

Nigeria and the Economic Community of West African States Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons: The State of Security in Rivers State, 2003-2020.

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Abstract

The study examined the effects of non-domestication of the ECOWAS Convention on Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons by Nigerian State and its impact on insecurity in Rivers State. The proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapon (SALW) has been one of the challenges that confront nations and local communities in most developing countries since after the demise of the Cold War. This challenge led to the establishment of the ECOWAS Convention on SALW, however, one of the impediments is the inability of member states to domesticate and effectively enforce these agreements in their countries. Sadly, Nigeria is yet to domesticate the ECOWAS Convention on the Proliferation of SALW. In the last decades, Nigeria has been experiencing a soaring wave of insecurity occasioned by the availability of SALW to non-state actors such as terrorist organizations, armed robbery, and cult groups, among others in various parts of the country. The study relied on both primary and secondary data. To elicit the primary data, 210 questionnaires were randomly administered among security agents, ex-militants, and other stakeholders in Rivers State. The study adopted arms theory as its theoretical construct. The study unravelled that the availability of small arms and light weapons increased the degree of electoral violence, cultism, and armed robbery, among others in the Rivers State. The study, therefore, recommends amongst others, that the Federal Government as a matter of urgency should domesticate the SALW, and move security items to the Concurrent List where subunits could legislate on the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons.

Keywords: ammunition; arms; ECOWAS; insecurity; Nigeria; non-domestication; Rivers State.

1. Introduction

The proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapon (SALW) has been one of the challenges that confront nations and local communities in most developing countries since after the demise of the Cold War. The challenge has propelled both global, Supranational, regional and sub-regional organizations to control the proliferation of SALW through Proclamation, Treaties, Conventions, Protocol, and tacit agreement, however, one of the impediments is the inability of member states to domesticate and effectively enforce these agreements at their domains. SALW has been used in the execution of wars, the promotion of civil and political violence, terrorize innocent citizens, and confront state actors in various sovereign states. Hence, the former Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Ann noted that the SALW proliferation "threatens legitimate, but weak governments and it benefits terrorists as well as the perpetrators of organized crime" (Anam, 2000). Jacob, Ishaya and Ado (2019) disclosed that:

The proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons are a worldwide, progressively complex, and multifaceted phenomenon that affects people and insecurity of countries the world over. Readily available and easy to use, small arms and light weapons have been the primary or sole tool of violence in almost all conflicts in every part of the globe (p.34).

The United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons held in New York on 19th and 20th June 2001 encouraged regions to strengthen and establish programmes on SALW to enable them to cope with the effects of arms and weapons in circulation in their various enclaves. The outcome of the United Nations Conference on SALW at New York in 2001 midwife the Conference of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), held in 2003, Dakar, Senegal, which reaffirmed its commitment to the Convention on the proliferation of SALW. The "Conference transformed the ECOWAS SALW into a legally binding Convention and enhanced the ability of the ECOWAS Commission in the fight against proliferation SALW. It draws its strength from Article 58 of the revised ECOWAS' Treaty relating to regional security" (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2010,p.1). Furthermore, Ndiaye, (2008) cited in Egbuta (2019) disclosed that the:

report of the West Africa Action Network on Small Arms in 2006 propelled the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to adopt a Convention to regulate the production, circulation, and civilian possession of SALWs to curtail insecurity and other transnational organized crimes in the sub-region. The WAANSA estimated the total number of small arms in circulation in the sub-region to stand at 8 million (p.4).

Nigeria is one of the signatories to the ECOWAS Convention on SALW and also a leading member of ECOWAS in the sub-region, particularly in ensuring regional security. Sadly, Nigeria is yet to domesticate the ECOWAS Convention on SALW but constituted a Presidential Committee on Small Arms and Light Weapons (PRESCOM) whose mandate is to reduce the proliferation of SALW in the country. Despite Nigeria's contributions in facilitating sub-regional security in West Africa, Nigeria state has been experiencing a soaring wave of insecurity occasioned by the availability of SALW to non-state actors such as terrorist organizations, armed

robbery, and cult groups, among others in various parts of the country. One of the reasons deduced for the increase in the number of SALW according to Osimen and Akintunde (2015, p.15) was that "Nigeria is a transit and destination of SALW." Most of these SALWs transit into the country via land borders and seaports. Other reasons include serving and retired military and police officers, blacksmith, arms dealers, returning peacekeepers, local militia, and other individuals. Others include politicians, community leaders, national leaders, and armed groups (Hazen and Horner, 2007).

In various parts of Nigeria, the reports of the proliferation of SALW are almost the same. For instance, the discovery of a cache of small arms and light weapons in a bunker in Kano on May 28, 2013, belonging to a Lebanese national was an indication that arms trade and proliferation in Nigeria is an organized transnational crime influenced by geographical factors. Muhammad (2013) cited in Egbuta (2019) revealed that the ammunition recovered from the Lebanese national residing in Kano state include:

a total of 11, 50mm anti-tank weapons, two 122mm artillery gun ammunition, four anti-tank landmines, 21 rocket-propelled grenades, RPG, 16 rocket-propelled grenades charger, one rocket-propelled grenade tube and 76 military grenades, one SMG rifle, nine pistols, 17 AK-47 rifles, 44 magazines, 11,433 rounds of 7.62mm special ammunition and 103 packets of slap TNT were among the weapons recovered from the raid on the building facility.

In the same vein, during the mop-up operation by the Nigerian Police Force in October 2017, over 6,527 firearms were recovered. A breakdown of the record showed that 671 AK-47 rifles, 594 pump action guns, 70 English Barreta pistols, 71 single- and double-barrel guns, 92 machine guns, one anti-aircraft gun, and 5,028 locally made guns were recovered (Daily Trust, September 08, 2018). In Lagos State, the Police in 2016 recovered at 6th Avenue, two AK-47 rifles, 24 AK-47 magazines, one Browning pistol and magazine, 951 ammunition of 752 mm size and 1,107 ammunition of 6mm size (The Punch, November 22nd, 2016).

