

An Empirical Assessment of Small Arms and Light Weapons Proliferation and Insecurity in Nigeria's Fourth Republic

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Abstract

The study examined the impact of small arms and light weapons proliferation on insecurity in Nigeria's fourth republic. A cross sectional research design method was adopted and data was collected via a survey of three hundred (300) respondents in South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria using non-probability sampling technique. Data collected were analyzed using correlation and linear regression analysis with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 23. The findings of the study revealed that there is significant and positive relationship between small arms and light weapons proliferation and insecurity in Nigeria's fourth republic. As predicted, the study also revealed that small arms and light weapons proliferation exerts a positive and statistically significant impact on insecurity in Nigeria's fourth republic. On the basis of these findings, the study recommends among others a thorough overhauling of laws regulating small arms and light weapons in Nigeria.

Keywords: *Insecurity, small arms, light weapons, proliferation, Nigeria state.*

Introduction

Nigeria in recent times has become a theatre of bloodshed, genocide and insecurity due to the violent and carnage activities of militants, terrorists and vociferous separatist agitations in the southeast. Social vices like political violence, armed robbery, armed banditry, oil bunkering, ethno-religious strife, vandalization, religious fundamentalism, kidnapping, militancy, Boko Haram, human trafficking and other forms of violent crimes, which are creating survival, stability and security challenges for the country thrive more with little or no counter check by the government. Proliferation and rise in the possession of small arms and light weapons (SALWs) since the country returned to democratic rule in 1999 is undoubtedly a regrettable feature of this setting, the presence of which makes casualties of violent attacks unprecedentedly high. Ogbu,

Ereke, James and Yusufu (2017:19) affirm that “violent behaviour does not necessarily begin with arms, but it swells dramatically when arsenals are available. Particularly in already volatile environments endemic with poverty, mistrust or injustice and absence of governmental structures.

In support of the above, Kevin (2007:23) rightly posits that “small arms and light weapons proliferation is acclaimed to be the major security challenge to people, societies and states globally, fueling insurgency, human trafficking and drugs, terrorism, organized crimes, internal insurrections and civil wars, posing obstacles to sustenance of stable peace and security”. This trend especially in Nigeria is attributed to the weakness and fragile nature of the state and her attendant failure to deliver good governance. The Nigerian government has failed to provide a secured and safe environment for lives, properties and the conduct of economic activities since 1999 to date (Osawe, 2015; Abiodun, Ayo-Adeyekun, Onafowora & Nwannenaya, 2018), this argument is still forceful today. With the lingering security challenges and the inability of the security apparatus of the government to guarantee safety and security in the country, the question that borders everyone in Nigeria today is that can there be security? Is security of lives and properties achievable? Apparently, the security situation in Nigeria remained insurmountable and many scholars have argued that government at all levels has not done enough by not confronting the situation head on and dealing with it decisively (Okeke & Oji, 2014; Osawe, 2015; Oko, Ufomba & Benjamin 2018). Others have argued that the situation has a political undertone or inclination calculated to serve the interest of certain political gods, who have been dissatisfied and disgruntled about the political manifestations in the country (Achumba, Ighomereho & Akpor-Robaro, 2013; Awojobi, 2017; Okeke & Oji, 2014; Osawe, 2015; Soetan, 2017; Jacob, Isaya & Ado, 2019).

ACRL (2010:27) in support of the foregoing posits that “small arms and light weapons are responsible for the majority of battle-related conflict deaths - an estimated 60 - 90 percent of all direct conflict victims are killed with firearms. Large numbers of men, women, older people and children die indirectly from the effect of armed conflicts, ruined health and security infrastructures, disease and famine. In addition, many more people are made refugees or are internally displaced, injured or abused due to arms fuel conflicts”. In Nigeria today, a great number of theoretical studies have been carried out to examined the effect of small arms and light weapons proliferation on insecurity (Adagba, Ugwu & Eme, 2012; Achumba *et al.*, 2013;

