



Arms Proliferation and Violent Conflicts in Nigeria: A Study of Ogun State

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Abstract

Arms proliferation is a security concern for many countries and has recently been severely experienced in Nigeria. This study, through a descriptive research design, examined arms smuggling and arms proliferation and its attendant effects on violent conflict in Ogun State. The study adopted the Failed State theory as its theoretical framework and the questionnaire as a primary instrument of data collection. Using a simple random sampling technique, 400 respondents were sampled out of a target population of 23,258. Descriptive and ANOVA analysis were applied and the hypotheses, tested. The study found that arms are proliferated into Ogun State through Idiroko border via different routes and means. The study also established that arms proliferation has significant effects on violent conflicts in Ogun State. It concludes that if arms proliferation continues unrestricted, Ogun State would become a hub for militarised civil life and weaken state control. The study therefore recommends policy interventions that target arms smuggling and disarmament to curb arms proliferation. It also underscores the need for the government to address underlying drivers of violence and strengthen state institutions.

Keywords

Arms Proliferation, Human Security, Idiroko Border, Nigeria, Violent Conflicts.

1. Introduction

The survival of human race, human dignity and economic prosperity are dependent on formidable security architecture. Since the beginning of time, man has had to deal with internal and external threats. Nations continue to deal with aggression from either within or other sovereign states and non-state actors. This perennial nature of violent conflicts is documented by Oyekanmi, et al., (2021), as they argued that, conflicts are inevitable to humans and come with varying degrees, dimensions and severity. While there are a plethora of challenges facing the world in recent times, one of the main issues that states and

governments around the world are presently grappling with but without a sustainable solution is the illegal and indiscriminate proliferation of arms. In this respect, the proliferation of arms especially, Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs) in the hands of non-state actors has had a dramatic effect on world peace and engendered violent conflicts.

The United Nations (2020) has revealed that there are well over one billion illegal arms in circulation globally which is acclaimed to be responsible for over 200,000 deaths annually. On the other hand, Amnesty International (2020) revealed about 1.4 million gun-related deaths between 2012 and 2016. This means, about 2000 people get killed or injured daily, while over 2 million people are living with gun-related injuries mostly caused by illegal possession of arms around the globe. According to the Small Arms Survey (2022), there were reportedly 531,000 violent deaths, of which 211,000 (40%) were related to illegally acquired guns only in the year 2020. Other studies also confirm that the vast majority of fatalities, violent crimes, and armed conflicts worldwide are caused by the proliferation of SALWs (Adejumo *et al*, 2021; Dadur & Aliyu, 2021; Komolafe & Olusola, 2020). The situation is even worse in developing countries given the weak state capacity to detect, monitor, and curb illegal and violent crimes. Generally, the situation in Africa is chaotic. According to a research conducted by the Africa Union and the Small Arms Survey in the year 2018, there are roughly 100 million small and light weapons in Africa, of which 80% are in the hands of civilians or non-state actors, primarily rebel, militia, and terrorist groups (African Union, 2018).

Arms proliferation is not a recent phenomenon; however, the pattern, trend, and effects have continued to be of great concern to the international community as it has persisted unabated. In this regard, Salihu and Ozden (2020) argue that arms proliferation in Africa became a major problem during the Cold War as superpower rivalries fuelled proxy intra-state conflicts. In several African nations, such arms are used by criminal groups for armed banditry, kidnapping, armed espionage, cattle rustling, terrorist attacks, militancy and armed robbery. The Global Organized Crime Index (2021) ranked arms trafficking as the third most prevalent criminal market globally and is particularly rife in Africa¹. These weapons are the main causes of the militarisation of civil life and the growth of a violent culture. The bloodshed caused by small guns claims more than a thousand lives every day, victims including many civilians especially women and children. Whereas small arms are used in conflicts, their effects are disproportionate, extensive, and long-lasting (Religion for Peace, 2022).

