



**SMALL ARMS PROLIFERATION,  
ETHNO-COMMUNAL CONFLICT, AND UNDERDEVELOPMENT:  
OKE-OGUN AREA OF OYO STATE, NIGERIA IN FOCUS**

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**Abstract:**

Small arms proliferation and ethno-communal conflict is growing social menace in Nigeria, which has resulted to severe loss of lives (especially, children and women), destruction of properties and unstable socio-economic environment needed for rapid economic development in the country. Against this background, this study examined the relationship between small arms proliferation, ethno-communal conflict and underdevelopment. The study adopted survey research design. The strain theory by Robert K. Merton was adopted as theoretical guide. Data were gathered from both primary and secondary sources. Stratified and purposive sampling technique was adopted in selecting one thousand, one hundred and fifty two (1152) respondents from the three local government areas in the study area. The obtained data were statistically analysed using linear regression. The result obtained from the analysis of data indicates that, there is a significant relationship between proliferation of small arms (such as AK-47, double barrel, G-3, AKM) ethno-communal conflict and, underdevelopment. The Federal Government of Nigeria and other stakeholders in conflict management should adopt preventive approach in handling conflict in the country.

**Keywords:** small arms proliferation, ethno-communal conflict, and underdevelopment

**1. Introduction**

Small arms proliferation, ethno-communal conflict, and underdevelopment are multi-dimensional, and interconnected social problem that have besiege and undermine progress in many countries across the globe. Nigeria, the most populous black race on earth has witnessed series of arms violence, conflict of various forms and types, violent

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crimes and series of deadly attacks from insurgent groups. Since its advent in Nigeria, the Boko Haram insurgent group has wrecked immense havoc in the country, through the *"using explosives and firearms with gruesome fatal"* socio-economic consequences (Okoli & Iortyer, 2014; Okpa & Ekong, 2017). According to Ukwayi, Okpa and Dike, (2018) insecurity in the form of ethnic, communal, and religious crisis is one of the biggest, most complex, and perhaps the most complicated problem facing Nigeria and most countries in the world, whether developed or developing countries. This has made the country a receptacle of weapons flowing from other part of the African region and beyond. The general assumption is that the protracted nature and the recurrence of ethno-communal, religious, electoral violence and inter-communal conflict among other violent crimes have resulted to the stockpile of illegal weapons use in prosecuting this evil and social ill, which has undermine development in the country (Emmanuel, 2013). The unhealthy security situation in the country apparently demonstrated in the wilful killings, aggression, cruelty, fraudulent activities like child trafficking, kidnapping and hostage taking have rendered many Nigerians deeply embittered about the safety profile of the country (Ukwayi & Okpa, 2017). Scholars at different forum have argued that small arms proliferation has potentials to prolong crises, aid the breach of local and global human rights law, and also put the lives of innocent citizens at high risk as well as inhibit socio-economic development.

According to Ibrahim and Azubuikwe (2014), underdevelopment threatens human security and exposes great number of people to poverty, illness, and poor political and economic prospects. The indices of underdevelopment include among others, extreme poverty; disparity in delivery of social services including formalized education systems, medical facilities, and portable drinking water; poor or lacking infrastructure and governance capacity; and an environment of physical insecurity (Otu, Eja, Joy & Emeka, 2011). All of these factors collectively lead to a poverty trap, in which poverty is widespread, cyclical, and intractable. The uncontrolled proliferation and stockpiling of small arms prior to, all through and after life threatening crises has resulted to many regions like the western Nigeria being flooded with weapons with devastating effects on development of the region (Adewoyin, 2016). In Oyo state, studies have shown that the access to and abuse of these small arms fuel ethnic, religious, political and communal crises, with unthinkable effects on socio-economic development (Okoye, 2000; Ikejiani-Clark, 2007). The conclusions of these studies may be adjudged true because a significant number of the crises that occurred in the state were prosecuted with small arms, and in some instances extremely sophisticated weapons fit for external assault. The evil perpetuated through this weapon are not measurable, as their availability is usually considered as a major cause that influences armed violence and the outbreak as well as the continuation of internal conflicts and tensions in some parts of Oyo State (Adewoyin, 2016, Ukwayi, Adewoyin, John & Ofem, 2017).

