SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS OF SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS (SALW) PROLIFERATION AND CRIMES IN KADUNA CENTRAL SENATORIAL DISTRICT

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Abstract

Research Problem: *The excessive availability of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) is obvious across Senatorial Districts of Kaduna state, Nigeria including Kaduna Central Senatorial District. This phenomenon has fueled the prevalence of crimes with profound implications for the socio-economic development of the District.*

Methods/Theory: *The study adopts the theory of Differential Opportunity. A cross sectional research design was utilized to gather relevant information from the respondents. Primary data were collected through questionnaires and interviews, while the secondary data were obtained from journals, textbooks, and online publications. Utilizing Taro Yamane formula, a sample size of approximately 400 respondents was determined, with 347 valid questionnaires successfully retrieved for analysis.The data were analysed using descriptive statistics*

Results: *The findings reveal that widespread availability of SALW stems from porous borders, illegitimate production of small arms, poverty, unemployment, marginalization, and other structural deficiencies. Crime remains prevalent in the study location. The socio-economic impacts of SALW proliferation and crimes include destruction of livelihoods and infrastructure, disruption of educational systems, loss of income, food insecurity and widespread human rights violation.*

Conclusion: *The widespread SALW have fostered crime and negatively impacted socio-economic development of Kaduna Central Senatorial District of Kaduna state.*

Key Contribution and Recommendations*: The study contributes to existing knowledge by highlighting the socio-economic consequences of SALW proliferation. It recommends that the governmentimplement critical*

initiatives such as investing in advanced surveillance technologies for comprehensive border security and addressingunderlying socio-economic challenges. These measures will help to curb SALW proliferation and crime, thereby promoting peace, security, stability, and socio-economic development in Kaduna Central Senatorial District.

Introduction

Nigeria, the sixth most populated nation globally, is a diverse state rich in mineral and natural resources adequate to fulfil the socio-economic requirements of its populace. Nonetheless, the ongoing violence, criminal activity, and insecurity have obstructed the complete realisation of these advantages, endangering peace, security, stability, and progress. The primary reason driving these difficulties is the rampant proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) throughout the 109 Senatorial Districts of the country, including Kaduna Central Senatorial District.

The Small Arms Survey (2018) indicates that roughly 10,972,000 guns are present in West Africa, with an estimated 6,731,000 located in Nigeria. Of the total firearms in the country, approximately 6,145,000 are held by non-state actors and criminal organisations, accounting for 91.3% of the small arms and light weapons in circulation. The extensive accessibility of small arms and light weapons among these groups has exacerbated violent conflicts and criminal activities, encompassing communal disputes, ethno-religious tensions, separatist movements, militancy, maritime piracy, ritualistic murders, illicit oil theft, armed robbery, cult activities, human trafficking, abduction, and cattle theft throughout the nation. The Kaduna Central Senatorial District has undergone considerable upheaval due to the entry of small arms and light weapons (SALW).

Numerous studies have indicated that criminal organisations employ the unregulated areas within Kaduna State's Senatorial Districts, especially in Kaduna Central Senatorial District, as secure locations for illicit activity. Abiodun, Solomon, and Nathaniel (2024) emphasised the incursion of bandits and kidnappers into the Kajuru forest, which encompasses thousands of hectares in Kaduna Central. The unauthorised manufacture of weapons further empowers these criminal factions within the state. These criminal organisations have perpetrated assaults on multiple communities, resulting in fatalities, extensive displacement, and the devastation of agricultural areas and property. The Kaduna State Emergency Management Agency (KADSEMA) reported that banditry resulted in the displacement of more than 289,375 individuals across 551 communities in 12 local government areas during the first quarter of 2024 (This Day, 2024). BirninGwari and Chikun LGAs experienced the most severe impact, displacing 70,893 and 26,345 individuals, respectively. This circumstance has intensified unemployment and poverty as the displaced individuals persist in experiencing adversity following the loss of their means of subsistence.

The rise of unconventional existential threats from Islamist terrorists, such as Boko Haram and Ansaru, notably in the Kajuru, BirniGwari, and Chikun Local Government Areas of Kaduna State, is becoming concerning (Timothy, 2022). These rebels, equipped with advanced weaponry, regularly perpetrate chaos on people and government authorities in these areas. Moreover, they have been assaulting educational institutions, infrastructure, and healthcare systems, so jeopardising peace, stability, and socio-economic growth. For example, primary school pupil enrolment in Kaduna state decreased from 2,111,969 in the 2021/2022 academic year to 1,734,704 in the 2022/2023 academic year (The Nation, 2024). This

circumstance jeopardises human capital advancement and economic expansion. The Nigerian government has instituted many strategic steps to combat the proliferation of SALW. The legislature enacted the Firearms Ordinance (1958), Firearms Acts (1959), and Firearms Registration Acts (1990). The Kaduna State administration and peace partners have initiated programs, including amnesty for arms surrender and the enhancement of local conflict resolution institutions.