Rivers State is one of the commercial hubs endowed with crude oil deposits in Nigeria. Since the inception of Nigeria's Fourth Republic, the State has been experiencing a high degree of insecurity occasioned by the proliferation of SALW used by communities, cult groups, and militants in communal conflicts, cult rivalries, armed robberies, attacks on innocent citizens, security agents and oil facilities in the Rivers State and Niger Delta at large. The control of small arms and light weapons appears to be an unending venture in Rivers State. Successive administrations since 2003 have made efforts in demobilizing these cultists and militants' group through the offer of amnesty and surrendering of their arms and weapons to enhance stability in the state. Soetan (2017, p.36) revealed that in the "late 2004, the disarmament process under which 1,000 guns were handed over, the majority of them AK-47s or SA Vz 58s. The condition of the weapons was poor, suggesting that the best weapons have been retained. In October 2016, the Rivers State Police Command arrested a Nigerian importer and dealer on prohibited firearms and recovered hundreds of G3, AK47 rifles, and Berretta automatic rifles."

The Nigerian State acquires weapons to enhance the protection of citizens and the State from external aggression, violent non-state actors and individuals in the Rivers State also acquire SALW for political gains and oil-related enterprises, which are considered to be illegal and criminal based on the Nigeria firearms Act. Adedayo (2016) noted that:

The SALWs proliferation has been driven by political ambition combining with a cross-cutting illegal economy, fed by oil bunkering, creating both direct and indirect drivers of violence in the Niger Delta region. The international trade in SALWs in the Niger Delta trade is thought to be dominated by ruthless Ukrainian and Russian dealers who over the past few years have swapped thousands of automatic weapons for illegal bunkered oil (p.1).

However, since the Nigerian state is yet domesticated the ECOWAS Convention on SALW of 2003, the outdated Firearms Act of 1970 is an alternative to the ECOWAS Convention on the proliferation of SALW. The Firearms Act was enacted 50 years ago, "long before the adoption of ECOWAS and other UN Conventions... The Firearms Act has become obsolete as it no longer reflects current global dynamics and benchmarks" (Egbuta, 2019, p.4).

At present, it is practically impossible for the Federal and Rivers State Government to estimate the amount of SALW in circulation in Rivers State and the country at large. These arms and weapons are in the hands of various cult groups, militant's groups, criminal elements, and individuals in the Rivers State are inestimable. The Rivers State House of Assembly cannot legislate or domesticate the ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons because security is domiciled in the Exclusive List of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Hence, the Executive arm in Rivers State cannot enforce the outdated Firearms Act of 1970. The proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons has been unchecked by the government to the extent that residents in Rivers State live in perpetual fears. Citizens are killed at random and illegal small arms are displayed by the cultists and militants in the streets. This development propelled the Acting Director of Amnesty International Michael Hammer to write Dr Peter Odili, State Governor of Rivers State in 2004. In the letter, Mr Hammer revealed that:

Up to 500 civilians are thought to have been killed and an unconfirmed number of persons were injured in fighting between rival armed groups... Weapons alleged to have been used in these attacks include AK47, sub-machine guns, and dynamite. However, the armed groups are thought to also possess rocket-propelled grenades, hand grenades, other sophisticated weapons, and dynamite (Hammer, 2004, p.1).

Given the above, the study aimed to examine how the non-domestication of the ECOWAS Convention on the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons has adversely impacted the current security in Rivers State, Nigeria.

2. Conceptual Clarification

Small Arms and Light Weapon

The ECOWAS Convention on SALW (2006) referred "small arms as arms used by individuals, and which include firearms and other destructive arms or device such as exploding bombs, incendiary bombs or gas bombs, grenades, rocket launchers, missiles, missile systems, or landmines; revolvers and pistols with automatic loading; rifles and carbines; machine guns; assault rifles; and light machine guns" (Ibrahim, Mutum, and Sunday, 2020). The light weapons "are portable arms designed to be used by several persons working together in a team, and which include notable heavy machine guns, portable grenade launchers, mobile or mounted portable

anti-aircraft cannons, portable anti-tank cannons, non-recoil guns, portable anti-tank missile launchers, and mortars with a caliber of fewer than 100 millimeters" (Ibrahim, Mutum and Sunday, 2020). Riviere (2016) "perceived small arms as anything from a pistol to light machine guns, classified as weapons of choice for criminal activities, suicide, and a constant motivator to violence and crimes." Njoroge (2006) argued that "the widespread of small arms has increased the level of armed crimes in both rural and urban areas that include the armed robbery, cattle rustling, and violent conflicts." For instance, majority of those who "engaged in armed robbery and kidnapping are perpetuating the crimes with the small arms. This circumstance does not only pose a threat to human lives but also, affects the socio-economic aspect of the communities" (Hayuma,2008). Onuoha (2012) also noted that "presence of small arms in the ethnoreligious conflict in Jos has caused serious devastation on human and properties. And the availability of these forms of arms, prolongs conflict, facilitates internal displacement, disrupts social peace, devastates economic livelihood of individuals and it creates fear." Stohl and Tuttle (2009) argued that "the threat of illegal use of small arms prevents the delivery of humanitarian and economic aid, and it contributes to the flow of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs)." Gradesfixer (2019) revealed the reason for the spread and proliferation of small arms in Nigeria is as a result of widespread poverty despite that Nigeria is a major oil-exporting country. Those that are deprived of the benefits of petrodollar revenue resort to using arms and weapons against the Nigerian State. The widespread poverty and limited economic opportunity were exploited by various violent non-state actors such as the Boko Haram, Niger Delta Militants, Herdsmen terrorists and the non-violent indigenous people of Biafra to recruit and radicalize the uneducated vulnerable poor people via the distribution of cash gift. One of the hindrances of the sustenance of unchanging peace and security in Nigeria is the alarming rate in the proliferation of SALW. The non-domestication of the ECOWAS Convention on the proliferation of SALW is considered as the principal source of light weapon used in inter-communal clashes, militancy, cultism, armed robbery, among others, which has posed a serious threat to lives and properties in Rivers State.