Furthermore, the spread of illegal arms throughout West Africa has exacerbated the region's violent conflicts. Unchecked and uncontrolled movements of arms have caused devastation, poverty, underdevelopment, and heightened conflict (Amos, 2023). The permeable borders of West African nations are exploited for the circulation of arms and intensifying conflicts. This is because the permeability of borders makes it easier for the existence of illicit trans-border networks like those involved in drug and human trafficking (Agbegbedia, 2022). The spread of illegal arms in Nigeria has been hazardous. According to Abdul-Qadir, Kamar, & Ibrahim (2020), over 70% of all illegal small guns in West Africa are believed to be in Nigeria, and the regular interception of illegal small arms trafficking both within Nigeria and over the border by security services in Nigeria is worrisome. Moreover, SB Morgen Intelligence (2021) reports 6.145 million small arms in the hands of non-state actors in Nigeria. These arms are consistently being held by non-state actors who are responsible for the destructions on several levels as criminal groups have been able to intensify and increase their firepower over the decades. In that case, unchecked and uncontrolled access to arms in Nigeria has led to

¹ <https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/ocindex-2021/>

armed conflicts creating a culture of death and terror among the populace and even threatening the government (Frank & Agu, 2021; Abdul-Qadir *et al*, 2020).

Arms proliferation is a huge concern as it affects development and human rights. It fuels and intensifies confrontations, weakens respect for international humanitarian law, and threatens weak but legitimate governments while benefiting the non-state actors that organise and carry out crimes. For instance, arms proliferation is considered the major reason for the amplified violent clashes between herders and farmers in the South-West, the Niger Delta militant crises in the South-South, and religious and terrorist attacks in the North, among others (Roosevelt & Alexander, 2021). Similarly, Relief Web (2022) subscribes categorically by highlighting that in the past ten years, Nigeria's security issues have claimed over 60,000 lives. All the lives lost have been linked to illegal arms smuggled into the nation and circulating uncontrollably in the country. The nation has remained plagued by violent conflicts caused by insurgents, bandits, farmer-herder clashes, gang and cult fights, and separatist agitations. These problems have resulted in murders, property damage, growing poverty, and evictions (Relief Web, 2022).

According to Campell and Rotberg (2021), even if some other aspects of the state still function, Nigeria has failed as a state from her first obligation to provide security and maintain a monopoly on the use of violence. The government has taken some measures such as security checks and interception, military suppressions and border closure among others but proliferation of SALWs has remained unabated. Based on this fact, Campbell and Rotberg (2021) predict a growing danger to the government's hold on power from the unbridled violence being committed by various armed criminal organisations. Nigeria has woefully failed in ensuring peace and security of its citizens as many have suffered the evils of illegal arms in the hands of non-state actors; their businesses destroyed, family members lost forever, living in continued fear and death grip; repressions, disrupted economic activities leading to loss of means of livelihood; the list of evil is endless (Frank & Agu, 2021).

Extant studies have showcased the notoriety of violent conflict through unauthorised possession of weapons in Nigeria (c.f. Agbegbedia, 2022; Umaru, 2021; Agba & Ukpabio, 2021). Such studies have explained how illegal arms have motivated violent conflict through various dimensions such as insurgency, banditry and kidnapping. However, attention to how unlicensed individuals and groups get access to SALWs and how the uncensored arms proliferation is wreaking havoc on Nigeria's national security architecture has not been duly established in the literature. More so, the notoriety and persistent effects of arms proliferation on violent conflicts in Ogun State has not drawn adequate academic attention.

Ogun State is one of 36 states of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. In recent years, Ogun State has become famous for its rapid industrialisation (Femi, 2024). The State covers an area of 16,980 square kilometres and lies at latitude 7°00' North and longitude 3°35' East. The State is located in the south-western region and is bounded by Oyo and Osun states to the north, Lagos state to the south, Ondo state to the east, and the Republic of Benin to the west (Majolagbe, Alkali & Onwordi, 2014). According to City Population (2022), Ogun State has an estimated population of 6,379,500, the majority of whom are predominantly Yorubas. This study focused primarily on Idiroko town, sharing border with a neighbouring country, the Republic of Benin. Idiroko town was chosen for the study as a flash-point of arms transfer and easy proliferation of same to Nigeria through the borderline. The study area is situated in Ipokia Local Government Area (LGA) of Ogun State; it has served as an official crossing point since the early 1960s. The native inhabitants of Idiroko are the Yorubas, Anagos, and Egun, with English, pidgin and French as spoken languages in the town. However, it's a settler's district as it has many migrants as a result of cross-border trade (Omoniyi, 2004; Afolayan, 2000). The

major economic activity in the town is mostly subsistence farming, although trans-border trading both legal and illicit is the town's main source of income.