Nonetheless, these efforts have exerted minimal influence in mitigating the spread of SALW and associated criminal activities. The residents of Kaduna Central Senatorial District persistently endure kidnapping, abduction, human rights violations, sexual assault, and humanitarian crises. Despite extensive material on SALW proliferation, the socio-economic implications in Kaduna Central Senatorial District remain largely unexamined. This gap demands the current study, which examines the socio-economic ramifications of SALW proliferation and criminality in Kaduna Central.

Statement of the Problem

Nigeria has a significant issue due to the pervasive availability of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW), which jeopardises peace, security, and socio-economic development. Throughout the decades, criminal organisations and terrorists have exploited the rampant availability of small arms and light weapons to commit egregious crimes and instigate insecurity across. The Kaduna Central Senatorial District is no exception. Criminals and abductors have devastated communities throughout Kaduna Central Senatorial District, obliterating lives, livelihoods, and infrastructure, while precipitating humanitarian catastrophes. The Kaduna State Government Security Report indicated that more than 1,192 individuals were killed across the three senatorial districts in 2021 (Daily Post, 2022). The selection of SALW by these criminal organisations is attributable to its lethality, durability, mobility, and user-friendliness, particularly in ungoverned areas like the Kajuru forest within the District. This predicament is exacerbated by frail governmental institutions, permeable borders, illicit weaponry manufacturing, elevated illiteracy levels, and systemic inadequacies.

Notwithstanding governmental and stakeholder efforts, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons persists, significantly impacting socio-economic development. This research aims to analyse the effects of small arms and light weapons (SALW) and crime on the socio-economic development of Kaduna Central Senatorial District. The study specifically intends to:

To investigate the factors contributing to the excessive availability of SALW in Kaduna Central Senatorial District;

To evaluate the socio-economic implications of SALW proliferation and crimes in Kaduna Central SenatorialDistrict;

Literature Review

Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW)

Grasping the idea of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) is essential for any discourse on arms proliferation and its socio-economic consequences. Scholars and institutions have provided differing definitions of SALW. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Convention (2006) characterises small arms as weapons utilised by an individual, encompassing firearms and other destructive instruments or devices, including explosive bombs, incendiary bombs, gas bombs, grenades, rocket launchers, missiles, missile systems and landmines. It includes revolvers, automatic-loading pistols, rifles, carbines, machine guns, assault rifles,

and light machine guns. This viewpoint emphasises the portability of small arms, which can be effortlessly transported and utilised by an individual.
The UNDP National Crisis and Recovery Commission (2008) describes light weapons as those intended for operation by a crew of two or three individuals, although they may also be utilised by a single operator. This encompasses heavy machine guns, hand-held under-barrel and mounted grenade launchers, portable anti-aircraft guns, portable anti-tank guns, recoilless rifles, portable launchers for anti-tank missile and rocket systems, portable launchers for anti-aircraft missile systems, and mortars with a calibre of less than 100 millimetres.
The United Nations General Assembly (2006) offers an expansive definition, characterising SALW as "any portable lethal weapon that expels or launches, is designed to expel or launch, or may be readily converted to expel or launch a shot, bullet, or projectile through the action of an explosive." Notwithstanding these differing viewpoints, there is agreement on fundamental attributes such mobility, lethality, and user-friendliness. Significantly, SALW had been extensively utilised to commit egregious offences in Nigeria, particularly within the research region.

Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW)

According to Alimba (2008), the proliferation of arms denotes "the extent of rapid escalation in the quantities of arms present in a location, whether it be a community, region, country, or continent." Malam (2014) similarly defines SALW proliferation as the aggregation and dissemination of weapons of varying sizes and numbers inside a certain territory or nation. This situation is propelled by variables including negligent manufacturing, distribution, exportation, diversion, transfer, and buildup of lethal weapons, especially from highly regulated or lawless regions. Jibrin (2019) further underscores that arms proliferation is defined by the accessibility of weapons to individuals or groups, attributable to their widespread availability in society. SALW proliferation denotes the process by which weapons circulate more widely within communities, becoming accessible to non-state actors and criminal organisations, hence exacerbating insecurity and criminal activity. The repercussions are particularly apparent in unstable regimes characterised by poor institutional restrictions, corruption, porous borders, and socio-economic disparities that facilitate illegal arms circulation.

