

Effects of the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons on Women Security in Ngaoundere, Adamawa Region, Cameroon.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons on women's security in the Adamawa region of Cameroon. A mixed-methods approach and descriptive research design were adopted for the study. A total of 268 participants responded to the survey. Simple random and purposive sampling techniques were employed due to the dense population of Ngaoundere. Data were collected using questionnaires and key informant interviews, which gathered both qualitative and quantitative information. The collected data were entered and analyzed using the latest version of SPSS. The analysis revealed that the population of Ngaoundere, Adamawa Region, Cameroon, is diverse, primarily consisting of nationals from the Far North region of Cameroon, as well as individuals from other areas such as the North West and South West Regions of the country. The study area is also home to a number of expatriates, mainly humanitarian workers and refugees. The level of aggression involving small arms and light weapons (SALW) in Ngaoundere has increased over the past decade. Most victims of aggression involving SALW are women, making them particularly vulnerable to threats posed by these weapons. The study recommends the establishment of a national commission on Small Arms and Light Weapons. Additionally, it advocates for the increased inclusion of women in discussions related to security and disarmament.

INTRODUCTION

The illicit proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons rank among today's most pressing security threats. Each year, tens of thousands of people are killed or injured in conflicts primarily fought with these weapons, as well as in crime-ridden areas outside of conflict zones. They are also the weapons of choice for many terrorists. The issue of small arms and light weapons (SALW) poses significant challenges to various aspects of peace negotiations. The current global estimate of firearms exceeds billion small arms arms, with approximately million (about 85 percent) are (Small Arms Survey, 2018). In conflict, SALW are conflict situations, in the implicated of deaths as well as and While not unique to conflicts, exclusive consequences of Small Arms Light SALW intimidation, rape, torture, sexual abuse, sexual harassment, threats and humiliation, threats, and trafficking of and the and girls (Jasmin Nario-Galace, 2017).

Women are frequently depicted as the primary victims of conflict. Although they are significantly affected by conflict and small arms and light weapons (SALW), their contributions are often overlooked during peace processes. However, women also serve as agents and active participants in warfare. Unfortunately,

once peace is established, they are often neglected. Women represent a diverse group of social actors who are often determined to assume specific roles in conflict situations. Despite being disproportionately impacted by violence and conflict, women remain underrepresented in nearly every aspect of the United Nations small arms process.

Although women are sometimes directly involved in peace talks, they are often outnumbered by men. Given that women are one of the demographics most severely affected by armed conflict, it is imperative that they be included in all planning, implementation, and evaluation processes related to small arms and light weapons (Vanessa Farr, 2010). Regardless of the context in which it occurs, violence against women is exacerbated and facilitated by the presence of guns and other small arms and light weapons. Current research on small arms has begun to move beyond merely the weapons and is increasingly focusing on the devastating human impact of their misuse. Meanwhile, norms and policies aimed at preventing the proliferation and misuse of small arms have continued to evolve at local, national, regional, and international levels.

The connection between small arms and light weapons (SALW) and violence against women is evident not only during wartime but also in other contexts, such as post-conflict periods or in societies experiencing negative peace. Although Brazil is not currently in a state of conflict, its homicide rates are comparable to those in war-torn countries, with a woman being assaulted every 15 seconds (Sandra Andrade, 2013). Female victims who filed complaints at the Special Police Station for Crimes Against Women (DEAMs) in Rio de Janeiro completed a questionnaire regarding various forms of violence.

The findings indicated that among the 615 women who responded to the questionnaire, 86 percent were familiar with their perpetrators, and 68 percent reported being threatened with firearms (Amnesty International, 2005). Even in less violent regions, firearms pose a significant risk. In cases of domestic abuse, a woman is five times more likely to be killed by her partner if a gun is present. Over the years, the importance of recognizing women as stakeholders rather than merely victims or passive beneficiaries has gained prominence, particularly through significant events such as the World Conferences on Women, especially the one held in Beijing in 1995.

Since 2001, African countries have made significant efforts to develop appropriate legal instruments to control small arms; however, this collective initiative has yet to yield tangible results on the ground. The issue of small arms is critical, important their proliferation has to the political disintegration of many numerous countries. nations. effects consequences of small arms of are acutely by many Africans. In many several there are no insufficient individuals to cultivate lands, land, generations waste are wasting lives by in futile conflicts. are denied deprived of childhood and are forced to become assume adult responsibilities before reaching Despite all these challenges, resilience of the African people is demonstrated evident in number of activists and other who risk their life lives peaceful change. Amoa quoting Arms Survey (2004), stated asserts it cannot is not over exaggeration to state that small arms played the a role in every political conflict, conflict across East, and West. West In Uganda, the Lord's resistance Resistance Army, by Joseph Kony, a has terrorized country since 1987 (though it has since been removed from the list of designated active terrorist groups) have been and has for a widespread human violations rights violations, recruitment murder, the child soldiers, abductions and and abductions, among others. writes that notes estimates indicated that indicate are about eight million small arms and light weapons in West Africa alone: of alone; 640 million small arms circulating in the globally, estimated that 100 million are found in Africa (AU Peace Africa" (AU Security Agenda, 2005). 2005).