Oyo State has suffered enormously from insecurity generated by the circulation and misuse of small arms in wrong hands. Specifically, the misuse of arms during ethno-communal and inter-communal conflicts in Igboho/Igbope (Oorelope local

government area), Irawo-Owode/ Irawo-Ile (Atisbo LGA) and farmers/herdsmen (Saki-West LGA) in 1981, 1996 and 1999 respectively in Oyo State, Nigeria has contributed to the killings of remarkable number of men, women and children (Ukwayi, Adewoyin, John & Ofem, 2017). Although, there is no official statistical records available about the number of death during these conflicts, unconfirmed report alleged that nearly five hundred people were killed with properties worth several millions naira destroyed. These conflicts unarguably impede the development of the areas affected as schools, churches, critical infrastructures and lives were destroyed why the conflicts lasted. Previous studies on the explanatory variable have concentrated on production, transfer and storage of small arms (Adebisi, 2002; Ikelegbe, 2005; Ikejiam-Clark, 2010, Emmanuel, 2013). However, there are limited quantitative studies focusing on the relationship nexus between small arms proliferation, ethno-communal conflict and underdevelopment in Oke-Ogun Area of Oyo State, Nigeria. Hence this study is designed to bridge this knowledge gap.

## **2. Theoretical framework**

### **2.1 Strain theory**

This study was anchored on strain theory by Robert K. Merton (1957). In his contribution to the explanation of the rising crime situation in America towards the middle of the twentieth century, Merton (1957), in his strain theory had argued that a society instils in its members a desire for certain goals and prescribes socially approved means for realizing such goals (Ugwuoke, 2010). After examining American social and cultural pattern critically, Merton had formulated five methods through which citizens reacted to the cultural goals which are thwarted through the application of legitimate means, he may adopt illegitimate methods in the alternative. Merton's identified five methods of reacting to the ends- means dilemma only one method is positive while the other four are negative or deviant adaptations to conditions of anomie.

1. Conformity: In this means of adjustment persons accepts the culturally defined desires and the approved way for attaining those desires.
2. Innovation: In this mode of adaptation, people accept the institutional goals, but they come up with their own ways of accomplishing the approved societal goals.
3. Ritualism is for those who holds fast to legitimate means but resign from goals.
4. Retreatism is for those who reject both the goals and means with total resignation. These are drug addicts, alcoholics and psychotics.
5. Rebellion is for those who reject both goals and the means but vow to establish a new social order. These are the rebels.

Strain is a true reflection of most contemporary world, including Nigeria. Accomplishment and realization of societal goals are more evaluated basically in materialistic terms. There are rules guiding the game of success, but they seem to be of little relevance than success itself. In fact, the end is what obviously justifies the means in today Nigeria society. Material acquisition is a feature that runs through all segment

of the country, yet the means available to some members of the population are limited. Consequently, the limited means of attaining these goals compels people to innovate by engaging in illegal arms smuggling. Availability and easy access to smuggled arms often lead to incessant and prolonged conflict in Nigeria as a result of activities of arms smugglers who aspire to meet the societal goals by innovating for their own way of survival. Merton theory has been criticized for advocating and accepting the status quo uncritically, that is, the theory assumes that everyone in the society is or ought to be gunning for the same general goals of success materially or as the case may be define themselves in relation to these goals.

### **3. Research setting and study population**

The study area is Oke-Ogun in Oyo State, Nigeria. The area is made up of ten local government areas out of which three were purposively selected for the study. The study area will be discussed under the following sub-title: Geographical location, people and culture. Administratively, Oke-Ogun Area is one of the five geo-political zones in Oyo State, namely, Ibadan, Ibarapa, Ogbomoso, Oyo and Oke-Ogun. It covers an area of about 63 percent of the total landmass of the state. It is located within latitude 7°70' north and 9° north and longitude 2°60' east to 4°20' east. Oke-ogun, which is geographically located in the North end of Oyo town, comprises of ten (10) local government areas i.e. Iseyin, Kajola, Iwajowa, Itesiwaju, Atisbo, Saki East, Saki West, Oorelope, Irepo and Olorunsogo. The serene and vast beautiful landmass is predominantly a rural settlement enclave (Aderigbe, 2014). The study population consists the total number of people residing in Oke-Ogun area of Oyo State. The total population of male is (421,030), while that of females is (385,023) giving the grand total of 806,053 (National Population Commission, 2010). The population comprises of self-employed, gainfully employed, civil servants, farmers, and industrialists. Others are police officers, custom officers, immigration and other para-military security outfit stationed at the border. The assumption is that, these categories of individuals are in the better position to provide dependable information on the nexus between small arms proliferation, ethno-communal conflict and underdevelopment in Oke-Ogun area of Oyo State, Nigeria.