Onifade, Imhonopi & Urim, 2013; Awojobi, 2014; Malam, 2014; Okeke & Oji, 2014; Onoja, 2014; Garga, 2015; Osawe, 2015; Soetan, 2017; Abiodun *et al.*, 2018; Oko *et al.*, 2018; Peterside, 2018; Jacob *et al.*, 2019). However, no recent study has been conducted to empirically assess the impact of small arms and light weapons proliferation on insecurity in Nigeria. Hence, a knowledge gap exists. To fill this gap, this study sought to assess the impact of small arms and light weapons proliferation on insecurity in Nigeria's fourth republic.

Conceptual Discourse

Insecurity

To be able to conceptualize insecurity, it is pertinent to first define the concept of security. In the view of Awojobi (2014:358), security is "one of the fundamental needs of human society. In a society where there is no security, the population is likely to be vulnerable to attacks from perceived enemies". For Akin, 2008 cited in Achumba *et al.* (2013:80), security refers to "the situation that exists as a result of the establishment of measures for the protection of persons, information and property against hostile persons, influences and actions. It is the existence of conditions within which people in a society can go about their normal daily activities without any threats to their lives or properties". Nwolise, 2006 cited in Garga (2015:272) contends that security is "an all - encompassing condition which suggests that a territory must be secured by a network of armed forces, that the sovereignty of the state must be guaranteed by a democratic and patriotic government, which in turn must be protected by the military, police and the people themselves, that the people must not only be secured from external attacks, but also from devastating consequences of internal upheavals such as unemployment, hunger, poverty, disease, ignorance, homelessness, environmental degradation and pollution cum socio-economic injustices". Similarly, Ogunleye, Adewale, Alese and Ogunde, 2011 cited in Achumba *et al.* (2015:80) contends that security "embraces all measures designed to protect and safeguard the citizenry and the resources of individuals, groups, businesses and the nation against sabotage or violent occurrence".

In the view of Osawe (2013), security has to do with freedom from danger, fear, anxiety or uncertainty. It is a condition of being protected from, or not being exposed to danger. A secured state is one that is reasonably free from, or not being exposed to external aggression or internal sabotage (Imobighe, 1983). Achumba *et al.* (2015:80) describes security as "stability and continuity of livelihood (stable and steady income), predictability of daily life (knowing what to

expect), protection from crime (feeling safe) and freedom from psychological harm (safety or protection from emotional stress which results from the assurance or knowing that one wanted, accepted, loved and protected in one's community or neighbourhood and by people around. It focusses on emotional and psychological sense of belonging to a social group which can offer one protection". This approach to understanding security was captured in the 1999 Constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria Section 14 (2) (b), that "the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government". It is pertinent at this point to posit that security does not only affect the satisfaction of the needs of the inhabitants, but their very survival. Without security, a people cannot develop and direct their human and material resources towards greater output. Thus, no meaningful development can take place amidst insecurity in a democratic society.

Insecurity on the other hand, implies the absence of security and has attracted such common descriptors as danger, want of safety, uncertainty, state of doubt, hazard, trouble, instability, inadequately guarded or protected, lack of protection and being unsafe and want of confidence. In the view of Osawe (2015:125), "the concept of insecurity connotes such meaning as a state or condition of being unsafe or the feeling of being unsafe characterized by self-doubt, anxiety, fear and vulnerability; danger; hazard, uncertainty; lack of protection etc. At national level, insecurity could be seen as the threats on the general peace ranging from low-level civil disorder, large scale violence or even on armed insurgency. Threats to national security may be directed at either the state's citizens, or the organs and infrastructure of the state itself, and may range from petty crime, serious organized crime, political or industrial unrest or even domestic terrorism". Achumba *et al.* (2013) argues that the above descriptors point to a condition where there exists a vulnerability to harm, loss of life, property or livelihood. Thus, they consider insecurity to be a state of not knowing, 'a lack of control and the inability to take defensive action against forces that portend harm or danger to an individual or group, or that make people vulnerable'.