Violent conflicts are frequently reported in Ogun such that is now becoming a hub of violence. For instance, Daud (2021) reveals attacks that featured killings, raping, tortures and cruelty being carried out by herders' terrorist wielding illegal arms. The herder crisis claimed about 50 lives while several houses, farmland and other properties were set ablaze in Ketu-Yewa axis in 2021 alone (Mojeed, 2021). Recent reports documented attacks on a church which led to the death of the pastor and abduction of 7 members (Ogunnaike, 2023). The state of insecurity is so high in Ogun State that some community members have reportedly deserted their communities for neighbouring towns in fear of being killed while others continue to live in constant fear (*The Nation*, 2021).

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Arms are weapons that use explosives to shoot off a projectile or flame. Arms refer to weapons whose frame or receiver is made of explosive material that will or is intended to, shoot a projectile or flame (Center for Development of Security Excellence, 2023). The United Nations Report of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms defined arms as commercial firearms and military-style weapons used for inflicting injuries (Ikoh, 2018). For this study, arms are classified as SALWs. These are types of arms which are readily available, affordable, lightweight, portable, strong, and simple weapons that can be used by one to two people in armed conflicts, criminal activity, and violence. A small arm is characterised as a firearm with a calibre of less than 20 mm that may be carried and fired by one person on foot along with its ammunition. A "light weapon" is any lethal weapon or weapons system that may be carried by a crew of up to five people on foot, along with any necessary parts and ammunition (Jenzen-Jones & Schroederr, 2017).

Arms proliferation then refers to a state in which SALWs are widely available. It implies that those who aren't allowed to carry guns or members of the public could obtain guns without restriction. Kofi Annan, cited in Aver, Nnorom and Ilim (2014) explained proliferation of arms as the act of selling weapons and munitions to private individuals, particularly in conflict areas. On the other hand, Kenneth and Eunice (2018) defined arms proliferation as the rapid and steady increase in the quantity or number of weapons through manufacturing, patronage and use. In the context of this study, arms proliferation refers to uncontrolled and unrestricted flow of illegal arms especially SALWs into the hands of non-state actors measured by respondents' opinions on arms proliferation.

The World Health Organisation (1996) conceived violence as the deliberate use of physical force or power whether actual or threatened against oneself, another individual, a group or a community, aiming at causing suffering, injury, death, psychological distress, mal-development or deprivation. Whereas, Michel (2019) considers violent conflict as a form of conflict in which the parties involved resort to the use of physical force, resulting in the loss of life to advance their goals. Similarly, Bushman and Huesmann (2010) view a violent conflict as an aggressive behaviour that has the potential to result in severe suffering, bodily harm, injury, or even death. Also, Chaturvedi (2006) argued that violent conflict is a harmful behaviour, whether intentional or unintentional, directed towards other people or their property. In this respect, violent conflict can take many different forms, including threats, terrorism, coercion, brutality, intimidation, repression, riots, and revolutions. In the context of this study, violent conflict is the use of arms and weapons by parties involved to inflict injuries, sufferings or cause death.

Analytically, violent conflicts within the state can be explained by the Failed State Theory. Based on the writings of Robert Kaplan (1994), the theory postulates that, security risks and threats in any nation are a result of the State's failure to carry out its essential functions (Albertson & Ashley, 2016). This theory is premised on three core gaps: security gap, capacity gap, and legitimacy gap (Tyagi, 2012; Call, 2008; Anyanwu, 2005). It argues that when a nation fails to adequately provide, security, essential services, and legitimacy to its population, then such a nation is potentially vulnerable to a variety of conflicts which ultimately weakens it. The theory also maintains that as a nation fails in its provision of essential service e.g. security, it begins to struggle to establish political authority, incapable of maintaining peace, order and security within its borders. In this regard, it can be hypothesised that arms proliferation in Ogun State is linked to the inability of Nigerian State to control its borders.

Expounding the Failed State Theory, The Fund for Peace (2017) in its report identified clearly certain salient features that may clearly point a failed state. These include; the security apparatus, economic and political indicators. The security apparatus indicator takes into account the threat and major criminal variables to a state's security, including bombings, attacks, battle related deaths, rebel movements, mutinies, coups, acts of terrorism, insurgencies, organised crime, arms proliferation, group or ethnic grievance, factionalised elites as well as the public's perception of domestic security. The economic indicator takes into account elements associated with deterioration of a nation's economy such as trends of the nation's progressive economic deterioration as indicated by GDP, per capita income, unemployment, inflation, productivity, debt, levels of poverty, and business failures. It also considers abrupt declines in trade income, foreign investment, commodity prices, and any collapse or depreciation of the national currency, uneven development and brain drain. Lastly, the State legitimacy index takes into account the representation and transparency in the administration's interactions with the people it serves. It should be noted that, the indicator measures the public's degree of trust in governmental institutions and procedures and evaluates the consequences when that trust is lacking, through flawed elections as seen by large-scale public protests, persistent acts of civil disobedience.