### **4. Methods**

The study adopted cross-sectional survey research design. The design was considered appropriate for this study because it allows the researcher to make inferences about the population by studying the sample (Ukwai, Adewoyin, John, & Ofem, 2017). Two methods of sampling were adopted namely, stratified sampling and purposive sampling techniques. The sample for this study consists of one thousand, one hundred and fifty-two (1152) respondents purposively drawn from three (3) local government areas in Oke-Ogun Area. A breakdown of this sample indicates that three hundred and

eighty four (384) respondents were selected from the three LGAs. The Survey Monkey Sample Size calculator was adopted in determining the sample size for the survey. This was achieved by inputting the total population of the three LGA into the calculator at a confidence level of 99 percent and at a margin error of 5 percent, the result displayed the minimum required sample size of 384, which was adopted as the sample size for each of the three local government areas selected for the study.

Data were principally generated through questionnaire and key interview guide. The questionnaire contains closed ended questions divided into three sections, with each of the sections focusing on a specific segment of the study. The in-depth interview in like manner covers similar questions as contained in the research objectives. The participants of the KII consist traditional ruler; para-military organisations, youth leaders, women leaders, religions leaders, hunters, farmers, traditional/ local opinion leaders, and government functionaries. Most of the informants were eyewitnesses and participants in the conflicts or individuals who represented their communities and associations in the several meetings, committees and consultations held to work out modalities for terminating the conflicts. Interactions during KII were tape recorded and transcribed. Where the interviewed desired to stay undisclosed and requested that his or her should not be recorded, the research assistance takes extensive notes. The KII participants were purposively gathered on two basis: *“the relevance of a respondent’s official position and a respondent’s reputation for being knowledgeable about the proliferation of small arms and conflict in the study area”*. Upon conclusion of data collection, data gathered from the field were coded and analysed using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). Linear Regression and content analysis were used to analyse quantitative and qualitative data respectively.

## 5. Results and discussion of findings

In respect of sex of respondents, 662 respondents (58 per cent) were male and 479 respondents were female (42 per cent). Of the 379 respondents from Saki-West Local Government Area who responded to the questionnaire, 221 (58 per cent) were male while 158(41.7 per cent) were female. In Oorelope LGA, the result shows that 223 respondents were male (58.7 per cent) and 157 respondent (41.3 per cent) were female while in Atisbo LGA, it was 218 respondents (57.1 per cent) male and 164 females (42.9 per cent). On the distribution of their age, 30 respondents (2.6 per cent) were below 20 years while 89 participants (7.8 per cent), 128 participants (11.2 per cent), 188 participants (16.5 per cent), 262 participants (23 per cent) and 444 participants (38.9 per cent) were within age group 20-24 years, 25-29 years, 30-34 years, 30-34 years, 35-39 years respectively. The result also shows that in the three selected local governments, majority of the respondents were 40 years (38.5 per cent Saki-West, 39.2 per cent in Oorelope and 39 per cent in Atisbo LGA). In summary, a significant number of the participants were above 40 years of age.

On the nature of their occupation, out of the 1141 respondents, 450 respondents (39.4 per cent), were farmers, 457 respondents (40.1 per cent) were public servants while 194 respondents (17.0 per cent) and 40 respondents (3.5 per cent) were traders and Business men and women respectively. In terms of their marital status, 253 respondents representing (22.2 per cent) were single, 813(71.3 per cent) were married while the remaining 75 respondents (6.6 per cent) were either separated or widowed or divorced. In Saki-West, majority of the respondents were married (71.5 per cent). Similar result was obtained in Oorelepo and Atisbo Local Government Areas where (71.8 per cent) and (70.4 per cent) of participants were married respectively. This result clearly shows that majority of the respondents were married.