Crime

Crime is a complex and evolving issue that appears in various ways within society. Tappan (1960) characterises crime as a deliberate act or omission that contravenes criminal law, executed without defence or justification, and penalised by the state as either a felony or misdemeanour. Marchuk (2014) elaborates on this definition, characterising crime as "a socially detrimental act or omission that violates the values safeguarded by a state." It is a legally banned event that may result in prosecution in criminal proceedings and subsequent penalty upon conviction. Sowmyya (2011) characterises crime as an act that is vehemently condemned by society, necessitating both criminal intent and conduct shaped by social, economic, biological, and psychological influences.
The definition of crime differs throughout communities and changes over time, including offences such as terrorism, kidnapping, banditry, fraud, murder, robbery, arson, burglary, rape, examination malpractice, and child neglect. In the research area, criminal activities frequently coincide with the spread of small arms and light weapons, as well as systemic issues including unemployment, poverty, and insufficient law enforcement. Comprehending this interaction is crucial for

analysing the socio-economic ramifications of crime in the Kaduna Central Senatorial District. Furthermore, offences including banditry, armed robbery, and livestock rustling persist as significant challenges to peace, security, and socio-economic advancement in the region.

Socio-economic Development

Socio-economic development is an essential objective for nations, as it influences the quality of life, stability, and future opportunities for individuals. Societies that attain socio-economic development are more capable of delivering education, healthcare, employment, and social opportunities, therefore enhancing well-being and alleviating poverty. Given the significance of socio-economic development, it is essential to comprehend and mitigate any threats to it. Chompa (2022) defines socio-economic development as the progression of social and economic improvement within a society. Social development entails the modification of social institutions to augment a society's ability to achieve its goals, whereas economic development relates to the expansion of economic prosperity within nations and regions to elevate the welfare of their populations. This study defines socio-economic development as the interplay between the social and economic situations of the residents of Kaduna Central Senatorial District, Kaduna State.

Theoretical Framework

This research use the "Theory of Differential Opportunity" as its theoretical basis. The idea popularised by Richard Cloward and Lloyd Ohlin (1960) aims to elucidate the reasons individuals from various social strata partake in specific forms of criminal behaviour and the chances accessible to them. Cloward and Ohlin contended that crime arises not merely from poverty but from the absence of access to legitimate avenues for societal accomplishment. The idea posits that specific social classes possess superior access to lawful options compared to others, resulting in disparities in criminal behaviour among groups. Individuals are more inclined to commit crimes when lawful options are few and illicit opportunities are abundant. This theory is pertinent for analysing the socio-economic consequences of SALW proliferation and criminal activity in the Kaduna Central Senatorial District. It elucidates the participation of specific social classes in offences such as banditry and armed robbery, particularly with the prevalent availability of small arms and light weapons (SALW). The current proliferation of criminal organisations engaging in violent actions, adversely impacting socio-economic development, can be attributed to the facile availability to illicit small arms and light weapons (SALW). This dynamic has significant ramifications for the region's socio-economic advancement.

Drivers of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) Proliferation

Researchers and specialists have recognised multiple variables contributing to the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW). Factors contributing to the issue encompass the proliferation of remains from World War II weaponry, permeable borders, illicit small arms manufacturing, extended civil conflicts, and systemic inadequacies. Throughout the Cold War, global powers like the United States and the former Soviet Union extensively supplied small arms and light weapons to their allies in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Despite the conclusion of the Cold War in 1991, the remnants of these weapons were not adequately retrieved or eliminated, resulting in their surplus availability. This circumstance has perpetuated inter-state and intra-state proxy wars, disputes, and criminal activities. Permeable borders have substantially

