public trust in institutions, and public trust is, in the final analysis, the most durable security infrastructure any community can possess.” In Owo, political aspirants have routinely promised security without specifying mechanisms, committed to funding without disclosing budgets, and invoked the suffering of victims without producing actionable plans. This rhetorical security, divorced from institutional investment, is worse than silence; it breeds cynicism, and cynicism breeds disengagement, and disengagement creates the vacuum in which violence thrives.

Political aspirants in Owo must commit to four concrete obligations. First, the allocation of dedicated and transparent

budgets for community security, including the funding of local vigilante networks, the provision of security equipment, and the establishment of community safety committees in each ward. Second, active engagement with traditional rulers, particularly the palace of the Olowo, in developing culturally resonant security protocols that command community respect and participation. Third, the deliberate insulation of security institutions from partisan manipulation, for when the police are deployed as thugs and the army as electoral enforcers, the community’s faith in those institutions is destroyed, possibly for generations. Fourth, the establishment of youth rehabilitation and re-integration programmes that address the root causes of delinquency rather than merely punishing its symptoms.

Remi Sonaiya, writing on governance and public safety in Nigeria, reminds readers that “no security architecture is more robust than the political will that sustains it; and political will, in a democracy, is ultimately a function of electoral accountability.” This means that the citizens of Owo bear a corresponding responsibility: to demand specific security commitments from aspirants, to hold elected officials accountable for those commitments, and to resist the temptation to trade their votes, and therefore their safety, for bags of rice.

Security Agencies and Institutional Responsibilities

Security agencies, in the context of this paper, include the Nigeria Police Force, the Department of State Services, the Nigerian Army, the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps, as well as local security outfits such as the Amotekun Corps and various community vigilante groups. Each of these actors occupies a distinct but overlapping space within Owo’s security ecosystem, and each must be held to specific standards of professionalism, transparency, and community responsiveness.

The Nigeria Police Force, which bears the primary constitutional responsibility for

internal security, has in many communities across Nigeria earned a reputation not for protection but for predation. Ayo Olukotun, in his wide-ranging study of media, security, and public order in Nigeria, documents case after case of “police officers who function less as guardians of the public peace than as freelance revenue collectors, extracting bribes at checkpoints, extorting confessions, and vanishing precisely when danger most demands their presence.” This is not an observation intended to condemn every police officer; there are many dedicated, courageous men and women in uniform whose service deserves recognition. But systemic dysfunction demands systemic analysis, and the people of Owo deserve better.

The Amotekun Corps, established in 2020 as a regional security outfit for the South-West, represents a genuinely promising development in community-centred security. Dipo Fashola, in his detailed study of community security and vigilante groups in Nigeria, argues that “the Amotekun model, when properly funded, adequately trained, and structurally integrated with federal security agencies, offers the most contextually appropriate framework for addressing the hybrid threats, including herder-farmer conflicts, kidnapping, and cultism, that now define the South-West security landscape.” In Owo specifically, the Amotekun Corps has demonstrated notable operational effectiveness, but it has also been hampered by underfunding, inadequate manpower, and the absence of a clear command structure that integrates it with Police and DSS operations.

What is advocated here is not the replacement of one security institution with another, but the architecture of genuine synchrony: a formal, regularised, protocol-governed system of intelligence sharing, joint operations, and coordinated community engagement among all security actors in Owo. Musa Ibrahim, in his comparative study of security dynamics across Nigeria, insists that “the future of

Nigerian security lies not in the dominance of any single agency but in the cultivation of an ecosystem of trust, collaboration, and shared accountability among all security actors.”

Knowledge-Driven Ideas of Stakeholders: Community Participation in Security

There is a temptation, when speaking of security, to speak only of uniforms and weapons, of agencies and policies, of politicians and their promises. But the most durable security in any community is not the security that flows from the barrel of a gun; it is the security that flows from the moral fabric of a community, from the willingness of neighbours to watch out for one another, from the courage of citizens to report suspicious activity, and from the shared determination that violence shall not be normalised.

Ngozi Adeyemi, in her thoughtful study of educational psychology and adolescent behaviour in Nigerian schools, identifies community cohesion as “the single most powerful protective factor against youth delinquency and community violence.” She defines cohesion not merely as social friendliness but as “a shared investment in collective well-being, expressed in concrete acts of mutual accountability and civic engagement.” In Owo, this cohesion exists in latent form; it is visible in the warmth of community festivals, in the networks of mutual aid that sustain families in hardship, and in the fierce pride that Owo people take in their town’s history and culture. The task is to translate this latent cohesion into active security participation.