According to Awojobi (2014:358), insecurity is "the state of being exposed to attacks. It is a state of anxiety and palpable fear". Hasan, 2005 cited in Jacob *et al.* (2019:35) sees insecurity as "a fact of life for the poor urban citizens of many countries arise from the lack of secure housing tenure, which means living with the constant fear of eviction or it may reflect high levels of personal insecurity stemming from police harassment, abuse in the hands of bureaucracies or the

breakdown of public safety in the neighbourhood. In the context of this study, insecurity is conceived as the absence of safety of individuals, groups, businesses and state from the rising spate of criminal activities such as insurgency, terrorism, human trafficking, armed robbery, kidnapping, cultism, communal and ethno-religious crises, thuggery and armed banditry.

Small arms and light Weapons

According to ACRL (2010:26), “small arms are those weapons designed for personal use”. These include, but not limited to revolvers and self-loading pistols, assault rifles, carbines, light machine guns and sub-machine guns (Malam, 2014; Abiodun *et al.*, 2018). While light weapons refer to “heavy machines guns, hand-held under-barrel and mounted grenade launchers, portable launchers of anti-tank and ant-aircraft missile system and mortars of less than 100mm caliber, ammunition and explosives include cartridges (rounds) for small arms, shells and missiles for light weapons mobile containers with missiles or shells for single-action, anti-personnel and antitank hand grenades, landmines and explosives” (ACRL, 2010:26). The causes of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALWs) is well documented in the literature, for example, revolts, religious crises, social agitations, riots, electoral violence, cross border smuggling, porous borders, subversion, militancy, insurgency, ethnic tensions, poverty, black marketeering, sabotage, communal clashes, local manufacturing, terrorism, acute unemployment, privatization of security. Some of the scholars focus on the supply side or push factors like willing sellers, porous borders and lucrativeness, while others focus on the demand side or pull factors like violence crimes, riots, unrests and conflicts (Ayissi&Sall, 2005; Florguin& Berman, 2005; Hazen & Horner, 2007; Nte, 2011; Malam, 2014; Okeke & Oji, 2014; Ogbu *et al.*, 2017; Soetan,2017; Abiodun *et al.*, 2018; Ogwuda, 2018; Jacob *et al.*, 2019).

A vast number of small arms and light weapons (SALWs) are in public and private hands. According to the Small Arms Survey, 2007 cited in Malam (2014:260), “there are at least 875 million firearms in the world. There are more than 1,200 companies in 90 countries that produce small arms and light weapons that kill between 500,000 and 750,000 people annually”. Geneva Declaration Secretariat, 2011 cited in Malam (2014:260) contends that SALWs are contributory factor to armed conflict, the displacement of people, organized crime and terrorism, thereby undermining peace, reconciliation, safety, security, stability and sustained social and economic development”. In the context of this study, SALWs is conceived as weapons such as pistols, short-guns, revolvers, assault rifles, light machine guns, medium machine guns and hand

grenades, rifles squad automatic weapons, general- purpose machine guns, submachine guns, heavy machine guns, recoilless rifles, rocket launchers, small and larger mortars, cannons, howitzers, ammunition and exploding bomb, an incendiary bomb or a gas bomb, an incendiary bomb or a gas bomb, portable grenade launchers, anti-tank missile launchers, portable anti-aircraft cannons and non-recoil guns used to perpetrate all forms of violent crimes.