facilitated the rampant proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Kaduna State and Nigeria overall. Martin KuleAbeshi states that there are more than 1,400 unmanned illicit routes in Nigeria, especially along its borders with Cameroon, Niger, Benin, and Chad (Chinedu, 2019). Beyond these delineated unmanned borders, there exist ambiguous passages utilised for the transit of illegal migrants and covert arms trafficking networks, which present significant dangers to Kaduna Central Senatorial District and Nigeria as a whole. Criminal organisations have illicitly transported substantial amounts of small arms and light weapons via terrestrial routes, maritime ports, and airports, with considerable shipments intercepted and confiscated during strategic security operations.
The unauthorised manufacture of small arms and light weapons by unscrupulous individuals or organisations persists in fuelling the proliferation of firearms in the Kaduna Central Senatorial District. Security operatives have discovered many illicit weapons production facilities in Kaduna and other regions of the country. Troops from Operation Safe Haven discovered a firearms manufacturing facility and seized 22 advanced weapons, including handguns, AK-47 rifles, submachine guns, and ammo in Kafanchan, Jema'a LGA (The Nation, 2023). The production of firearms hampers initiatives to limit the excessive proliferation of small arms and light weapons, as these unregistered and untraceable arms draw support from criminal organisations and non-state entities. These factions frequently utilise the weaponry to cause devastation in villages throughout Kaduna state.
Structural weaknesses, including poverty, unemployment, and marginalisation, have contributed to the heightened availability of small arms and light weapons in Kaduna State. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) indicated that the unemployment rate increased to 33.3 percent, affecting nearly 23.2 million Nigerians in March 2021, marking the highest level in at least 13 years (Izuaka, 2023). The unemployed Nigerians persist in poverty, driving many towards criminal activities involving small arms and light weapons (SALW). The youth are the most adversely impacted by unemployment and poverty. A significant number of unemployed youngsters frequently obtain tiny guns to commit crimes to fulfil immediate necessities. Corrupt politicians have abused this scenario by enlisting teenagers to assault political adversaries and incite chaos during elections. Okereke (2021) emphasises the significant influence of poverty, unemployment, and economic inequalities on the proliferation of SALW, notably in Kaduna State. The study delineates how economic adversities propel individuals towards criminal endeavours, including armed robbery, kidnapping, and livestock rustling. These offences not only jeopardise regional security and stability but also exacerbate the demand for small guns, hence facilitating their extensive availability and utilisation.

Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) Proliferation and Crimes in Kaduna State

The spread of small arms and light weapons is an indisputable contemporary affliction, considerably exacerbating crime and insecurity. Laurance (1998) contends that the rampant proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) significantly contributes to the prevalence and severity of violent crimes in Africa, as well as the elevated figures of insurgents and criminals globally. Nigeria has been afflicted by armed robbery, kidnapping, insurgency, and terrorism in numerous states, including Kaduna, as a result of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW).
SB Morgan (2023) reported 582 cases of violent crimes, primarily kidnapping, involving 3,620 victims in Nigeria from July 2022 to June 2023. Kaduna State documented

the second-largest tally of kidnapping victims, totalling 690 abductees throughout its 23 Local Government Areas (LGAs). The operational frameworks of these criminal syndicates encompass highway assaults, residential break-ins, and focused monitoring, with financial profit as the principal incentive. Individuals abducted have endured significant psychological trauma, abuse, and distress in several villages within the Kaduna Central Senatorial District. Furthermore, from May to June 2024, personnel of the Nigeria Police Force, Kaduna Command, confiscated eight automobiles, seven motorbikes, one tricycle, and twenty-nine stolen cattle from armed robbers, kidnappers, and bandits in Kaduna State (Kaduna State Government, 2024). In the course of this operation, five AK-47 rifles, seven improvised firearms, and 1,817 rounds of live ammunition were confiscated, and other captives were liberated. The substantial seizure of arms and ammunition highlights the pervasive accessibility and utilisation of weapons in criminal activities. Notwithstanding these endeavours, the public persists in experiencing acute terror, rendering life intolerable and undermining social cohesion. The situation presents significant threats to socio-economic growth and erodes the authority of Kaduna State institutions.

Moreover, criminal organisations have taken advantage of unregulated areas in Kaduna to commit crimes and instigate insecurity. Abiodun et al. (2024) emphasised the incursion of bandits and kidnappers in the Kajuru forest of Southern Kaduna. These criminal organisations have transformed the forest into operational hubs for planning assaults and training new recruits, including young individuals. The lack of state infrastructure has rendered these areas suitable for weapon storage, camp establishment, and the detention of captives during ransom discussions. Criminal syndicates persist in besieging towns in the Kaduna Central Senatorial District, including adjacent rural areas, perpetrating mass abductions, violent raids, and homicides throughout time.

Socio-economic Implications of Small Arms and Light Weapons Proliferation and Crimes in Kaduna Central Senatorial District

The extensive accessibility and utilisation of SALW exacerbate violent crimes and insecurity, obstructing peace, stability, and socio-economic progress in Kaduna State. The protracted assaults conducted by militia factions, robbers, and terrorist entities have resulted in widespread fatalities and displacement inside communities throughout the Kaduna Central Senatorial District. The Kaduna State Government (2024) stated that more than 1,192 residents, including farmers, were slain in the state in 2021. The mass killings and displacements have exacerbated poverty and damaged familial structures, especially when numerous productive household members have succumbed to the lethal assaults of criminal gangs. This has diminished household income, elevated dependency ratios, and undermined familial resilience.