Cameroon has experienced increasing political and social instability, driven by multiple crises in recent decades. These include the socio-political turmoil affecting the two English-speaking regions of Cameroon (North West and South West), the Boko Haram insurgency in the Far North, the influx of refugees from the Central African Republic (CAR), electoral violence, and post-election disputes following the 2018

presidential election. Additionally, there has been a rise in hate speech within political discourse, the radicalization of youth, and a growing spirit of rebellion and resistance to state violence. The security challenges faced by the country are closely linked to the use of weapons, many of which are not legally owned. Cameroon is not an arm-producing state (at least in theory), so part of the challenge lies in identifying the sources and actors involved in the circulation of these arms. The crisis in the Central African Republic has exacerbated the main conflicts affecting communities in the Adamawa and East regions, primarily due to the regular influx of refugees and sporadic incursions by armed groups from the Central African Republic. These factors have led to significant forced displacement in trans-border villages between Cameroon and the CAR. The influx of refugees, many of whom later migrate to the Adamawa region, has contributed to the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. Consequently, the region has experienced an increase in insecurity, armed banditry, and intense criminality, with the root of these issues being the easy availability of such weapons. As the number of refugees rose significantly, water points became hotspots where some members of host communities perpetrated violence against refugee girls and women. Numerous cases of physical and sexual aggression have been reported, particularly involving women and girls searching for firewood in the forests surrounding the villages (Nwati, 2021).



Statement of the Problem

The central issue addressed in this study is the impact of small arms and light weapons on women's security in Ngaoundéré, Adamawa Region, Cameroon. In Africa, significant quantities of small arms and light weapons are circulating, with the primary danger stemming from their uncontrolled distribution. The proliferation of these weapons results in loss of life, property damage, sexual violence, and numerous other consequences, making it a critical issue that must be addressed. Although the manufacture of these arms is prohibited under Cameroonian law, it is essential to identify the various categories of actors with differing interests who are involved in this illegal trade. Confusion arises when these actors include importing and exporting states, non-state entities, rebel forces, militias, and paramilitary groups. Consequently, it can be challenging to differentiate between legal and illegal trade.

There has been extensive discussion and debate regarding gender-based violence associated with small

arms; however, there has been little to no implementation of resolutions aimed at reducing this phenomenon. Women play a significant role in conflicts and are often the most affected. There is a pressing need for a conceptual reevaluation of how conflict analysis is approached, as current interventions have failed to yield sustainable solutions. Presently, there is a lack of effective gendered conflict analysis, resulting in an incomplete understanding of the situation in the country. Consequently, actions and recommendations do not address the full scope of the issues at hand. Given that women actively participate in conflict prevention and that conflict situations have different gendered impacts, it is crucial to consult women and women-led civil society organizations as part of the Gender Conflict Analysis. The ineffective implementation of most recommendations from the Major National Dialogue and other peace initiatives, such as Cameroon's National Action Plan on United Nations Resolution 1325, significantly diminishes their potential impact on peace processes, accountability mechanisms, transitional justice, and post-conflict transformation. Therefore, it is essential to discuss how small arms and light weapons threaten the security of women. In this context, the research will aim to examine the effects of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons on women's security in the Adamawa region of Cameroon.



Research Questions

This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the origins and types of small arms and light weapons in Ngaoundere, Adamawa region, Cameroon?
2. What are the effects of small arms and light weapons on women security in Ngaoundere, Adamawa region, Cameroon?
3. What role do women play in the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the Adamawa region?
4. What proposed recommendations could help mitigate the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the Adamawa region?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Review

This study is grounded in two theories: Conflict Theory and Feminist Peace and Conflict Theory (FCPT).

The Conflict Theory

Conflict theory, first developed by Karl Marx (1818-1883), is a theory which explains that society is in a state of perpetual conflict because of competition for limited resources. Conflict theory holds that social order is maintained by domination and power, rather than by consensus and conformity. According to conflict theory, those with wealth and power try to hold on to it by any means possible, chiefly by suppressing the poor and powerless. A basic premise of conflict theory is that individuals and groups within society will work to try to maximize their own wealth and power (Nickerson, 2021). Conflict theory has sought to explain a wide range of social phenomena, including wars, revolutions, poverty, discrimination, and domestic violence. It ascribes most of the fundamental developments in human history, such as democracy and civil rights, to capitalistic attempts to control the masses (as opposed to a desire for social order). Central tenets of conflict theory are the concepts of social inequality, the division of resources, and the conflicts that exist among different socio-economic classes (Nickerson, 2021).