Nigeria State and Insecurity Challenges

Ighodalo (2012:164) affirms that “one of the principal functions of the modern state is that of protecting the territorial integrity of the state, life and property of its citizenry and upliftment of the human condition. The promotion of human security has become the central focus of the new development paradigm because building of arms and ammunitions do not bring peace, security and political stability. Eradicating poverty, hunger, diseases through sustainable development programmes hold the key to an enduring national security”. In line with the United Nations Charter on Human Rights in 1948, the Nigerian strategic plan of the administrations of president Olusegun Obasanjo, President Goodluck Jonathan and President Mohamadu Buhari articulate that ‘the primary objective of national security shall be to strengthen the Federal Republic of Nigeria to advance her interest and objectives; to ascertain instability; control crimes; eliminate corruption; enhance genuine development, progress and growth; improve the welfare and well-being and quality of life of every citizen. It is saddening to mention that government politics and actions since the restoration of democratic rule in 1999 to date tend to manifest glaringly the opposite of the objectives of the strategic plan. The continual rising spate of unemployment, poverty, terrorism, corruption, marauding herdsmen militancy, kidnappings, armed robberies, the new face of militancy in the Niger Delta, human trafficking and other forms of violence crimes, all of which are creating survival and security challenges across the length and breadth of the country are core indices of a weak and failed state. This is further demonstrated by executive ineptitude, communal clashes, ethno-religious conflict, political motivated assassination, capital flight with deepened economic depression and debt burden (Eke, 2013).

Yagboyaju and Akinola (2019) argues that Nigerian state stood in between exhibiting attributes of a state collapse and state failure. Similarly, Oke *et al.* (2018) posits that Nigeria typifies a perfect example of a failing and a weak state that is fast gravitating towards a failed or collapsed state like Somalia. According to Mimiko, 2010 cited in Yagboyaju and Akinola (2019:2), “the Nigerian state has degenerated to the point where it is unable to provide minimal social security

for its vulnerable population”. In Nigeria today, several reasons have been advanced regarding the causes of insecurity. Otto and Ukpere (2012) argues that poverty and proliferation of small arms are the driving forces behind the rising spare of insecurity in Nigeria’s fourth republic. Eme and Onyishi (2011) identify the causes of insecurity in Nigeria to include improper finding of the police and other security agencies, non-payment of the allowances of these security agencies, monetization of the labour market, gross party indiscipline and infighting among political gladiators, poor welfare and inadequate police personnel. Awojobi (2014) and Oko *et al.* (2018) argues that poverty and unemployment breed insecurity in Nigeria. Onoja (2014) notes that the growing dissatisfaction with falling standards of living and the inability of the state to provide for the growing population are responsible for insecurity across the country. The insecurity situation in the present Nigerian democratic dispensation has intensified since the 2009 attack by Boko Haram sect in Bauchi State.

Therefore, it is pertinent to note at this point that a country that invests heavily on human needs may not have to spend much money and efforts in fighting crimes like human trafficking, armed robberies, kidnappings, student unrest, youth restiveness, political assassination, bombing, terrorism, banditry, insurgency etc. Indeed, there can hardly be security amidst starvation, peace building without poverty alleviation and no true freedom built on the foundation of injustice (Adagbabiri & Okolie, 2018). Thus, human beings should constitute the referent in the definition of security in the Nigeria context. It is Nigerian’s citizens that are imperiled and not the state, because there is no country threatening the existence of Nigeria (Onoja, 2014). This support the assertions of Omede (2012) who posits that Nigeria’s security should be based on a holistic view which sees the citizens as the primary beneficiaries of every security and development deliverable that the state can offer.

Small Arms and Light Weapons Proliferation in Nigeria

The possession of guns by non-state actors in Nigeria is not new and predates colonialism (Saburi, 1957). Guns were introduced by the Europeans before the colonialism, during legal and illegal (slave) trade between them and Africans. Afterwards, guns and other arms, ammunition and weapons were utilized by the Europeans to realize their imperial ambitions when they used force to suppress African to European incursion, conquest and colonialism. The gunboat diplomacy was popularly used by the British to coerce African Chiefs into entering several

treaties with them. There was establishment of West African Frontier Force (WAFF) used by the British to execute the British-Aro War of (1901-1902), and suppress residence in Nigeria and Africa (Chuma-Okoro, 2011; Okeke & Oji, 2014; Soetan, 2017). These guns possibly found their ways to the hands of non-state actors during the colonial epoch subsequently used in traditional festivities and hunting in the rural communities. The guns and gun power subsequently became symbols of strength and power and were exhibited at funerals, ceremonies, customary festivals and burials among the natives. Today, guns are no longer just ornaments of prestige, or just for hunting, safari and expedition. Guns and other types of small arms and light weapons have transformed in terms of functionality, lethality, sophistication, ubiquity and motive of ownership. They have become more weapons of criminality and instruments of the underworld used to perpetrate all forms of crime as opposed to their previous perceptions as just ornaments of prestige, hunting and other mundane missions (Chuma-Okoro, 2011; Jaye & Amadi, 2017 cited in Ogwuda, 2018).