Moreover, the rampant proliferation of small arms and light weapons has adversely affected food security and livelihoods throughout the Senatorial District. Agricultural activities have been abandoned by farmers due to direct assaults or the apprehension of ambushes by criminal organisations. This condition has intensified food insecurity, elevated poverty levels, disturbed market dynamics, deterred investment, and enhanced the vulnerability of rural people. The influx of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) into Kaduna State has significantly diminished, hindering economic advancement in both the state and Nigeria overall (The Vanguard, 2021). Moreover, the spread of small arms and light weapons has persistently inflicted suffering,

social upheaval, and displacement in Kaduna. The Kaduna State Emergency Management Agency (KADSEMA) reported that banditry displaced more than 289,375 residents across 551 localities in 12 local government areas during the first quarter of 2024 (This Day, 2024). The BirninGwari and Chikun Local Government Areas experienced the most severe impact, resulting in the displacement of 70,893 and 26,345 individuals, respectively. This displacement has undermined family structures, diminished social life, and precipitated humanitarian disasters. Christopher (1995) contended that trauma in violence-afflicted communities originates from profound concerns ingrained in collective psyches, intensified by the pervasive accessibility of weapons. These circumstances diminish personal security, present continual dangers to life, and eventually compromise social well-being.

Criminal activities have adversely affected the educational system. Primary school enrolment in Kaduna State decreased from 2,111,969 in the 2021/2022 academic year to 1,734,704 in the 2022/2023 academic year (The Nation, 2024). Persistent assaults on educational institutions by bandits and terrorists have resulted in closures and disruptions in education. This condition has disrupted curriculum, deprived students of opportunity to cultivate critical thinking abilities, elevated illiteracy rates, and diminished human capital development, consequently jeopardising long-term economic progress.
The prevalence of violent crime has inhibited investment and tourism, both critical for local development in Kaduna State. Amadi and Chukwuemeka (2024) illustrated how the apprehension of violence impacts economic activities, resulting in closures, income loss, and increased unemployment. This economic recession intensifies poverty, establishing a detrimental loop where the absence of opportunity propels individuals into criminal behaviour, further destabilising the area. The expansion of small arms and light weapons has resulted in extensive human rights violations, encompassing rape, suffering, and psychological trauma. In 2022, Kaduna recorded more than 3,168 incidences of gender-based violence (GBV), comprising 220 incidents of rape (Peoples Daily, 2023). The acts of violence have inflicted profound psychological trauma and social disintegration, undermining community cohesion and depleting the social capital essential for developmental initiatives (Ochogwu& Aku, 2011). The deterioration of trust in communities has hindered collective action, while the trauma linked to crimes persists in adversely affecting mental health and social stability over the long run.

Methodology

This research utilised a cross-sectional survey methodology to investigate the socio-economic consequences of small arms and light weapons proliferation and crime in the Kaduna Central Senatorial District, encompassing seven Local Government Areas (LGAs). Two Local Government Areas, Chikun and Kajuru, were deliberately chosen because of their elevated crime rates. The study population comprises eight wards within these LGAs: Kajuru, Maro, Kufana, KasuwanMagani, Chikun, Sabon Gari, Kuriga, and Narayi, with a total estimated population of 255,091 (NPC, 2006; Kaduna State Projected Total Population, 2024). A sample size of 400 respondents was calculated via the Taro Yamane formula (1967). Multi-stage sampling was employed: Initially, two Local Government Areas (LGAs), Kajuru and Chikun, were randomly picked from the District; thereafter, eight wards—Kajuru, Maro, Kufana, KasuwanMagani, Chikun, Sabon Gari, Kuriga, and Narayi—were selected using simple random sampling. Purposive sampling for Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) focused on

security personnel, traditional leaders, community representatives, government servants, students, victims of banditry, and rehabilitated or convicted bandits. The data collection integrated both primary and secondary sources. Structured questionnaires produced 347 valid responses, and 14 key informant interviews were conducted utilising semi-structured guides. Secondary data were obtained from academic books, peer-reviewed journals, government publications, statistical reports, and reputable web sources. The analysis utilised descriptive statistics, including frequency tables and percentages, to examine correlations among variables.

Data Analysis and Results

This section presents and analyses data elicited from respondents during the study. Out of 400 questionnaires distributed, 347 were retrieved and validated, representing a response rate of 86.75%. Data were tabulated and analyzed using descriptive statistics to summarize demographic characteristics and perceptions on SALW proliferation, crime and socio-economic implications of the study area.The results are presented below:

Table 1: Gender of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage %
Male	215	62.0
Female	132	38.0
Total	347	100.0

Source: Field Survey, Author's Computation (2025)

Table 1 indicates that 62.0 per cent of respondents were male and 38.0 per cent were female. The predominance of male respondents reflects the social structure of Kaduna Central, where men often participate more actively in community security, politics, and civic engagements. Nonetheless, the 38% female participation is significant, as it captures women's perspectives on displacement, household insecurity, and social instability associated with SALW proliferation.