### **5.1 Respondents perception of the nexus between proliferation of small arms, ethno-communal conflict and underdevelopment.**

Respondents perception of the relationship between small arms proliferation, ethno-communal conflict and underdevelopment. Table 1 show the responses of respondents on ethno-communal conflict with four option of strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree. Result as presented in Table 1 indicates that about half of the participants in the three local government areas either strongly agree or agree on all the size items on ethno-communal conflict subscale. In fact, on item 1, which states that availability of small arms such as AK-47 and G3 fuels ethno-communal conflict, more than 70 percent of the respondent strongly agreed or agreed that access to small arms like AK-47 and G3 sustains ethno-communal conflict. The result also showed that more than half of the respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that community leaders provide fire arms to their warriors during ethno-communal conflict and that availability of small arms such as AKM frustrates reconciliation process during ethno-communal conflict. Table 1 also indicates that about half of the participants support the statement that lives and properties are destroyed during ethno-communal conflict when weapon like AK-47 are used. Consequently, undermine development.

**Table 1:** Responses on proliferation of small arms, ethno-communal conflict and underdevelopment

S/N	Items	LGA	SA	A	D	SD	Total
1	Availability of small arms such as AK-47 fuels ethno-communal conflict	Saki west	268 (70.0)	97 (25.7)	7 (1.9)	7 (1.9)	379
		Oorelope	270 (71.2)	96 (25.3)	8 (2.1)	6 (1.6)	380
		Atisbo	272 (71.4)	96 (25.2)	7 (1.8)	7 (1.8)	382
		Total	810 (71.0)	289 (25.3)	22 (1.9)	20 (1.8)	1141
2	Ethno-communal conflict is prevalent among communities that have stockpiles of small arms like double barrel	Saki West	179 (47.2)	176 (46.4)	15 (4.0)	9 (2.4)	382
		Oorelope	186 (48.9)	169 (44.5)	16 (4.2)	9 (2.4)	380
		Atisbo	185 (48.4)	172 (45.0)	16 (4.2)	9 (2.4)	382
		Total	550 (48.2)	517 (45.3)	47 (4.1)	27 (2.4)	1141
3	Access of to small arms like G3 sustains ethno-communal conflict	Saki West	195 (51.5)	143 (37.7)	27 (7.1)	14 (3.7)	379
		Oorelope	197 (51.8)	141 (37.1)	27 (7.1)	15 (3.9)	380
		Atisbo	199 (52.1)	141 (36.9)	27 (7.1)	15 (3.9)	382
		Total	591 (51.8)	425 (37.2)	81 (7.1)	44 (3.9)	1141
4	Community leaders provide fire arms to their warriors during ethno-communal conflict	Saki West	170 (44.9)	168 (44.3)	29 (7.7)	12 (3.2)	379
		Oorelope	173 (45.5)	163 (42.9)	32 (8.4)	12 (3.2)	380
		Atisbo	172 (45.0)	166 (43.5)	32 (8.4)	12 (3.1)	382
		Total	515 (45.1)	497 (43.6)	93 (8.2)	36 (3.2)	1141
5	Availability of small arms such AKM frustrates reconciliation process during ethno-communal conflict	Saki West	210 (55.4)	135 (35.6)	22 (5.8)	12 (3.2)	379
		Oorelope	209 (55.0)	137 (36.1)	24 (6.3)	10 (2.6)	380
		Atisbo	207 (54.9)	141 (36.9)	20 (5.2)	14 (3.7)	382
		Total	626 (54.9)	413 (36.2)	66 (5.8)	36 (3.2)	1141
6	Lives and properties are destroyed during ethno-communal conflict when weapons like AK-47 are used	Saki West	203 (53.6)	150 (39.6)	21 (5.5)	5 (1.3)	379
		Oorelope	208 (54.7)	145 (38.2)	24 (6.3)	3 (0.8)	380
		Atisbo	206 (53.9)	149 (39.0)	20 (5.2)	7 (1.8)	382
		Total	617 (54.1)	444 (38.9)	65 (5.7)	15 (1.3)	1141