3. Theoretical Framework

The study adopted Arms Control Theory as its theoretical construct. Arms control theory refers "to the assumptions and premises of strategic analysts who first developed arms control as an adjunct to national security in the 1958–1962 time frames" (Larsen, 2002, p.6). The theory was prominent in Bernard Baruch (1946) Report titled: 'Baruch Plan Report', which was proposed to the United States Government on how to tackle the proliferation of arms and weapons. The Baruch Plan Report was an offshoot of the Acheson –Lilienthal Report to the United Nations Commission known as the United Nations Atomic Energy Commission (UNAEC) during the first meeting in 1946. Thereafter, the United States of America, Great Britain, and Canada called for regulation of atomic energy.

In the beginning, "arms control was conceived as a way to enhance national security" (Larsen, 2002, p.6). Bull (1983, p.21) argued that "arms control or disarmament was not an end in itself, but a means to an end and that end was first and foremost the enhancement of security. During the Cold War era, nation-states strive to acquire defense capacity that will enable them to enjoy military superiority, hence, defense policies such as maintaining a sizable army and building military hardware became a top agenda in the Cold War era. This promoted a relationship among

sovereign states that are anchored on interest and not on trust as obtainable in international politics. This is emanating from the fact that most sovereign states misrepresent and misinterpret information about the defense policies and capacities of rival states in the worst light. Gray (1971) argued that "security dilemma can produce an arms race, thereby increasing political tension among states, raising the probability and severity of crises, and possibly causing the war. Arms control tries to address the negative effects of this security dilemma." Hence, Payen (2013) itemized various reasons that could lead to arms and weapon proliferation among actors in international relations. They include Superpower rivalry during the Cold War; military burden-sharing; the regional balance of power; political, military, and economic influence; economies of scale; self-reliance; economic factors; ethnic conflicts; authoritarian regimes; global criminal activities; cultural values; and the disintegration of the soviet union and the fall of communism.

Before the emergence of contemporary arms control theory, the traditional arms control theory has been in existence. "Traditional arms control theory was the product of a unique confluence of factors and reflected the assumptions, analyses, and policy priorities of defense analysts and policymakers of that era" (Bull, 1983,p.21). The traditional arms control has its history that validates and captures the connotation that the aim of the traditional arms control theory is still prevalent and cogent in the current era.

The present arms control was resurfaced at a reevaluation of the United States defense and foreign policy that was occasioned by the disappointment with the postwar diplomacy and arms control impasse. Negotiation over armaments policy with other perceived enemies was not a pleasing one. Larsen (2002, p.6) noted that "long negotiations and multiple proposals had yielded no tangible results, primarily because of Soviet objections to those verification regimes deemed essential by the West."

However, the demise of the Cold War marked a turning point in the proliferation of small arms and a light weapon. The emergence of a violent non-state actor such as terrorist organizations in global politics redefined the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. It went beyond the control of sovereign states because the states in the Cold War era acquire power capabilities to sustain state survival and hegemony in their domain. However, the contestation of the legitimate holders of power between the state and violent non-state became very common, particularly in failed states or states with weak institutions. The regional and sub-regional organizations began to consider the proliferation of small arms and light weapons a topmost priority in the programmes. Payne (2013, p.118) noted that "a basic problem with efforts to reduce the proliferation of weapons is that individuals embrace the Hobbesian worldview, which places the constant struggle for power and dominance" in global politics.

Linking the arms control theory to the study is anchored on the inability of the Nigerian government to ratify the ECOWAS Convention on Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapon. The ECOWAS Convention on Proliferation of SALW was aimed at preventing and combating the excessive and destabilizing accumulation of small arms and light weapons with the jurisdiction of ECOWAS borders. The Convention was a concerted effort of the Member States to control small arms and light weapons within ECOWAS borders. However, the inability of Nigeria to domesticate the ECOWAS Convention on the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in her legal system has resulted in an increase in insecurity in the country. The Federal

government collaborating with the Rivers State government has achieved control of arms through the Proclamation of Amnesty on militants/cultists in 2006 and 2016 respectively. The ECOWAS Convention on the proliferation of SALW was to enable the signatories to domesticate and control arms in the various countries in the sub region. This is predicated on the fact that in international relations, local communities constitute the small units and define the direction of domestic politics, which forms the national interest of a sovereign state. Whatever affects the local communities influences the pattern of debates and decisions at the sub-regional level. Therefore, the domestication of the ECOWAS Convention on the proliferation of SALW was to increase the check and control the arms in circulation at various parts of the country. Sadly, the non-domestication of the ECOWAS Convention on the proliferation of SALW by the Nigerian State has increased the degree of insecurity arising from the number of arms at the disposal of violent non-state actors, individuals, among others in various parts of Nigeria including Rivers State.

4. Analysis of ECOWAS Convention on the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons

The ECOWAS Convention was necessary because of deficiencies and lack of the Members State's commitment towards actualizing the goals set out by the ECOWAS Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Light Weapons. The Convention document was adopted by the member states in 1998 and renewed in 2001. However, the Moratorium maintained a timeline and a political engagement pushed by State Parties. Its lack of detail, the text made it impracticable. Though, the voluntary state of the document was also another challenge for lack of sanctions, which indicates an inability to effectively implement the said document.