Nigeria is not just a transit and destination of small arms and light weapons, but also a fabricator of these small and light arms. To reinforce this argument, Hazen and Homer gave a graphic illustration of instance of Nigeria's contribution to the proliferation of SALWs in Africa with the example of local production of weapons in Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria as shown below.

Table 1: Craft-Production of Small Arms in Akwa, Anambra State, Nigeria

Weapons	Features	Ammunition	Cost
Pocket-single-shot gun	Approximately 13cm long, steel muzzle to wooden stock, extremely rudimentary hammer requiring cocking, effective only at a distance of 1-2m, uses single shotgun cartridge.	Various calibers shotgun cartridge	₦4000/\$32
Four-shot revolver	Available in manual and automatic configurations.	9mm, 8.5mm	₦ 8,000/\$64
Single barrel shotgun	Breech-loading, safety cocking mechanism	Various calibers of shotgun cartridges	₦ 10,000 - ₦ 11,000/\$80- \$88

Horizontal double barrel shotgun	Breech-loading, one triggers each barrel, safety cocking mechanism.	Various calibers of shotgun cartridge	N25,000 - N 30,000/\$200 - \$240
Vertical double barrel shotgun	Automatic configuration firing both rounds without need for cocking breech-loading	Various calibers of shotgun cartridge	N 45,000/\$360

Source: Hazen and Horner (2007). Small arms, armed violence and insecurity in Nigeria: The Niger Delta in perspective.

The rate of accumulation of small arms and light weapons is creasing and becoming endemic as various forms of violence and casualties are in recent times recorded in the Northern part of Nigeria (Chuma-Okoro, 2011 cited Okeke & Oji, 2014). SALWs in circulation in Nigeria come from local fabrication, residue of guns used during the civil war, thefts from government armouries, smuggling, dishonest government - accredited importers, ethnic militias, insurgents from neighbouring counties, Fulani herdsmen and some multinational oil corporations operating in Niger Delta (Abiodun *et al.*, 2018). Nigeria has in the past decades witness increased violence and small and light arms circulation. However, the proliferation of SALWs in contemporary Nigeria is well documented in the literature, for example, ethnic bigotry and religious intolerance, revolts, sabotage, communal clashes, political violence, micro-nationalism, black marketeering, insecurity, economic crises, insurrection, militancy, electoral injustice, riots, social unrest, failure of political leadership, corruption, excessive militarization, bad governance, acute youth unemployment and abject poverty among others were the causes of small and light arms proliferation in Nigeria (Malam, 2014; Ogbu *et al.*, 2017).

Small Arms and Light Weapons Proliferation and Insecurity in Nigeria's Fourth Republic

Small arms and light weapons proliferation has been one issue that has formed part of the international agenda since 1998. In the international scene, SALWs proliferation is a security challenge that is threatening the corporate existence of emerging nations, especially in African (Ogwuda, 2018). SALWs proliferation according to Jacob *et al.* (2019:36), increases the potential for violence and violent conflicts, armed robbery, terrorism, kidnapping, cattle rusting, herders/farmers clashes, cultism, human trafficking and other violence crimes in Nigeria and by extension retard development, cause massive human and physical destruction, serious human