Although Nigeria may not perfectly fit the model of a failed state the same level as Somalia or the former Sierra Leone, the theory particularly exposes the plight of Nigeria as a sovereign nation. The Nigerian State unflinchingly battle with all these three core gaps at a disheartening level. The security gap is near comatose as armed bandits, kidnappers, terrorists, and armed smugglers among others regularly destroy the lives and properties of Nigerians (Afrobarometer, 2023). Such criminals can carry out these magnitudes of destruction due to proliferated SALWs. Hence, SALWs are smuggled heavily through the Nigeria borders daily as the nation lacks the capacity to curb and sanction these trafficking. Smugglers are having a filled day as arms are trafficked through the very borders of the State from other States. The resultant effect of these is clearly evident in the economic and political gaps which are worse off; huge unemployment rates and debts, poverty, inflation, uneven development, depreciated naira, flawed elections and breakdown of law and order. Nigeria could be evidently on the brink of being regarded as a failed state (Ibaba, 2021).

The empirical literature on arms proliferation in Nigeria has taken various routes. Some of the previous research examined the effects of arms proliferation on national security (e.g. Chidozie & Augustine, 2023; Ramatullah, 2022; Christian & Uzodinman, 2022; Omaku, Musa & Ibrahim, 2022; Agba & Ukpabio, 2020). For instance, Chidonzie and Augustine (2023) point to arms proliferation as the biggest contributor to the epileptic food security in the nation. The study argues that arms are used in herder-farmer clashes, Boko Haram insurgent groups, and bandits among others to wreak havoc on agrarian communities most especially in the northern

region of Nigeria. Arms proliferation has also been linked to intensified electoral violence, and growth and constant violence of ethnic militias. In some states such as Kogi, arms proliferation has led to loss and displacement of people, destruction of properties, and uncontrolled violent use of arms and created a general sense of insecurity (Abdul-Qadir, et al., 2020).

Another body of research has attempted to explain the factors leading to arms proliferation and how such proliferation challenges national security. In most cases, arms proliferation has been linked to corruption by government officials, lucrative profit, illiteracy, unemployment, poverty and failure of the Nigerian State to control its borders (Obafemi, Chagba & Omale, 2023; Umaru, 2021; Ebye-Ph, & Okon, 2021; Abdul-Qadir, et al., 2020). Moreover, the failure of the state to guarantee security has pushed some ethnic groups to resort to SALWs for self-defence and defending their means of livelihood (Umaru, 2021).

Studies from other countries show that arms proliferation has become an instrument deployed by non-state actors to threaten, embarrass and weaken governments, causing economic downturns, political instability, humanitarian crises, development setbacks and also regional instability (Pereladei, 2024; Kuyang & Moncef, 2022; Bernard, 2020; Timothy, 2019). It is noteworthy to state that the study conducted by Pereladei (2024) submitted that arms proliferation is the major threat to human security in Mali. The study argued that insurrection and terrorist acts by the Tuareg and other armed groups have consistently been a threat to the Malian government in northern Mali and have led to physical, food, economic, environmental and political insecurity. Also, a study by Bernard (2020) on arms proliferation and the Horn of Africa maintained that the region's instability is associated with ongoing hostilities, criminal activity, and acts of terrorism, all of which have deepened the demand for and supply of illegal and illicit arms. Somalia, Uganda and most especially Sudan and South Sudan have been characterised by destructions and heightened by arms proliferated into these States.