Table 2: Age of Respondents

Age Category	Frequency	Percentage %
18–27 years	71	20.5
28–37 years	108	31.1
38–47 years	92	26.5
48–57 years	51	14.7
58 years and above	25	7.2
Total	347	100.0

Source: Field Survey, Author's Computation (2025)

Most respondents (57.6%) were between 28 and 47 years, representing the economically active age group most exposed to insecurity and political mobilization. The prevalence of younger respondents suggests that arms proliferation and violent crimes directly affect the productive population, while older respondents (21.9%) provided more reflective insights into the historical roots of insecurity in the district.

Table 3: Religion of Respondents

Religion	Frequency	Percentage %
Islam	189	54.5
Christianity	142	40.9
Traditional	10	2.9
Others	6	1.7
Total	347	100.0

Source: Field Survey, Author's Computation (2025)

Table 3 shows that Islam (54.5 %) and Christianity (40.9 %) dominate the religious composition of Kaduna Central. This reflects the district's pluralistic faith structure, where ethno-religious identity frequently intersects with conflict. The nearly balanced representation of both religions ensures that the study captures a broad range of perceptions regarding the link between religious tension and violent crime.

Table 4: Educational Attainment of Respondents

Educational Attainment	Frequency	Percentage %
Non-Formal Education	39	11.2
Primary Education	61	17.6
Secondary Education	124	35.7
Tertiary Education	96	27.7
Others	27	7.8
Total	347	100.0

Source: Field Survey, Author's Computation (2025)

Table 4 reveals that most respondents (35.7 %) had secondary education, while 27.7 % had tertiary education. The relatively high educational profile implies that respondents could comprehend the questionnaire items and express informed opinions on security challenges. Those with non-formal or primary education (28.8 %) contributed lived community experiences, ensuring that both educated and grassroots voices are represented.

Effects of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) Proliferation on Crimes

This section presents respondents' perceptions based on the five thematic dimensions identified in the study instrument. Each construct was measured using a five-point Likert scale: *Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (UD), Disagree (D),* and *Strongly Disagree (SD),* allowing for standardized responses and simplified analysis.Results are summarised below with percentage frequencies and interpretive analysis.

Table 5: Porous Borders and Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons

Item/Statements	StronglyAgree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	StronglyDisagree	Total
Nigeria's porous borders make it easy for illegal arms to enter the country.	183 (52.7%)	109 (31.4%)	27 (7.8%)	18 (5.2%)	10 (2.9%)	347 (100%)

Weak surveillance and inadequate manpower at border posts encourage arms smuggling.	168 (48.4%)	117 (33.7%)	29 (8.4%)	23 (6.6%)	10 (2.9%)	347 (100%)
Corruption among border officials contributes to light weapons proliferation.	192 (55.3%)	105 (30.2%)	23 (6.6%)	18 (5.2%)	9 (2.7%)	347 (100%)
Modern technology is not effectively used to monitor Nigeria's borders.	160 (42.9%)	124 (34.3%)	30 (10.7%)	21 (8.1%)	12 (4.0%)	347 (100%)
Uncontrolled border routes significantly increase violent crimes.	174 (46.4%)	118 (36.0%)	25 (9.5%)	20 (5.8%)	10 (2.3%)	347 (100%)

Source: Author's Computation, 2025

Table 5 presents respondents' views on the reasons behind the excessive availability of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW), with particular focus on porous borders in Kaduna Central Senatorial District and Nigeria at large. The findings reveal an overwhelming consensus that porous borders are a major enabler of small arms proliferation in the study area. On the first item, a significant majority of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with this assertion. These findings align with Chinedu's study, which highlighted the existence of over 1,400 unmanned illegal routes in Nigeria, particularly along borders with Cameroon, Niger, Benin, and Chad. According to Chinedu, these routes have been exploited by criminal gangs and clandestine networks to smuggle SALW into Nigerian states. During an interview, the Chief Imam of Central Mosque, MararabaRido, noted *"the porous nature of Nigerian borders has contributed to the widespread availability of small arms. These criminals also deal in drugs and further use these weapons to commit heinous crimes in our communities."*

Subsequently, the findings indicate that weak surveillance, inadequate manpower, and corruption at border posts further exacerbate the proliferation of SALW in Kaduna Central and Nigeria. The majority of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with these observations, while only a few disagreed. These findings are consistent with previous research linking insufficient security personnel and corruption to SALW proliferation. The World Institute for Peace (2025) reported that substantial funds allocated for border surveillance and security infrastructure have been mismanaged, leaving over 90 manned borders vulnerable and unmanned crossings entirely neglected. This financial misappropriation has weakened operational capacity and hindered the deployment of adequate surveillance technologies and personnel. The Police Officer from Chikun LGA mentioned: *"Our take-home is small ooh. How many security operatives do we even have in this country to man the borders? We will continue to try our best towards securing the nation".* Overall, the findings affirm that

porous borders are not merely a peripheral issue but a systemic failure directly contributing to the prevalence of small arms and the rise of crimes in the region.