infractions and a chronic atmosphere of instability and insecurity in the country”. This support the assertion of Peterside (2018: 856) who posits that SALWs “helped to prolong conflicts, induced huge internal population displacement, undermined social peace, devastated economic livelihood of individuals and communities, leading to recurrent violent conflicts that have led to the loss of thousands of lives and properties worth millions of naira” Caleb and Okafor (2015) also affirm that the different forms of security challenges playing Nigerian state such as armed robbery, kidnapping, farmers/herders crises, ethno-religious crises, insurgency and terrorism against the authority of the state have connection with the massive proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALWs). Similarly, Ngang, 2007 cited in Jacob *et al.* (2019) posits that insecurity associated with Small arms and light weapons proliferation in Nigeria is evident in the present clashes between farmers and herdsmen, the frequent attack by the dreaded Boko Haram, militancy in Niger Delta, rising spate of kidnappings, armed robbery, cultism and political motivates assassination.

According to Igbini (2020:294), “the proliferation of SALWs around the world and particularly in African had over time developed at an alarming rate which has put the security and sustainable development of the entire continent in jeopardy. SALWs proliferation has created a culture of violence and an upsurge of criminal activities that is threatening the peace, security and sustainable development in Nigeria”. Soetan, 2017 cited in Igbini (2020:294) posits that “in a democratic policy like Nigeria, where resources tend to be scarce and state capacity relatively weak, illicit SALWs provide ethnic warriors with the means and power in criminal activities and in the process severely undermine the rule of law. The proliferation of SALWs threatens the consolidation of democracy and national security in Nigeria which is necessary for sustainable development. Small arms and light weapons proliferations have devastating impacts on Nigeria’s national security thereby threatening its stability. The proliferation and use of SALWs in violent crimes have killed more than 10,000 Nigerians, an average of 1,000 people per year since 1999. The majority of casualties about 66% in Kano riot of 2004 were small arms and light weapons victims. Injuries due to small arms and light weapons have increased much as ten-fold in urban Nigeria because most homicides are committed using SALWs (Nte, 2011; Ogbu *et al.*, 2017; Jacob *et al.*, 2019).

Small arms and light weapons proliferation always worsens conflicts and by extension increase the number of casualties during violent crimes attacks. SALWs proliferation fueled conflicts

have severely damaged governance system and eroded confidence among the citizens and destroyed hitherto peaceful relationships amongst communities and groups in Nigeria (Nte, 2011). The inflow and usage of small and lethal weapons in recent times by non-state actors is fallout of state fragility. This is because response of state instrument of force is often time weak when hostilities occur in rural areas where governmental structures are scarcely available (Ogbu *et al.*, 2017). In support of the foregoing, Soetan (2017:2) notes that “there is excess proliferation, state-sponsored violence and state proliferation of small arms and light weapons, leading to political violence. For example, virtually all the law enforcement or security agencies are allowed to carry arms with exemption of few that are even lobbying to be allowed to carry weapons. Thus, militarizing the society more”. Therefore, there is lack of capacity and strong legal or effective institutional frameworks to regulate SALWs and combat the phenomenon of SALWs proliferation in Nigeria, particularly in Northern part of the country (Chuma-Okoro, 2011). Small arms and light weapons proliferation and misuse no doubt threatening individual security, contributing to human rights violation, undermining social justice and weakening good governance which are ingredients for national security and sustainable development.

Theoretical framework

While there are several theories which might prove appropriate for a discourse of this nature, the theory of causality present us with a heuristic tool for interrogating the central issue of the study. Based upon the work of Chambliss (1975), the theory of causality rests on the assumption that the capitalist economic system and the unequal property relations that economic and material conditions generates are the root cause of crime in the society. Diverse views as to why crime emerges in situations of economic inequality are treaded by scholars within the Marxist camp. These included augments that crime was an inevitable expression of conflict and based upon the exploitative nature of class relations (Chamblis, 1975). The theory of causality also argues that crime was a protest or an incipient rebellion by the poor against the social conditions which prevented them from acquiring good, and that in a capitalist society the poor and powerless were forced into crime in order to survive (Quinney, 1980).