The main aim of the ECOWAS Convention on Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons is to prevent and combat the excessive and destabilizing accumulation of small arms and light weapons with the jurisdiction of ECOWAS borders.

Another vital aim is to promote trust between the Member States via concerted efforts and transparent move on the control of small arms and light weapons within ECOWAS borders.

Furthermore, is to build institutional and operational capacities of the ECOWAS Executive Secretariat and the Members State in the efforts to curb the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, their ammunition and other related materials.

Finally, it aims to promote the exchange of information and cooperation among the Member States. In this section, the ECOWAS Convention defined Small Arms in Article 1 as:

Arms used by one person and which include notably: firearms and other destructive arms or devices such as an exploding bomb, an incendiary bomb, a grenade, a rocket launcher, a missile, a missile system or landmine; revolvers and pistols with automatic loading; rifles and carbine machine guns; assault rifles; and light machine guns (see, www.poa-iss.org/RegionalOrganizations/ECOWAS%20Convention)

For Light Weapons, the Convention provides in Article 1 thus:

Portable arms designed to be used by several persons working together in a team and which include notably: heavy machine guns; portable grenade launchers,

mobile or mounted; portable anti-aircraft cannons; portable anti-tank missile launchers or rocket launchers; portable anti-aircraft missile launchers; mortars with calibre missile launchers; Mortars with a calibre of fewer than 100 millimeters(see, www.poa-iss.org/RegionalOrganizations/ECOWAS%20Convention).

From the definition above, it has been proven now that Small Arms are ones capable of being handled and used by only one person while Light Weapons have a denotation of portable arms made for two or more persons working in concert as a unit. An interesting part of the Convention is the provision of “Other Related Materials”. This is defined as:

All components, parts or spare parts for small arms or light weapons and their ammunition necessary for its functioning; or any chemical substance serving as active material used as propelling or explosive agent.

This provision preempts individuals who in an attempt to outsmart or evade the law, would strip into shreds or dismantle the arms and ammunition to take them away from the definition ascribed to it by the Convention. In other words, dismantling the arms into parts is still within the contemplation of the prohibition by the Convention. So, both parts and whole arms and ammunitions, caught up within these definitions are prohibited. This is the awesomeness of the Convention. Another novel and commendable provision of this Convention is as it relates to “Non-State Actors”. It defines them to mean:

Such as any actor other than State Actors, Mercenaries armed militias, armed rebel groups and private security companies.

The Convention placed a prohibition on the transfer of Small Arms and Light Weapons:

Member states shall, without exception, transfer small arms and light weapons to Non-State Actors that are not explicitly authorized by the importing members.

The philosophy behind this article is the prevailing security situation in the region where arms bearers today are more of armed groups or gangs who use this equipment to cause mayhem on the state government and the people. They use these weapons to abuse and impede human freedoms and the peace of the community. Others use it to bring down the government, destroy lives and properties and render citizens refugees or internally displaced. About ninety-eight percent of these are caused by Non-State Actors. Worthy of note also is the provisions on weapons Marking, Tracing and Brokering. The Convention defines ‘Marking’ as inscriptions permitting the identification of arms covered by the convention in Article I (6). It also defines ‘Tracing’ in Article I (7) as to what;

Indicates the systematic monitoring of the movements of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition and other related materials from the manufacture to the end-user, to help member state competent authorities to detect illicit manufacture and trading.

‘Brokering’ is defined in Article I (7) as:

Work carried out as an intermediary between any manufacturer, supplier or distributor of small arms and light weapons and any buyer or user, this includes

the provision of financial support and the transportation of small arms and light weapons.

In the ECOWAS sub - region, brokering institutes a novelty. This is based on the fact that the majority of member states well-thought-out that no arms brokers were operating in the region. This is anchored on the fact that arms transfer was the prerogative of the state. Though, some member state expressed concerns that the article on brokering would be a means of legitimization of private brokers who may deal in the illicit arms market. On the contrary, the lack of regulation of brokering activities would constitute an opportunity lost to oversee transfers through brokers and if necessary, sanction illicit activities. Significantly, Article 3 (1) of the Convention mandates the Members States to prohibit the transfer of small arms and light weapons and their manufacturing materials into their national territory or from or through their national territory. On the control of the Manufacture of small arms and light weapons, *articles 7 and 8* stipulate strict control by way of regulating the activities of the local manufactures in light of an overall policy of arms reduction and limitation. It also provides for compiling information on industrial manufacture where it exists and subjecting arms manufacturing activities to certain requirements related to the provision of precise information and to furnish same to the ECOWAS Executive Secretariat.

Article 11 is a new initiative wherein the Convention requests member states to establish a register of Small Arms and Light Weapons destined for use in peacekeeping operations as a way of ensuring the control of the movement of SALW and for their effective withdrawal at the end of the peace operations in which the member states are participating. State Parties are also expected to declare to the ECOWAS secretariat all SALW used in the peace operations and to declare to the Executive Secretary all the small arms and light weapon seized, collected and or destroyed during peace operations on their territory and in the ECOWAS region. To secure an effective fight against SALW proliferation in the region, the Convention provides in Article 14 (1) and (2) thus the:

Member States shall prohibit the possession, use and sale of light weapons by civilians. Member State shall regulate the possession, use and sale of small arms by civilians.

The Convention under these articles above differentiated the import of the two weapons. The possession, use and sale of light weapons by civilians are completely banned. But the possession, use and sale of small arms by civilians are to be regulated by the state. Under the regulation of small arms, a certain authorization procedure involves issuing a license to the civilian by the relevant authority. The convention provides criteria to be met by the prospective civilian applicant for the issuance of a license. Under Article 21, Members States are commanded by the word “shall” to;

Undertake to revise and update national legislation to ensure that the provisions in this convention are minimum standards for small arms and light weapons control and their ammunition as well as other related materials.