Source: Field work, 2016. \*\*\*Values in the parentheses are the percentages

## 5.2 Test of hypotheses

### Hypothesis one

In the null form, hypothesis one states that there is no significant relationship between proliferation of small arms (such as AK-47, double barrel, G-3, AKM) ethno-communal conflict and underdevelopment. The independent variable here is the proliferation of small arms while the dependent variable is ethno-communal conflict and underdevelopment. This hypothesis was tested using linear regression. The findings

revealed in table 2. The correlation coefficient of .552 was obtained which means that there is moderate remarkable relationship between the circulation of lethal weapons and ethno-communal conflict and underdevelopment. The coefficient of determination of .552 was obtained which means that proliferation of small arms accounted for 55.2 percent of the variation in ethno-communal conflict and underdevelopment. The moderately high positive relationship means that the more the proliferation of small arms, the more likely ethno-communal conflict to occur and the more likely development impede. The r-square value of 55.2 percent suggests that proliferation of small arms accounted for more than half of the variance in ethno-communal conflict and underdevelopment in Oke-Ogun. Result also revealed that proliferation of small arms significantly predict the incidence of ethno-communal conflict and underdevelopment  $F(1, 1139) = 499.862, p < .05$ ). The beta coefficient of .552 indicates that circulation of lethal weapons contribute significantly to the prediction of ethno-communal conflict and underdevelopment ( $\beta = .552, t = 22.36, p < .05$ ). The adjusted r-square, which is a measure of effect size, shows that 30.4 percent of the variance in ethno-communal conflict and underdevelopment was explained by proliferation of small arms. Furthermore, since the calculated  $r(0.552)$  is greater than the critical  $r(.139)$  with 1139 degrees at the 0.05 level of significance. This means that the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, there is a significant relationship between proliferation of small arms (such as AK-47, double barrel, G-3, AKM) ethno-communal conflict and underdevelopment in Oke-ogun.

**Table 2:** Relationship between proliferation of small arms, ethno-communal conflict and underdevelopment

Variables	Mean	SD	r-value	Sig.	
Small arms proliferation	10.53	2.60	0.552	.000	
Ethno-communal conflict and underdevelopment	9.38	2.46			
Model summary	R	R square	Adjusted R-square	Std. Error of the estimate	
1	0.552	0.305	0.304	2.05	
Anova	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Regression	2107.185	1	2107.185	499.862	.000
Residual	4801.494	1139	4.216		
Total	6908.680	1140			
Coefficient	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
Constant	3.873	.254	.	15.27	.000
Proliferation of small arms	.523	.023	.552	22.358	.000

Significant at 0.05, df = 1139, critical r = .087, critical F = 3.85.

## 6. Discussion of findings

### 6.1 Small arms proliferation, ethno-communal conflict and underdevelopment

The findings of the hypothesis revealed that the illegal circulation and access to small arms significantly influence ethno-communal conflict and impede development in Oke-Ogun Area of Oyo State, Nigeria. The implication of this result is that the availability of small arms fuel ethno-communal conflict and inhibits development. However, some of these arms in the hands of unauthorized individual stockpile are acquired through purchases from black markets, during attacks on police and military armouries. This suggests that, ethno-communal conflict is prevalent among communities that have stockpiles of small arms like double barrel, AK-47. The study further revealed that the proliferation of illicit arms, pose a serious threat to peaceful co-existence of communities who have disagreement or dispute. The findings from the statistical testing shows that although small arms do not cause ethno-communal conflicts, the wide accessibility, build up and illegitimate circulation of such arms drives ethno-communal crises; destabilize harmonious resolution; strengthen hostility and hampers socio-economic development.