Other studies (Anaukwu & Onwuekwe, 2024; Salihu & Doke, 2024; Felix, 2022) have equally documented the implications of illicit arms transfer on fundamental human rights, peace-building efforts and stability of state security architecture. However, these studies have majorly focused on understanding violent conflicts and its effects on state security and economy. There has been less attention on the sources through which these illegal weapons are being transferred. Few studies carried out in Nigeria on arms proliferation and violent conflicts have mainly traced the nefarious activities of Boko-Haram insurgents in the northern part of the nation with no major emphasis on the south-west region, especially Ogun State. This particular State shares a boundary with another nation and is known for its booming and profitable smuggling enterprise (Olufemi, 2020). Moreover, many of the previous studies were qualitatively conducted or over-relied on secondary sourced data. It is on this premise this study focuses on examining the relationship between arms smuggling at the borders and arms proliferation, as well as the reasons and effects of arms proliferation on violent conflict in Ogun State. The study adopted a quantitative research design to bridge the existing methodological gap and it tested two hypotheses:

H₀₁: Borders are not source of arms proliferation in Ogun State.

H₀₂: Arms proliferation does not have significant effect on violent conflict in Ogun State.

3. Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive research design with the use of a questionnaire as its primary instrument of data collection. The target population of the study was drawn from Idiroko border town in Ipokia North Local Government Area of Ogun State with a population projection of 23,258 (Malechi & Mathias, 2021). The border town is a porous one with many entry and exit

points and is popular for its lucrative smuggling enterprise (Olufemi, 2020). It is due to this fact that the town houses the administrative offices for the Nigerian Army, Police, Customs, and Immigration because it is a border town (Udeme, 2012; Omoniyi, 2004). The target population comprised of residents, personnel of the Nigeria Customs Service, the Nigeria Immigration Service, the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency, the Police Force, traders and businessmen and women in the target area. Utilising Yamane (1967) sample size formula;

$$SS = \frac{PS}{[1 + (PS \times PE^2)]}$$

Where; SS= Sample Size, PS=Population Size (23,258), PE= Precision Error (0.05%), 1=Mathematical constant, the calculated sample size was 397, rounded off to 400 to accommodate missing or unreturned copies of the questionnaires shared. The 400 participants were sampled using a simple random sampling technique. A total of 392 or 98% copies of the questionnaires out of the 400 administered were recovered. The questionnaire was designed on a 4-point Likert Scale where respondents were asked to express their levels of agreement or disagreement with the given statements. The reliability of the study was tested for internal consistency using Cronbach's coefficient alpha ($\alpha=0.70$). The test showed that borders are the source of arms proliferation in Ogun State ($\alpha=0.736$), and arms proliferation has a significant effect on violent conflicts in Ogun State ($\alpha=0.797$). The study adopted content validity to ensure that the research instrument represents all aspects of the construct. The data obtained from the questionnaire were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) Version 26 and interpreted through frequency counts and percentages. The hypotheses were tested using ANOVA analysis.

4. Results

4.1. *Smuggling and arms Proliferation*

The study's first objective was to establish the relationship between arms proliferation in Ogun State and arms smuggling at the borders. In this regard, the respondents were presented with five different statements that aimed to establish the relationship between arms smuggling techniques and arms proliferation in the state. Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics results of respondents' views on the smuggling and proliferation of arms in Ogun State.

The results show a majority, 368 (93.9%), of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that Ogun State is notorious for arms proliferation with a Mean score of 3.34 and a Standard Deviation of .590. Similarly, a significant majority of the respondents (88.3%) confirmed that Ogun State serves as a route for the proliferation of arms with a Mean score of 3.16 and Standard Deviation, .610. The third, fourth and fifth statements explored the techniques arms smugglers use. The results show that 353 (90.1%) of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed, that arms are smuggled with the aid of bags and other little means through the Ogun State borders which leads to proliferation with a Mean score of 3.20 and Standard Deviation of .619. More so, 376 (96%) of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed, arms are heavily transported by vehicles through the borders into Ogun State which increase abruptly the arms in hands of non-state actors with a Mean score (3.16) and Standard Deviation (.545). Lastly, 352 (89.8.4%) of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that arms are brought in through many of the illegal entry and exit routes in Ogun State which end up in the hands of non-state actors with a Mean score (3.34) and Standard Deviation (.669). Table 1 reveals a grand mean of 3.22 which signifies respondents' agreement to the arms smuggling and arms proliferation in Ogun State.