Also,

Each member state shall adopt legislative and other necessary measures to establish as a criminal offence the following cases: (a) any activity carried out in violation of the provision of this convention; (b) any activity carried out in

violation of an arms embargo imposed by the United Nations, the African Union or ECOWAS.

So, State Parties to the Convention commit to update, harmonize or amend their municipal legislation to comply with the extant provisions of the Convention. In order to have sanity in the national borders of State Parties member states, in collaboration with the ECOWAS Executive Secretary shall strengthen sub-regional cooperation among all the relevant security agencies in combating the illicit circulation of small arms and light weapons. Again, *Article 24* mandates member states to establish through regulation or legislation a National Commission, whose principal duty shall be to fight against the illicit proliferation and circulation of light weapons. The commission shall be allocated a budget to ensure effective functioning.

5. Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive research design. The study adopted the triangulation method of data gathering techniques. A total of two hundred and ten (210) questionnaires were administered to various respondents from the security community, amnesty programme committee, ex- militants, repented cultists, and critical stakeholders in Rivers State. One hundred and ninety (190) valid questionnaires were retrieved from the respondents. The questionnaire contained questions relating to peoples' perception on the challenges of non-domestication of ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons in Nigeria: The security implication in Rivers State. The study adopted the descriptive technique using percentage.

6. Data Presentation and Analysis

The sampled respondents using the qualitative and quantitative research techniques as discussed in methodology managed to establish that most of the respondents were males and that gender difference had a role to play in the insecurity in Rivers State. Moreover, the response rate was high among the males as compared to the females. The data from the questionnaire are analyzed below:

Table-1: Respondents' Demographic Data Analysis

Distribution and Retrieved Questionnaires				
Respondents	Issued questionnaires	Retrieved questionnaires	Percentage	Cumulative percentage
Security community	30	27	0.14	14
Rivers-State Amnesty Committee	5	5	0.3	17
Ex-Militants	40	38	0.20	37

Repented Cultists	65	63	0.33	70
Critical Stakeholders	70	60	0.30	100
Total	210	190	100	

Gender

	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Male	138	0.73	73
Female	52	0.27	100
Total	190	100	

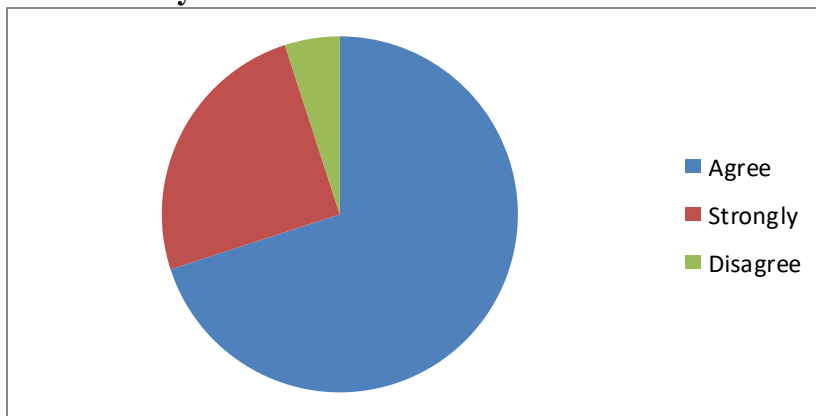
Educational qualification

Primary	-	-	
Secondary	80	0.42	42
Technical	22	0.12	54
Tertiary	88	0.46	100
Total	190	100	

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Considering table 1 above, considering demographic analysis, gender and educational qualification, representing total data obtained from the respondents obtained in the survey. 138 representing 73% are male, while 52 representing 27% are female. 80 representing 53.8% have attended high school, 22 representing 12% have attended technical training, while 88 of the respondents representing 46% have attended tertiary institutions, which is an indication that the majority of the respondent are educated.

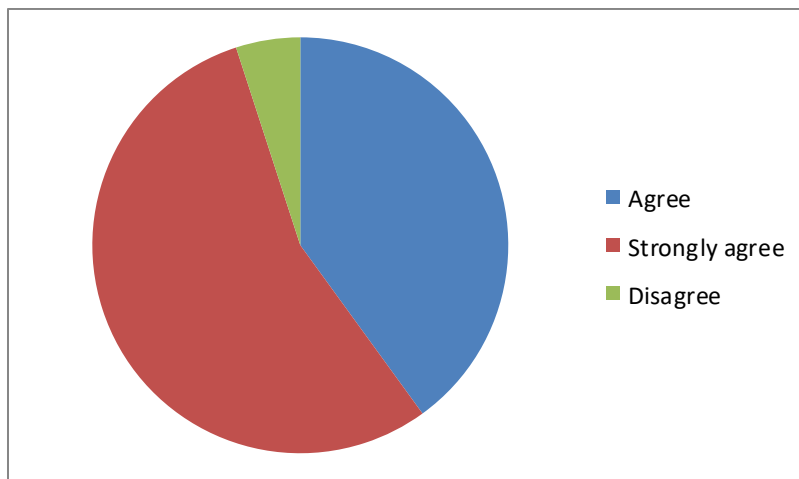
Fig.1: Indicates how the proliferation of arms and small weapons leads to insecurity in Rivers State.



Source: Field Survey, 2021

Considering this item, 95 (100%) of the respondents at a mean value of 1.04 and standard deviation of 0.20, affirmed proliferation of small arms and light weapons contributes to insecurity in Rivers State.