Okolie, Onyema and Basey (2019) submit that individuals or groups who feel frustrated in the attainment of their desires and demands often react by direct aggressive behaviour at what is perceived as being responsible for depriving or thwarting those desires as a substitute. They further affirm that it is not utter lack but unfulfilled hopes and expectations that engender violent

crimes. Criminality among the youths especially the lower-class has been attributed to various forms of frustration such as lack of money, unemployment and failure to achieve respect derived from economic disadvantage (Greenberg, 1977). The relevance of the theory of causality to this study is based on its ability to justify that the violent upbringing either by militants in the Niger Delta or Boko Haram in the Northeast and other violent crimes are ultimately due to the fallout of frustration and the attendant social malaise of abject poverty and acute youth unemployment, absolute levels of economic distress or deprivation perpetuated by official corruption in Nigeria. In line with the literature review, the following objectives and null hypothesis were formulated for the study.

Objectives of the Study

Specifically, the study sought to:

- i. Examine the relationship between small arms and light weapons proliferation and insecurity in Nigeria's fourth republic.
- ii. Ascertain the extent to which small arms and light weapons proliferation impact on insecurity in Nigeria's fourth republic.

Hypotheses of the Study

The following null hypotheses were formulated for testing:

H₁: There is no significant relationship between small arms and light weapons proliferation and insecurity in Nigeria's fourth republic.

H₂: Small arms and light weapons proliferation does not have a significant impact on insecurity in Nigeria's fourth republic.

Methodology

Research Design and Data Collection

This study adopted a cross sectional research design to determine the relationship and impact of small arms and light weapons proliferation on insecurity in Nigeria's fourth republic and data was collected via a survey of three hundred (300) respondents in South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria using non-probabilistic sampling techniques comprising of purposeful and convenience techniques. The research instrument used for this study was researcher's developed structured questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of 17 items structured along a 5-point likert type scale which ranks responses on a scale of (1) strongly agree (SA) to (5) strongly disagree

(SD). Out of the 300 copies of questionnaire administered, 257 were retrieved and analyzed given us a response rate of 85.7%. Out of the 257 respondents, 138 were male and 119 were female respondents respectively.

Table 2: Distribution of Questionnaire and Response Rate

S/N	South-South States	Questionnaire Distributed	Questionnaire Retrieved	Percentage Retrieved
1	Delta	50	45	15
2	Bayelsa	50	41	13.7
3	Edo	50	47	15.7
4	Rivers	50	37	12.3
5	Akwa-Ibom	50	44	14.7
6	Cross river	50	43	14.3
	Total	300	257	85.7%

Source: Questionnaire Administered, 2020

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

The validity of the research instrument was ascertained by subjecting its initial draft to face validation by two experts in the department of political science, Delta State University, Abraka. The opinions and suggestions of these experts were used to modify and reproduced the final draft of the instrument. The research instrument also underwent reliability test conducted on 35 respondents in Delta State who also took part in the study. Cronbach Alpha method was used to establish the internal consistency of the items as shown in the table below.

Table 3: Reliability statistics of variables

Scale	No. of item	Cronbach's Alpha
SALWs proliferation	7	0.726
Insecurity	10	0.713

Source: Researcher's Computation, 2020

The results in table 3 yielded a coefficient of 0.726 and 0.713, which satisfied the general recommended level of 0.70 for the research indicators (Cronbach, 1951). Hence, the researcher satisfied both the validity and reliability of the scale.

Method of Data Analysis

Data collected were analyzed using correlation and linear regression analysis with the aid of statistical package for Social Science (SPSS) version 23.