Community participation in security takes several forms. At the most immediate level, it means the establishment and maintenance of neighbourhood watch systems that are not merely informal but formally linked to security agencies, so that information shared by community members is received, recorded, and acted upon. It means the creation of community security committees at the ward, local government,

and town levels, each with clearly defined mandates, regular meeting schedules, and transparent reporting mechanisms. It means, also, the cultivation of a culture in which reporting crime is not regarded as an act of betrayal but as an expression of civic love, for in Owo, as in many Nigerian communities, the fear of retaliation and the distrust of security agencies have made silence the default response to danger.

Funmi Okonkwo makes the sobering observation that “in communities where security has been captured by political elites and deployed as a patronage resource, the ordinary citizen has been effectively dis-empowered from the security process; and this dis-empowerment is itself a form of insecurity, perhaps the most debilitating kind.” The implication for Owo is clear: true security synchrony requires not only the coordination of formal institutions but the re-empowerment of ordinary citizens as active, informed, and respected participants in the security of their own community.

Causes and Consequences of Secondary School Students' Delinquency in Owo

One of the most urgent and most under-discussed dimensions of the security problem in Owo is the delinquency of secondary school students. Delinquency, as used here, does not refer only to minor infractions such as lateness to school or disrespect to teachers, though these too deserve attention; it refers to a pattern of behaviour that includes cult group membership and activities, drug abuse, truancy and school dropout, petty theft, sexual violence, and, in the most extreme cases, complicity in armed robbery and ritual killings. These are not hypothetical concerns; they are documented realities in Owo and in secondary schools across Ondo State.

Tunde Fatunde, in his study of youth delinquency and social control in southwestern Nigeria, identifies a cluster of interlocking causes that are peculiarly salient in towns like Owo. He writes that “the delinquent secondary school student in

southwestern Nigeria is, more often than not, the product not of personal pathology but of structural abandonment: abandoned by a family fractured by economic stress, abandoned by a school system too underfunded to engage meaningfully with his humanity, and abandoned by a state too preoccupied with elite accumulation to invest seriously in his future.” This is a devastating diagnosis, and an accurate one. In Owo, several specific contextual factors aggravate these structural tendencies. The proximity of Owo to forest reserves and rural hinterlands has made it a site of operations for criminal networks, including kidnapping gangs, who actively recruit unemployed and disillusioned youth. The proliferation of cult groups in Rufus Giwa Polytechnic has had a gravitational effect on secondary schools in the town, creating a pipeline through which secondary school students are initiated into criminal fraternities before they ever sit for their West African Senior School Certificate examinations. Sola Adeyemi, in her work on adolescent crime and the Nigerian school system, notes that “the vertical integration of cult networks from tertiary to secondary education institutions represents one of the most alarming trends in Nigerian youth violence, creating structures of criminal socialisation that are difficult to dismantle once established.”

The consequences of student delinquency extend well beyond the individual delinquent. They include the deterioration of the learning environment in Owo's secondary schools, the perpetuation of cycles of poverty through school dropout, the normalisation of violence within the student population, the erosion of community confidence in educational institutions, and the creation of a pool of young, idle, and angry men and women available for recruitment into more organised criminal enterprises. These consequences are, in effect, both the product and the producer of the broader security deficit in Owo.

Ameliorating Insecurity in Owo: Cultural-Spiritual Weaponised Tools

There is a high level of insecurity in Owo and its adjoining towns. This paper recommends the deployment of the spiritual power historically used (as engaged) in Owo when ugly incidents arose in towns across Yoruba land. Owo is a historic town in Yoruba land with an outstanding record of curbing negative developments that ravaged its environment in the past. This paper therefore recommends that the town invoke such spiritual powers in nipping in the bud the menace of insecurity ravaging the area. Accounts persist of the powers of the women referred to as “Oronse” and “Ogwa Ajaka”, who reportedly demonstrated spiritual powers, including self-sacrifice, in bringing peace to Owo. Such powers should be invoked by community leaders in stamping out the cankerworm that has been unleashing terror on the town.

Strategies for Curbing Secondary School Students’ Delinquency in Owo

Having diagnosed the problem with appropriate rigour, the paper now turns to remedies. What follows is a framework of strategies that is holistic, context-sensitive, and grounded in the specific realities of Owo. These strategies are not exhaustive, nor are they mutually exclusive; they are, rather, interconnected elements of a coherent approach to reclaiming the dignity and futures of Owo’s secondary school students.

School-Based Security Education:

Secondary schools in Owo must integrate security and civic education into their regular curriculum, not as a peripheral subject dismissed in favour of examination preparation, but as a core component of the school’s moral and civic mission. Students must be taught not only about the dangers of cult membership and drug abuse but about the philosophical foundations of community, the ethics of responsibility, and the meaning of citizenship. Ngozi Adeyemi argues persuasively that “adolescents who

develop a coherent civic identity, grounded in clear moral values and a sense of belonging to a community larger than themselves, are significantly more resistant to the lure of criminal affiliation.”