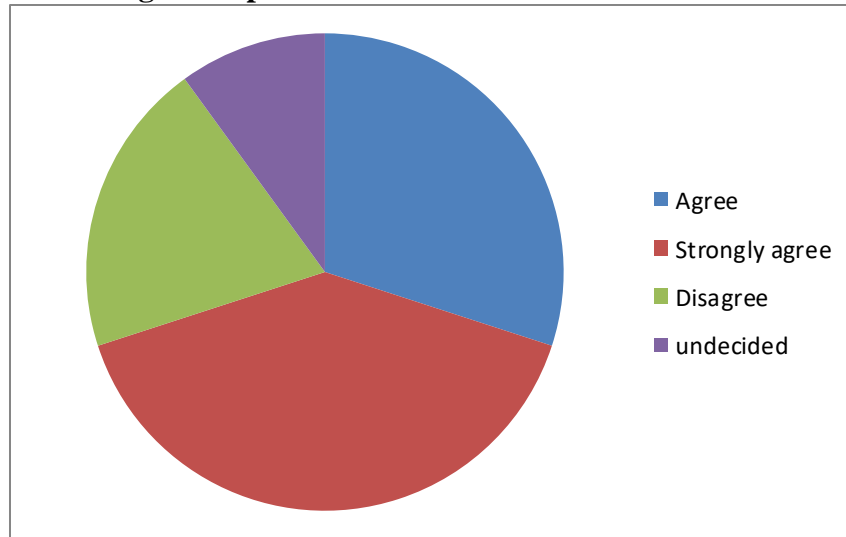
Fig. 2: Indicates the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and criminal activities in Rivers State.



Source: Field Survey, 2021

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons increases criminal activities in Rivers State. Also, about 14 (28%) and 22 (44%) of the respondents at a mean value of 4.02 and standard deviation of 1.13 agreed and strongly agreed respectively. This affirmed that the proliferation of small arms and light weapons increases criminal activities in Rivers State.

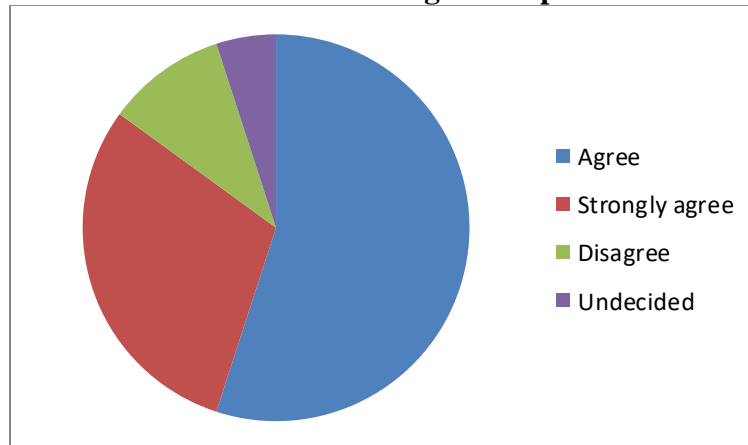
Fig.3: indicates how politicians increase the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Rivers State



Source: Field Survey, 2021

The chart above indicates that the politicians contribute to the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Rivers State. 39 (70%) of the respondents affirmed, with a mean of 3.81 and standard deviation of 1.17, that politicians contribute to the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Rivers State.

Fig.4: Indicates how the weakness of civil society groups affect the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Rivers State.

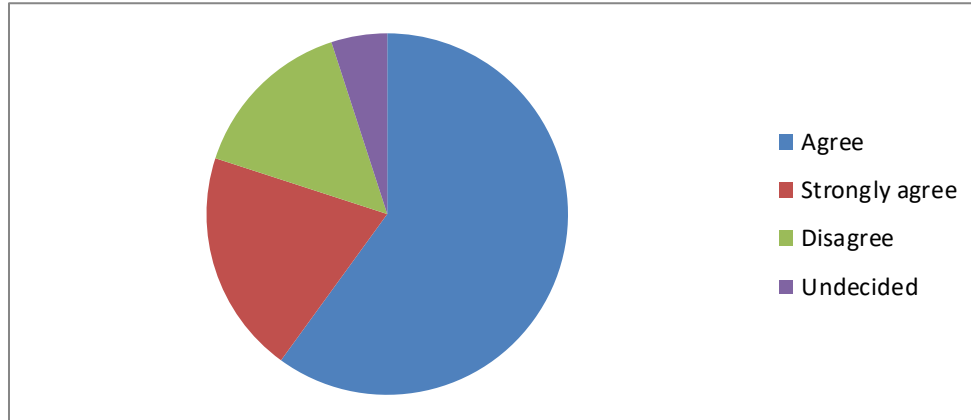


Source: Field Survey, 2021

The item shows that civil society is weak in exerting pressure. This item shows that civil society is weak in exerting pressure on the government to domesticate the ECOWAS Convention on Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Nigeria's legal system. In the chart above, about 44 (88%) of the respondents affirmed, with a mean of 4.20 and standard deviation of 2.00,

that the Weal civil society to exert pressure on government hampers the effective implementation of policy.

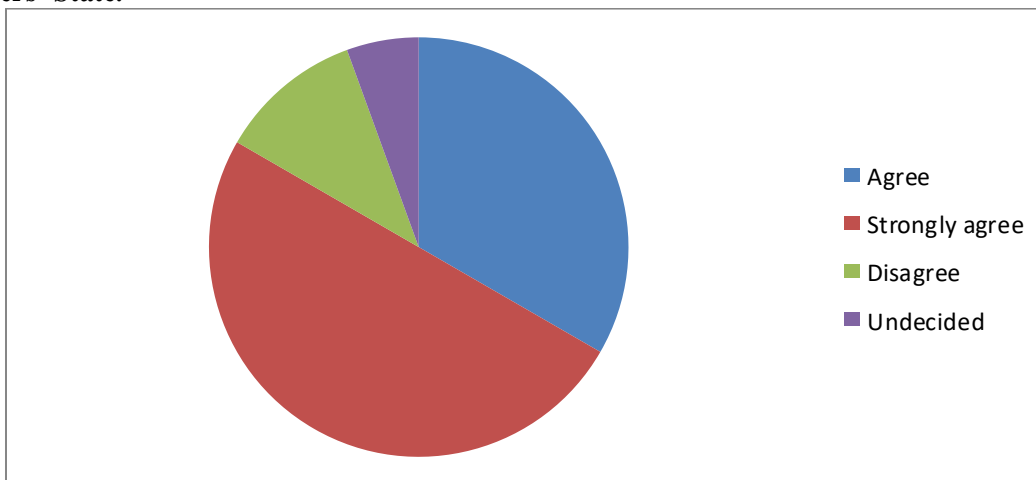
Fig. 5: Indicates how disgruntled security agents contribute to the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Rivers State.