Table 6: Organized Crime and the Illegal Arms Market

Item/Statements	StronglyAgree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	StronglyDisagree	Total
Armed robbery is sustained by easy access to light weapons.	171 (49.3%)	122 (35.2%)	33 (9.5%)	15 (4.3%)	6 (1.7%)	347 (100%)
Kidnapping for ransom has increased the demand for weapons.	184 (52.2%)	101 (29.4%)	34 (9.8%)	19 (5.7%)	9 (2.9%)	347 (100%)
Black markets and smuggling networks supply criminals with weapons.	179 (51.6%)	105 (30.3%)	30 (8.6%)	18 (5.2%)	15 (4.3%)	347 (100%)
Organized crime syndicates play a central role in arms spread.	166 (47.8%)	126 (36.3%)	33 (9.5%)	16 (4.6%)	6 (1.8%)	347 (100%)

Source: Author's Computation, 2025

Table 6 illustrates respondents' strong agreement that organized crime and illegal markets underpin the spread of SALW in Kaduna Central Senatorial District. The highest levels of agreement were observed for armed robbery, kidnapping for ransom, black market supply, and organized syndicates. Only a minority of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with these assertions. These findings align with Ojediran (2022), who observed that illicit arms significantly fuel violent conflict, crime, and insecurity, and further undermine economic stability and national progress. Chief Joel Adamu narrated: *"My community has been ridden with crime resulting from the excessive availability of weapons. I want to confirm to you that necessary steps need to be taken to ease the suffering of our people. Killings are too much"*. Indeed, the data reveal that proliferation is not only a by-product of conflict but also an economic enterprise driven by profit motives and criminal syndicates.

Table 7: Implications of SALW Proliferation on Violent Crimes

Item/Statements	StronglyAgree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Proliferation of light weapons has increased violent crimes and insecurity.	171 (49.3%)	128 (36.9%)	27 (7.8%)	15 (4.3%)	6 (1.7%)	347 (100%)
Access to light weapons has negatively affected economic activities.	157 (45.3%)	123 (35.5%)	36 (10.4%)	18 (5.2%)	13 (3.6%)	347 (100%)
Spread of small arms has led to displacement and property destruction.	143 (41.2%)	120 (34.6%)	39 (11.2%)	26 (7.5%)	19 (5.5%)	347 (100%)

Weapon proliferation has weakened trust among ethnic and religious groups.	168 (48.4%)	114 32.8%)	32 (9.2%)	20 (5.8%)	13 (3.8%)	347 (100%)
Circulation of small arms hinders law enforcement and community safety.	146 (42.1%)	125 (36.0%)	41 (11.8%)	19 (5.5%)	16 (4.6%)	347 (100%)

Source: Author's Computation, 2025

The data in Table 7 provide strong evidence that respondents overwhelmingly perceive the proliferation of SALW as a major contributor to violent crime, with far-reaching negative implications for socio-economic development in Kaduna Central Senatorial District. Specifically, respondents agreed that proliferation has intensified insecurity and eroded social trust and coexistence in the study area. These findings align with the Kaduna State Government (2024) report, which documented crimes such as kidnapping, banditry, cattle rustling, and armed robbery across the State's Senatorial Districts. The report revealed that over 1,192 inhabitants, including farmers, were killed in 2021, with many more displaced.

Similarly, the findings indicate that economic activities and property ownership are directly undermined by persistent violence and crime. Amadi and Chukwuemeka (2024) observed that criminal activities disrupt business operations, leading to closures, income loss, and rising unemployment in the district. Rev. Gejere informed that *"My fellow religious worshipers have continued to experience poverty and intense hardship due to the heightened level of insecurity in our communities. We cannot confidently go to farm. We are always afraid of these bad people. It is well oh!"*. These findings confirm that SALW proliferation not only fuels direct criminality but also generates broader socio-economic consequences, deterring investment, displacing populations, and weakening the state's capacity to maintain peace.

Discussion of Interview Responses

The qualitative data from key informant interviews substantially enhance the quantitative findings by offering contextual insights into the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, crime, and their effects on socio-economic development in the Kaduna Central Senatorial District. Interviews were performed with a variety of stakeholders, including security personnel, community leaders, victims of banditry, traditional rulers, civil servants, civil society organisations (CSOs), and rehabilitated criminals. The respondents' viewpoints underscore the intricate variables influencing the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and the ensuing implications for community safety and security.