Table 1: Respondents Views on Smuggling and Arms Proliferation in Ogun State (n=392)

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	M	SD	Total
1.	Ogun State is notorious for its arms proliferation.	158 (40.3%)	210 (53.6%)	24 (6.1%)	-	3.34	.590	392 (100%)
2.	Ogun State borders serves as route for the proliferation of arms.	110 (28.1%)	236 (60.2%)	46 (11.7%)	-	3.16	.610	392 (100%)
3.	Arms are smuggled with the aid of bags and other little means through Ogun State borders which leads to proliferation.	134 (34.2%)	219 (55.9%)	39 (9.9%)	-	3.24	.619	392 (100%)
4.	Arms are also heavily transported by vehicles into Ogun State through the borders which increase abruptly the arms in hands of non-state actors.	86 (22%)	290 (74%)	8 (2%)	8 (2%)	3.16	.545	392 (100%)
5.	Arms are brought in through many of the illegal entry and exit routes in Ogun State town which end up in the hands of non-state actors.	127 (32.4%)	225 (57.4%)	32 (8.2%)	8 (2%)	3.20	.669	392 (100%)
Grand Total						3.22		

Source: Field Data, 2024.

Generally, these findings confirm existence of arms smuggling business in Ogun State. The findings are reinforced by news reporters of several outlets which confirm the popularity of Ogun State, particularly Idiroko border town in Ipokia Local Government Area for smuggling business (Olufemi, 2020; Deborah, 2023; *The Guardian*, 2021). These reports the border town is primarily known for smuggling in illegal goods, including Indian hemp, foreign rice, used cars, poultry products, used clothing, exotic drinks and arms.

Furthermore, ANOVA analysis was conducted to test whether arms proliferation in Ogun State was linked to smuggling activities at the borders. Arms proliferation (item 1 in Table 1) was used as a dependent variable while items 5, 4, 3, and 2 (the same table) as predictors. The results in Table 2 indicate 55% of arms proliferation in Ogun State can be explained by the predictors and by 54.5% for adjusted R Square. The model suggests a moderate relationship ($R=0.741$). The results suggest that 45% of arms proliferation in Ogun State can be explained by other factors. Studies have uncovered a link between urbanisation and crimes (Clement, 2023; Ojo & Ojewale 2019; Venatus, 2019). Since Ogun State is experiencing rapid urbanisation and industrialisation, partly, arms proliferation can be linked to those factors.

Moreover, the results of F-statistics tests ($F = 118.132$) in Table 3 show the relationship is highly significant with $p < 0.0001$. The implication of this is that there is a direct association between arms smuggling at Ogun borders and arms proliferation. Arms smuggling through the Idiroko border is a recurring issue that has intensified through techniques. Studies and reports revealed that illegal arms worth several millions of naira are being intercepted regularly by security officials at the border. For instance, on 16th March 2024, the Nigeria Custom at the Idiroko border intercepted arms and ammunition worth 557 million naira which were concealed in several *garri sacks* (*Premium Times*, 2024). Also, 975 rounds of ammunition concealed in five bags of locally produced rice were intercepted at the Idiroko border on the 29th of November, 2023 (*Punch*, 2023).

H₀₁: **Borders are not a source of arms proliferation in Ogun State**

Table 2: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.741 ^a	.550	.545	.398

a. Predictors: (Constant), item5, item3, item2, item4

Table 3: ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	Df.	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	74.873	4	18.718	118.132	.000 ^b
	Residual	61.321	387	.158		
	Total	136.194	391			

a. Dependent Variable: item1

b. Predictors: (Constant), item5, item3, item2, item4

Source: Field Data, 2024

Additionally, on July 18th, 2023, the security agencies were able to intercept a cache of guns of various sizes such as shotguns, Ak47s, Assault rifles, revolvers, airguns and dynamite which were concealed in a truck at the Idiroko border (*The Guardian*, 2023). This finding is consistent with the study of Abdul-Qadir et al. (2020) which revealed arms are smuggled into the nation from other neighbouring nations in Africa. Their study points to porous and poorly policed borders as the major source of arms proliferation in Nigeria. In this regard, the cross-border proliferation of arms has led the nation to be saturated with illegal, unregistered and uncontrolled weapons, especially SALWs. This is however not peculiar to Nigeria alone, many nations in Africa especially Libya, Sudan, Somalia, Mali, and Uganda are known for cross-border smuggling of arms (Pereladei, 2024; Bernard, 2020).