Source: Field Survey, 2021

The chart above indicates that disgruntled security agents contribute to the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Rivers State. 80% of the respondents affirmed, with a mean of 4.32 and standard deviation of 2.46, that disgruntled security agents contribute to the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Rivers State.

Fig.6: Indicates how that lack of proper agency coordination of security agents has resulted in operational inefficiency in tackling the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Rivers State.

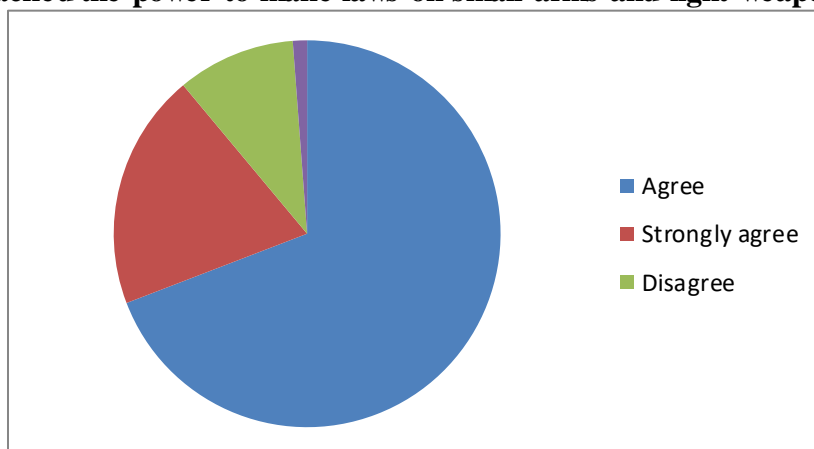


Source: Field Survey, 2021

The chart above indicates the lack of proper agency coordination of security agents has resulted in operational inefficiency in tackling the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Rivers State. 39 (75%) of the respondents affirmed, with a mean of 2.72 and standard deviation of 1.39, which indicates that lack of proper agency coordination of security agents has resulted

in operational inefficiency in tackling the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Rivers State. Based on the majority of the respondent's response, the lack of proper agency coordination of security agents has resulted in operational inefficiency in tackling the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Rivers State.

Fig.7: Indicates how the implementation of existing laws has been inadequate because the Rivers State House of Assembly lacked the power to make laws on small arms and light weapons.



Source: Field Survey, 2021

Also, 10(20%) and 16 (32%) of the respondents at a mean value of 3.36 and standard deviation of 1.48 agreed and strongly agreed respectively. This affirms that the implementation of existing laws has been inadequate because the Rivers State House of Assembly lacked the power to make laws on small arms and light weapons.

7. Discussion of Findings

From our findings, it was revealed that the non-domestication of the ECOWAS Convention on the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons adversely impacted security in Rivers State. The findings offer support to previous studies that availability of arms and weapons have increased the number of violence in Rivers State, especially since the emergence of Nigeria's Fourth Republic such as armed robbery, kidnappings, community violence, political intimidation, assassination and killings, illegal oil bunkering, among others (PIND, 2015; Ogele, 2020a; Ogele, 2021b). Dokubo (2005) revealed that "oil exploration/oil companies 'funds are considerable sources of proliferation of weapons. They are motivated to acquire arms in other to further their ambitions or enlarge their exploration coast and, also, to exchange the arms to militant groups for their protection to bunker oil in the high sea. Illicit sale and procurement of oil in the high sea is one of the motivating factors for some oil cartels to deal on the illicit exchange of firearms" (cited in Dappa and Omale, 2016, pp.35&36). This finding also collaborated Soetan (2017,p.36) that "at a meeting on 1 October 2004 in Abuja with representatives of the federal government, the leaders of two of the main armed groups, the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force under Alhaji Mujahid Abubakar Asari Dokubo and the Niger Delta Vigilante Group led by Ateke Tom, agreed to disband and disarm. There followed

further meetings in late 2004, and a disarmament process under which 1,000 guns were handed over, the majority of them are AK-47s or SA Vz 58s.”

The findings have shown that there is a significant relationship between the non-implementation of the ECOWAS Convention on the proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons by Nigerian State and the increase in circulation of arms and weapons in Rivers State. This result is inconsonant with the views of other researchers like Agboton-Johnson, Ebo and Mazal (2004) who disclosed the claims of a leader of an armed group in Rivers State when stated that “arms are available at sea, and are brought in by vessels just off the coast of Rivers State, and can be purchased by anybody that can afford to.” Soetan (2017,p. 33) also revealed that the “wide availability, accumulation and illicit flows of such weapons tend to escalate conflicts; weaken peace agreements; increases violence in crime; reduces economic and social development.” The findings also collaborate Dokubo’s submission that “of the 500,000 people killed every year across the world, an estimated 300,000 of them are as a result of small arms. An estimated 50 percent of illicit weapons that proliferate in Africa are used in internal conflicts, armed robbery and drug trafficking” (Dokubo, 2003, p.118). Hence, the Rivers State and Nigeria governments, over time, have offered amnesty to criminal elements in Rivers State and Niger Delta region at large. These disarmaments were carried out on various occasions and successive administrations.