Security officers highlighted that inadequate border surveillance and ineffective enforcement of arms control legislation contribute to the illicit influx of firearms. These observations corroborate the quantitative findings, which indicated a robust correlation between border insecurity and arms proliferation. Previous research relating porous borders to the inflow of small arms and light weapons in Nigeria further substantiate their claims. Martin KuleAbeshi observed the presence of various unmonitored illicit ways that criminals employ to get firearms into the country.

Community leaders and traditional authorities emphasised that rising religious and ethnic conflicts, along with organised crime, are primary catalysts for the heightened demand for self-defence weapons. The respondents' perspectives correspond with the quantitative findings, which revealed a significant association between organised crime and

weaponry proliferation. These findings align with Adeyanju and Oladokun (2021), who contend that the accessibility of weapons intensifies violent crime and hinders growth. Mrs. Grace Adams remarked, “I wish to convey that not all individuals who possess firearms are thieves; some carry weapons for self-defence against these criminals who have been infiltrating our village to abduct and murder residents.” What actions do you expect our troops to take when the anticipated protection from our security staff is lacking? Contrite criminals offered additional revelations regarding the supply chain of small arms, elucidating how illicit marketplaces and corrupt political frameworks perpetuate the arms trade. Their testimonies validate the quantitative data, which indicated a substantial correlation between political instability and the increase in SALW availability. Local political actors, especially during elections, often indirectly enable the distribution of guns to armed groups, which subsequently utilise them to scare and dominate voters. This viewpoint corresponds with survey results that identified illicit marketplaces as a significant catalyst for weaponization in Kaduna Central. This aligns with Eyitayo and Makhosazana (2021), who highlighted the function of organised criminal networks in the distribution of illegal firearms. The proliferation of small arms and light weapons has significantly undermined community trust and security. Victims of banditry detailed the psychological impact of armed violence, recounting tales of property loss, displacement, and physical damage. These anecdotes highlight the catastrophic consequences of pervasive weapon availability and reflect the quantitative findings, wherein respondents indicated a decline in trust among ethnic and religious groups owing to violence exacerbated by arms accessibility. Mr. Hosea Solomon further remarked, "We have lost confidence in our leaders and security personnel, as we are unable to sleep in our homes due to their negligence." Small guns are abundant in our region, and I have been abducted and endured suffering at the hands of my captors. My experience is abysmal, Sir. The deterioration of social cohesion surfaced as a persistent subject in discussions with community leaders and traditional authorities. Their observations indicated that the accessibility of weapons has undermined communal cohesion and obstructed inter-community collaboration, hence perpetuating cycles of violence. The interviewees said that rebuilding confidence would demand more than disarmament; it would require community-driven peace initiatives and enhanced cooperation between local leaders and security forces. This aligns with survey results, which highlighted the significance of community-oriented solutions and leadership initiatives in alleviating the effects of SALW on local security.

Conclusion

This study highlights the significant influence of small arms proliferation and criminality on the socio-economic development of Kaduna Central Senatorial District. Porous borders, ethno-religious strife, and the illicit arms trade are significant variables contributing to the abundant availability of small arms and light weapons (SALW) and criminality in the research area. The ramifications of pervasive small arms and light weapons, together with criminal activity, are profound, resulting in various social and economic obstacles that persistently impede progress in Kaduna State. Numerous lives have been lost, and many individuals have been displaced owing to the unregulated proliferation and abundant availability of small arms and light weapons (SALW). The following recommendations present a strategy for improving outcomes in addressing the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) and its effects on socio-economic development in Kaduna Central Senatorial District and throughout Nigeria.

Recommendations

Government should provide adequate funding and advanced surveillance technologies to strengthen border security and curb the influx of SALW into Nigeria's Senatorial Districts including Kaduna Central.

The government must prioritize the reduction of poverty, unemployment, marginalization, and corruption. Tackling these underlying issues will diminish the incentives for individuals to engage in illicit arms trade and contribute to long-term peace and stability.

Government and stakeholders need to promotecommunity policing initiatives in collaboration with formal security agencies to improve intelligence gathering and trust between citizens and law enforcement.

Nigeria must strengthen its participation in regional security frameworks such as ECOWAS conventions on SALW control, ensuring harmonized enforcement across borders.

Towards addressing the plight of victims of crimes, the government of Kaduna State should provide a comprehensive support system including reliefmaterials, psychological support,educational and healthcare support as well as economic empowerment inKaduna state.

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