According to Vendley and Ali (2010), hostility does not automatically start with access to lethal arms, but it amplifies when small arms are available, mostly in already unstable settings characterised with hunger and deprivation. The findings of this study supported the postulation of Albert (2005) who assessed the role of small arms in conflict in rural communities in Nigeria. He asserts that the availability of small arms risks igniting or fuelling ethnic conflict and the country serves a case in point of lethal weapon accessibility and abuse. Albert stated that these weapons have contributed to various ethno-communal conflicts in Nigeria *"often takes the form of riots, sabotage, assassination, armed struggles, guerrilla warfare and secession plan"*. The findings also agree with Albert (2001) who posit that small arms does not in any way cause ethno-communal conflict, but has the potentials to fuel and deepens the apprehension as demonstrated in protracted ethnic crises, increasing the figure of fatalities and constitute a danger to the sustained development of the socio-political and economic system. They noted that small arms plays pronounce role modern day crises and death in Nigeria and the worst hits are women and children.

Similarly, Ojakorotu and Okeke-Uzodike (2006), Emmanuel (2013) noted that the circulation of weapons and ethno-communal crises in the country has gotten to a worrisome level. They stressed that access to small arms have transformed the country into a battlegrounds. They gave instances of ethnic conflict in Nigeria to include the *"Ife-Modakeke ethnic conflicts of Oyo/Osun States 1999; Hausa/Fulani and Kataf of Zangon Kataf in Kaduna State 1999; Ijaw and Istekiris of Warri in Delta State, 1999; Hausa/Fulani and Yoruba ethnic conflicts in Oyo and Lagos States respectively, 1999/2000; Jukun/Chamba and Kuteb, Jukun and Tivo in Taraba State, 1998/1999; Igbakwu-Omor, Aguleri and Umuleri ethnic conflicts of Anambra State 1999"*. The findings of this study agreed with Bisina (2003) in his study on *"reducing small arms, increasing safety and security and minimizing conflicts in*

*the Niger Delta region: A survey of the small arms and light weapons situation of the Niger Delta*” observed that circulation of weapon in the oil rich region of Nigeria can best be accepted when one review some of the crises that has occurred in the region in which small arms was used to prosecute. He reported that the availability of small arms has sustained ethnic crises like the triangular dispute between the Ijaw, Itsekiri and the Urhobo in the Warri area. Accordingly, the hostility has refused to subside; this has resulted to displacement of people and the killing of unquantifiable number of souls.

Participant in KII were unequivocal in asserting that the proliferation of small arms has the potential of igniting as well as sustaining ethno-communal conflict as undermining development. A significant number of respondents also mentioned that ethno-communal conflict is fuel by access to illegal small arms. Evidence presented to buttress this position was Ife-Modadeke conflict in Osun state. Majority of the discussants posit that ethno-communal conflict is prevalent among communities that have stockpiles of small arms. According to this group of discussants access and availability of small arms frustrates reconciliation process during ethno-communal conflict, consequently leads to loss of lives and destruction of properties. The discussants explicitly reported that the major small arms in circulation in the area are AK-47, double barrel, local made pistols, machete, bow and arrow and swords. They highlighted that this class of small arms features predominantly in all the communal conflict that has occurred in the area. The study reveals that most of these small arms were brought into the country from neighbouring countries such Niger, Benin Republic, Cameroon. Poor policy outcomes and non- implementation of fire arms acts appear to be linked to the continue circulation of illegal small arms in Oke-Ogun Area of Oyo State and Nigeria at large.

## **6.2 Conclusion and recommendations**

Small arms proliferation and ethno-communal conflict is growing social menace in Nigeria, which has resulted to severe loss of lives (especially, children and women), destruction of properties and unstable socio-economic environment needed for rapid economic development in the country. The study was conducted to examine the relationship between small arms proliferation, ethno-communal conflict, and underdevelopment in Oke-Ogun of Oyo State, Nigeria. Existing literature indicates that proliferation of small arms influence ethno-communal conflict and undermines development. These three core social problems can be solved if government and other stakeholders in conflict management should adopt preventive approach in handling conflict in the country. This method is interested with coming up with an approach that will identify and deal with the causes, as well as reduce the occurrence of arm violence in southern Nigeria. The preventive approach should take cognizance of the causes of arm violence, this will lead to the establishment laws to curtail it. Also, the management of land by government should be fully implemented to check communal conflict caused by land dispute. Furthermore, government should automatically take over disputed land from community to avoid further killing and destruction of properties.

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