The findings of this study have shown that there is a significant relationship between the inordinate quest for power and materials well-being and the increase in proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Rivers State. The result of the study agrees with earlier studies conducted by Olamide and Emmanuel (2018,p.9), who observed that the “oil bunkering and vandalism worsen the crisis as the availability of light weapons contributed to the scores of dead people and the displacement of thousands of indigenes by inter-communal violence.” Similarly, Abiodun, Ayo-Adeyekun, Onafowora and Nwammenaya (2018,p,39) revealed that “in recent times, Rivers State has appeared to be the epi-centre of cultist activities in the country, with no fewer than 19 people reportedly killed following cult clashes in some communities in the state.” Our findings revealed that when he served as a member of the Rivers State Amnesty Committee, during disarmament in one of the local government areas in the Orashi region, the cultist claimed that the politicians procured the arms for them during the electioneering campaign in 2015. After the election, the politicians refused to meet their bargain and hence, could not demand these arms and weapons. Afterwards, these arms and weapons have been used for illegal activities since there is no employment in the state and our patrons refused to empower us. Our findings revealed that the availability of small arms and light weapons increased the degree of electoral violence, cultism, and armed robbery, among others in Rivers State.

The findings of this study have shown that there is a significant relationship between State security, institutional weakness and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Rivers State. Our findings revealed that the corruption in the security agencies has also contributed to its weakness; thereby disgruntled elements in the security institution sell arms and light weapons to the criminal elements in the society. The research agrees with earlier research conducted by Osimen and Akintunde (2015,p.16) who revealed that a major and five other soldiers of the Nigerian Army were convicted in November 2008 of selling over 700 arms and weapons valued at 100 million Nigerian Naira. They include AK-47 rifles, machine guns, and rocket launchers to Niger Delta militants between January 2000 and December 2006 (cited in Abiodun

et al, 2018,p,41). Similarly, the Punch Newspaper Editorial (June 15th, 2018) revealed that “militias offer bribes at the seaports, airports and land borders smuggle in weapons. It is not only the murderous militias that enrich corrupt customs, police and intelligence officials; Politicians and public office holders, the group said, also pay money to agents of the state to bring in weapons to arm their thugs and illicit storm troopers.” Hazen and Horner (2007, p. 33) revealed that other sources of small arms circulation are through serving and military and police officers, and those returning from the peacekeepers. Since the security institutions are weak, the weapons enter into the country, particularly in the hands of armed groups, political and community leaders, national dealers, and individuals. Besides the craft production of small arms are not checked or monitored by the relevant security agencies, hence, increases the domestic source of small arms.

8. Concluding Remarks

The oil exploration/oil companies ‘funds are considerable sources of the proliferation of weapons in Rivers State. The multinational oil companies are motivated to acquire arms in other to further their ambitions or enlarge their exploration coast and, also, to exchange the arms to militant groups for their protection to bunker oil in the high sea. Illicit sale and procurement of oil in the high sea is one of the motivating factors for some oil cartels to deal with the illicit exchange of firearms. The domestication of the ECOWAS Convention on the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons by Nigeria State will address the emerging challenges of insecurity in Rivers State. The Nigerian Firearms Acts of 1970 is outdated and weak, and stand the contemporary challenges occasioned by the increase in the availability of arms and weapons. There is lack of political will to tackle the incidence of arms proliferation in the country have left many citizens and business vulnerable to illegal user’s weapons. Most of the arms and weapons are used for illegal activities, particularly as the rate of unemployment continued to soar. The political gladiator actors and oil syndicates have taken advantage of the vulnerable youths to perpetrate violence. The availability of small arms and light weapons increased the degree of electoral violence, cultism, and armed robbery, among others in the Rivers State. Corruption in the security sector has contributed to the challenges of addressing arms proliferation in Nigeria. There are disgruntled elements in the security institution sell arms and light weapons to the criminal elements in the society.

9. Recommendations

Given the fragile security situation in Rivers State and Nigeria at large, the situation requires a pragmatic and progressive solution and urgent attention. The ECOWAS Convention on SALW having been ratified by Nigeria needs to be enacted into law for our domestic use. Though, the bill is before the National Assembly, which is considered as a bold step in domesticating the ECOWAS Convention on Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons.

Moving items on security to Concurrent List from the Exclusive List of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria will reduce the use and proliferation of small arms and light weapons. The innovation will enable the State Houses of Assemblies in Nigeria to make laws on arms and weapons for crimes that are local.

The federal government should establish a commission to handle arms and weapons-related matters in the country. The commission should be responsible for ensuring safe and effective management of arms and weapons, storage and security of national stocks, among others

Mopping up of arms and weapons in Rivers State should be a periodic exercise by the state government collaborating with the security agencies.

The government should identify criminal elements in the military and other security agents who sell arms and weapons to illegal users. Such elements should be arrested and prosecuted.

10. Limitations of the Study

One of the challenges faced in the field study was the insecurity in Rivers State. At present, the Rivers State has been experiencing insecurity arising from cult rivalry, kidnapping, and intra communal clashes. Consequently, the escalating level of insecurity in the region limited the collection of data on questionnaire administration, which are relevant to the study. For instance, not all the questionnaires distributed were retrieved. This, to the extent, limited data for the study.

Funding the project was a major challenge. Financial constraints adversely affected the number of visits to many parts of the Rivers State. Again, transportation, particularly, to the river line communities and hiring speedboats, payment of research assistants, and other field personnel have financial implications that were burdensome.

The study overcame some of the challenges through the adoption of ethical consideration, which involve informed and written consent through the research assistants recruited for this purpose. These research assistants were supportive in actualizing the aim of the study. Also, this project was personally funded.

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