4.2. *Reasons for arms proliferation*

The second objective of the study was to establish the reasons for arms proliferation in Ogun State. Similarly, respondents were presented with five-item statements (items 6-10 in Table 4) and asked to express the extent they agreed or disagreed with the statement. Descriptive statistics in Table 4 show that unemployment, poverty and economic hardship, corrupt security officials, get-rich-quick syndrome and the profitable nature of smuggling as the leading reasons for arms proliferation in the Ogun State with a mean range of 2.79 to 3.26 (Table 4). These factors are responsible for the unchecked and unregulated access criminal groups and individual actors have to arms.

Table 4: Respondents' Views on the Reasons for Arms Proliferation in Ogun State

S/N	Items	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	M	SD	Total (%)
6.	High rate of Unemployment	142 (36.3%)	218 (55.6%)	24 (6.1%)	8 (2%)	3.26	.662	392 (100%)
7.	Poverty and economic hardship	134 (34.2%)	218 (55.6%)	40 (10.2%)	-	3.24	.622	392 (100%)

8.	Corrupt Security Officials	80 (20.4%)	203 (51.8%)	55 (14%)	54 (13.8%)	2.79	.923	392 (100%)
9.	Get rich quick syndrome	127 (32.4%)	210 (53.6%)	31 (7.9%)	24 (6.1%)	3.12	.797	392 (100%)
10.	Profitable nature of smuggling	119 (30.4%)	211 (53.8%)	54 (13.8%)	8 (2%)	3.13	.713	392 (100%)
Grand Total						3.10		

Source: Field Data, 2024.

For instance, as shown in Table 4, more than 80% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that arms proliferation in Ogun state is an outcome of the high rate of unemployment, economic hardship, ambition for quick wealth and profitable nature of smuggling. Moreover, the majority (70%) of respondents explained arms proliferation in terms of corruption within the security organs. The results suggest tackling arms smuggling requires a multifaceted approach that addresses both livelihoods and governance concerns. Similar factors have been found to contribute to arms proliferation in other parts of Nigeria (Obafemi, Chagba & Omale, 2023; Abdul-Qadir Tukur & Ibrahim, 2020).

4.3. *Arms Proliferation and Violent Conflicts*

The third objective of the study was to establish the effects of arms proliferation on violent conflicts in Ogun State. As revealed previously, Ogun State has become one among notorious hubs of violent conflicts in Nigeria. The effects of arms proliferation on violent conflicts was measured by assessing respondents views on the extent they agreed or disagreed with the statements that arms proliferation in Ogun State has increased conflict casualties, escalated violence, undermined peaceful settlement of disputes, increased humanitarian crisis and created a sense of terror or culture of violence. Previous reports have indicated that the Idiroko border town has transformed into a kind of battleground where lives mostly those of innocent people are lost frequently as a result of incessant skirmishes between arms dealers and personnel of the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) (Olufemi, 2020).

The results in Table 5 reveal that the majority of the respondents, 337 (86%) agreed/strongly agreed that arms proliferation has increased conflict casualties while 313 (79.8%) of the respondents agreed/strongly agreed that it has escalated violence and prolonged conflict in Ogun State. Similarly, 313 (89.9%) of the respondents agreed/strongly agreed that arms proliferation has undermined the peaceful settlement of disputes, and 360 (91.9%) of the respondents agreed/strongly agreed that it has increased the humanitarian crisis. Then, 344 (87.7%) of the respondents agreed/strongly agreed that arms proliferation has created a general sense of terror and a culture of violence. With a total mean of 3.21, the majority of the respondents strongly agreed that arms proliferation has a significant effect on violent conflicts in Ogun State.

Table 5: Respondents Views on Effects of Arms Proliferation on Violent Conflicts in Ogun State

S/N	Items	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	M	SD	Total (%)
11.	Increased conflict casualties	158 (40.3%)	179 (45.7%)	39 (9.9%)	16 (4.1%)	3.22	.786	392 (100%)
12.	Escalated violence and prolonged conflict	151 (38.5%)	162 (41.3)	74 (18.2%)	8 (2%)	3.16	.789	392 (100%)
13.	Undermined peaceful settlement of	143	170	71	8	3.14	.780	392

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	disputes	(36.5%)	(43.4%)	(18.1%)	(2%)			(100%)
14.	Increased humanitarian crisis	150	210	24	8	3.28	.669	392
		(38.3%)	(53.6%)	(6.1%)	(2%)			(100%)
15.	Created a general sense of terror and a culture of violence	158	186	40	8	3.26	.721	392
		(40.3%)	(47.4%)	(10.2%)	(2%)			(100%)
Grand Total						3.21		

Source: Field Data, 2024.