Results

Table 4: Correlation Matrix

Variables		SALWs	Insecurity
SALWs Proliferation	Pearson correlation	1	.772**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	257	257
Insecurity	Pearson correlation	.772**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	257	257

**Correlation is significant at 0.01 levels (2-tailed)

Source: Researcher's computation, 2020

Table 4 shows the correlation between SALWs proliferation and insecurity in Nigeria's fourth republic. There exists a significant positive high correlation between SALWs proliferation and insecurity ($r = .772$, $n = 257$ and $p < 0.01$). This implies that small arms and light weapons (SALWs) proliferation has a strong and positive relationship with insecurity situation in Nigeria's fourth republic. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Linear Regression Analysis

Table 5: Model Summary^b

Model	R	R ²	Adj-R ²	Std. Error of the Estimate
	0.547	0.381		0.204

a. Predictors: (Constant), SALWs proliferation

b. Dependent variable: Insecurity

Table 6: ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of square	Df	Mean	F.	Sig.	Remark
1	Regression	4.918	3	3.007	13.415	0.000 ^b	Sig.
	Residual	2.532	251	0.139			
	Total	7.450	254				

a. Dependent variable: Insecurity

b. Predictors: (constant), SALWs proliferation

Source: Researcher's computation, 2020

The linear regression shows (R^2) value of 0.516 which revealed that SALWs proliferation independently account for 51.6% of the variation in insecurity challenges in Nigeria's fourth republic. The F. statistics of 13.415 revealed that the model is statically significant at 0.05 significant levels. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Discussion of Results

The study has showed through its perceived findings that small arms and light weapons proliferation has a positive and strong impact on insecurity situation in Nigeria's fourth republic. The finding is in agreement with Chuma-Okoro (2011), Okeke and Oji (2014), Soetan (2017), Abiodun *et al.* (2018), Ogwuda (2018), Peterside (2018), Jacob *et al.* (2019) and Igbini (2020) view that small arms and light weapons (SALWs) breeds insecurity in Nigeria's fourth republic. Jacob *et al.* (2019) argues that SALWs proliferation is the direct cause of insecurity in the country. They further posit that the failure of the Nigerian government to execute a comprehensive disarmament and arms destruction programme after the civil war (1967-1970) exacerbated the proliferation of guns and illicit arms trafficking. In Nigerian today, the high rate of illegal procurement and use of small arms and light weapons is indexed by the intermittent seizure of these weapons by security and border control officers. The frequency of deployment and used of these weapons in conflict and crime scenes and the level of human casualty and material damager recoded in the aftermath of its use in the country. As predicted, the study revealed that there is strong and positive relationship between small arms and light weapon proliferation and insecurity in Nigeria's fourth republic. The finding is in agreement with Usang, Ugwuba and Abang (2014) study that revealed the relationship between militants' access to small arms and prolonged insecurity in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. The result also concurs

with Soetan (2017), Abiodun *et al.*, (2018) and Jacob *et al.* (2019) view that there is direct link between small arms and light weapons proliferation and insecurity in Nigeria.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has critically assessed instances of fatal hostilities resulting from insecurity orchestrated by unchecked proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALWs) in Nigeria. The study has showed through its findings that small arms and light weapons proliferation have a strong and positive impact on insecurity in Nigeria's fourth republic. Also, the relationship between small arms and light weapons proliferation and insecurity in Nigeria's fourth republic was confirmed. Based on these findings, the study concludes that small arms and light weapons proliferation has significant influence on insecurity situation in Nigeria. This explains why armed robbery, kidnapping, terrorism, insurgency, marauding herdsmen militancy and other social vices in Nigeria's fourth republic emanate from small arms and light weapons proliferation. Based on the empirical and theoretical findings of this study, the following policy recommendations were made:

1. There is need for thorough overhauling of laws regulating the possession of small arms and light weapons in Nigeria.
2. Nigerian government should intensify efforts to provide job opportunities for the unemployed youths roaming about on the Nigerian streets.
3. The governments should empower the youths through genuine empowerment schemes that would equip them to be self-employed and employer of labour and not N-power.
4. The government should intensify efforts to accelerate the pace of economic growth and development in the country.
5. The political leaders should promote peaceful co-existence among the diverse ethno-religious and political groups in Nigeria. This will go a long way to help reduce the outbreak of violent conflicts that stoke small arms and light weapons proliferation.

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