Mentorship and Role Model Programmes:

Political aspirants in Owo, in particular, have both the resources and the moral obligation to sponsor structured mentorship programmes that connect secondary school students with successful, ethically grounded professionals from the Owo community. These programmes must not be tokenistic, confined to a single speech during school prize-giving day, but sustained, structured, and designed to build genuine relationships of guidance and accountability. Bola Dauda rightly notes that “the political aspirant who invests in youth mentorship is not merely performing philanthropy; he is constructing the social capital upon which sustainable community security ultimately depends.”

Community-School Security Partnerships:

Security agencies, particularly the Amotekun Corps and the Nigeria Police Force, must establish formal liaison relationships with secondary schools in Owo. This means not merely the occasional visit by a uniformed officer to deliver a stern lecture but a regularised, respectful, and trust-building engagement in which security agents are seen not as threats but as allies. Kemi Aborisade, argues that “when young people experience security agencies as partners in their development rather than as instruments of oppression, the entire dynamic of youth-security relations is transformed, and with it, the probability of delinquent behaviour.”

Family Support and Parental Engagement:

The family remains the first and most powerful institution of socialisation, and no strategy for curbing student delinquency can afford to ignore it. Schools in Owo must develop robust systems of parental engagement that go

beyond the annual Parent-Teacher Association meeting. Economic support programmes that alleviate the financial stress on families, which, as Fatunde notes, is a primary driver of youth delinquency, should be designed and funded as part of any comprehensive security strategy.

After-School Programmes and Productive Engagement: The hours between the close of school and the time a student returns home are, in the research literature on youth delinquency, consistently identified as the period of highest risk. Owo needs well-funded, attractively designed after-school programmes that engage students in sports, arts, vocational training, and civic activities. Dipo Fashola observes that “communities that invest in structured, meaningful after-school engagement for their youth invariably report lower rates of delinquency, substance abuse, and cult affiliation; and the investment required is a fraction of the social cost of the delinquency it prevents.”

Drug Rehabilitation and Cult De-Radicalisation: For students already enmeshed in drug abuse or cult affiliation, punitive approaches alone are demonstrably insufficient. What is needed are properly resourced rehabilitation centres staffed by qualified counsellors, psychologists, and social workers, where young people can be supported through the painful process of disaffiliation and re-integration. Sola Adeyemi's research confirms that “the absence of rehabilitative infrastructure in Nigerian communities essentially consigns delinquent youth to permanent marginalisation, from which the only exit is further and deeper criminalisation.”

Legislative and Policy Advocacy: Finally, political aspirants and community leaders in Owo must actively advocate at the state level for legislation that funds school security, mandates community policing partnerships, and establishes standards for the treatment of delinquent youth. Ondo State has, in

recent years, developed several security-related policies, but their implementation in Owo has been patchy and underfunded. What is needed is not new legislation but the political will to implement existing frameworks with consistency, transparency, and adequate resources.

Conclusion

Owo is a town that deserves better. Its history demands it; its culture commands it; and the blood of those who have perished in the town's escalating violence cries out for it. But better does not arrive by itself; it is built, patiently and purposively, through the coordinated action of all who have a stake in the community's future. Security synchrony, as argued throughout this paper, is not a slogan. It is a philosophical commitment and a practical programme: a commitment to the recognition that safety is a shared responsibility, and a programme of specific, funded, monitored interventions that involve political aspirants, security agencies, and the community in a genuine partnership of protection and prevention. Secondary school students' delinquency, treated here as both a symptom of broader security failure and a contributing cause of it, requires a response that is simultaneously structural and personal, institutional and relational, punitive and rehabilitative.

The strategies proposed here are not without difficulty. They require resources that are not always available; they require political will that is not always present; and they require a quality of community trust that must be painstakingly rebuilt after years of betrayal. It is nonetheless reasonable to conclude, based on the evidence and analysis presented, that these difficulties are not insuperable. The people of Owo have faced harder things and survived. The question is not whether Owo can build a safer future; the question is whether those who have the power to act will choose to do so. Political aspirants in Owo are called upon to make security synchrony the centrepiece of their public commitments; security agencies are called upon to embrace

community partnership not as a public relations exercise but as a genuine operational philosophy; the citizens of Owo are called upon to reclaim their agency as the first and last line of defence for their own community; and the teachers, parents, and community elders who shape the lives of secondary school students are called upon to invest, with renewed urgency, in the moral and civic formation of the young people who will determine what Owo becomes. Security is not the absence of danger; it is the presence of a community determined to face danger together. That is the synchrony this paper has sought to describe, one entirely within the reach of Owo.

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