On the other hand, ANOVA analysis was conducted to test whether arms proliferation has any significant effect on violent conflicts in Ogun State. Arms proliferation was measured through a Likert Scale (item 1 in Table 1). In this particular case, arms proliferation was used as an independent variable while items 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15 (table 5) as predictors.

H₀₂: Arms proliferation does not have any significant effect on conflicts in Ogun State

Table 6: Arms Proliferation and Violence: ANOVA Results

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Increased conflict causalities	Between Groups	61.186	2	30.593	65.929	.000
	Within Groups	180.506	389	.464		
	Total	241.691	391			
Escalated violence and prolonged conflict	Between Groups	91.563	2	45.782	117.174	.000
	Within Groups	151.988	389	.391		
	Total	243.551	391			
Undermined peaceful settlement of disputes	Between Groups	72.800	2	36.400	85.713	.000
	Within Groups	165.200	389	.425		
	Total	238.000	391			
Increased humanitarian crisis	Between Groups	34.545	2	17.272	47.792	.000
	Within Groups	140.588	389	.361		
	Total	175.133	391			
Created general sense of terror and culture of violence	Between Groups	52.708	2	26.354	68.004	.000
	Within Groups	150.751	389	.388		
	Total	203.459	391			

Source: Field Data, 2024.

The result in Table 6 reveals the F statistics values (65.929, 117.174, 85.713, 47.792, and 68.004) and significant values $P < 0.5$ which signifies that the null hypothesis which states that arms proliferation does not have any significant effect on violent conflicts in Ogun State is rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis. This implies that arms proliferation has a significant effect on violent conflict in Ogun State. The effects of arms proliferation on violent conflict in Ogun state are evident. For instance, crimes have increased terribly as the State which is a hub of rising industries is gradually becoming a den for all manner of criminals to thrive, ranging from smugglers, gang and cult clashes in Idiroko and other places like Iperu and Sagamu to kidnappings, armed robberies in broad daylight, and ritual killings among others (The *Guardian*, 2024). Other studies in Nigeria also have linked arms proliferation to violent conflicts such as separatist agitations, militancy, banditry, herder-farmer conflicts and ethnic chauvinism (Chidonzie & Augustine; 2023; Abdul-Qadir *et al*, 2020). The proliferation of arms has claimed several lives, destroyed properties and created a hostile environment in Nigeria. These findings imply that, unless the Federal Government of Nigeria and the state governments implement strenuous measures to control the proliferation of arms, the country will likely continue to hub violent conflicts. In the long run, arms proliferation will sink Nigeria to the verge of collapse.

5. Conclusion

The effects of arms proliferation on violent conflicts in Ogun State cannot be overflogged. The results are daunting from escalated conflict and prolonged violence to increased conflict casualties all of which have created a general sense of terror and insecurity. The state of affairs in recent times will continue to give a thriving chance for arms to be proliferated and the nation heavily threatened on all sides. If arms proliferation continues unabated and escalates violent conflict, civil life in Ogun State would become militarised and would totally weaken state control. When the state security architecture becomes fragile and susceptible to purveyors of crimes and violence entrepreneurs, the state would lose legitimacy and anarchy reign. The prospect for the end of state sovereignty is higher if illegal arms continue to proliferate.

It is pertinent to situate that, increased budgetary allocation to security and water-tight oversights to interior ministries alone may not suffice to tame the rapid intensification of conflicts unless the basis of motivation for these conflicts is unearthed and dislodged. Availability of instruments of violence 'weaponises' disgruntled individuals and groups, thus the propensity to compromise peace and threaten state stability becomes enticing when these weapons are readily available.

Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended as a policy response to the proliferation of arms that the government should introduce intervention policies such as arms control measures like arms embargo, disarmament and community engagement initiatives to curb arms proliferation in the State. Moreover, the government should address underlying drivers of arms smuggling such as unemployment with empowerment programmes and strengthen state institutions for effective policing and accountability. Lastly, international cooperation with the Republic of Benin, the nation that shares a border with Ogun State would help to coordinate efforts that address illicit cross-border arms flows and promote peace and security.

Acknowledgement

All authors whose works were consulted and cited are acknowledged and appreciated.

Funding

No funding was received for this work.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest to disclose.

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