The theory was considered relevant to the current study because it explained the conflict part of the study which brings out the part of SALW. Most at times, weapons are brought out as a result of conflictual situations. Karl Marx in the above theory tried to explain why it is in the human nature to be conflictual. It explains the variations of conflict in society, how it can affect peaceful coexistence and how two main parties are involved. Conflict theory believes that competition is a constant and, at times, an overwhelming factor in nearly every human relationship and interaction. Small Arms and Light Weapons are often used in a bid to control the available resources or impose ideologies to minorities and commit hideous crimes mostly with the intent of dominating. The relevance of SALW is an addition to the conflict theory as these are often used in a bid to control mostly resources be they material or natural.

Feminist Peace and Conflict Theory

The genealogy of feminist peace and conflict theory naturally comes as a hybrid phenomenon. Feminist peace and conflict theory (FPCT) is nurtured by a variety of disciplines and methodologies. The early twenty-first century historic reference to pacifist movements and gender aspects claimed by feminists relate mainly to the two world wars. Yet feminists questioned earlier the gender dynamics of the French Revolution (Mary Wollstonecraft, 1792) and the exclusion of women from the acclaimed new status of citizenship. Pacifists such as Bertha von Suttner or revolutionaries like Rosa Luxemburg or Emma Goldman made explicit reference to the plight of women in war and the continuity of private and public tyranny; men's dominance in the family and in the public domain. The continuum of violence running from domestic violence to war is therefore an essential paradigm for FPCT. For the first time, the realities encountered by women in wars were brought to the surface, written about, and taken into consideration. For the pacifist struggle, the visibility of those who suffered innocently was a moral mobilising factor against war. For patriotic suffragists, images of women in war enabled them to mobilise more capacities for a just war or revolution. However, both movements argued the plight of the innocent, those suffering under the hands of the enemy or the war in general. Through the paradigmatic shift from the architects to the victims of war, FPCT had a tremendous impact. Due to the thinkings of scholars in the field of feminist peace and conflict theory, progress was made in the field of women's rights as human rights. Mass rape in war was formally acknowledged as a crime against humanity and war crimes (Yugoslavia, Rwanda).

The theory was considered relevant to the study because it explained the role played by women in conflict situations and peace processes. This is a question that has become of major importance to the international floor because the main victims in conflicts and post-conflict situations are women. But the part of the implication of women in these conflicts or the role they play has often been neglected. The Feminist Peace and Conflict Theory is therefore of relevance to the question of women's security as a whole and the role of women in particular. The present work will also be relevant to the theory as it will help affirm the role that

women play in conflict situations and peace processes and the relationship they have with SALW.

Empirical Literatures

Origins and Types of Small Arms and Light Weapons

There are many ways in which SALW can end up being misused in environments where the state is unable to fully control the accessibility to and illegal possession of arms. In general, political, economic, and social transformations within countries tend to increase the availability of arms. SALW, unlike heavy arms, circulate in both the military and civilian markets. While military markets involve legal transfers from the producers and certified states to the purchasing state, civilian markets are flooded with excess arms that might result from either military budget cuts or producers' surplus production. While it is not always possible to accurately pinpoint how SALW find their way into one country from another and eventually into the hands of civilians, seven possible ways can be identified: Arms captured from enemies during fighting, soldiers defecting from armed groups, stolen or captured peacekeeping stocks (from UN troops), arms supplied by the armed forces, purchase through the open market, supply from government stockpiles of neighbouring states, and inheritance from family and relatives or friends (Araba, 2007).

The case of small arms collection programs in Kosovo demonstrates that even with a thorough review of local culture and historical factors, there can still be a challenge to disarmament. In Kosovo, gun ownership brings a sense of cultural pride. And so, the seizure of hunting rifles was met with strong resistance (UNDP, 2021).



Various domestic and regional dynamics contribute to the widespread proliferation of SALW in the Horn of Africa. These dynamics are shaped by the trade and trafficking of SALW in the region, which are conditioned by many structural factors.

- Political tension and environmental scarcity at the regional level give rise to the diffusion of arms, while longstanding migratory patterns facilitate their transfer across borders.
- Combinations of political manipulation, extreme poverty, deteriorating livelihoods, and environmental degradation contribute to people's willingness to take up arms.
- The presence of poorly paid and poorly trained security forces further ensures a steady supply of weapons to civilians.
- The political tradition in the Horn of outsourcing armed conflict to non-state armed groups is another

factor driving proliferation (HSBA, 2007).

Burundi emerged from a conflict that lasted 13 years. One of the major consequences of the war was the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in rural and urban communities. During the civil wars (1972 and 1993-4), the civilian populations possession of arms increased, with some significant differences between provinces; the capital and provinces bordering the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) were badly affected. 2 Most demobilised combatants continue to hold onto their weapons; as of February 2006, among the 35,000 people who had been demobilised, only about 6,000 arms had been collected (United Nations Peacebuilding Commission, 2007).

Weapons that move in Cameroon include equipment sourced in the region and arms sourced illegally from other parts of the world. They may include legacy weapons being recycled from early conflicts. In the particular case of Cameroon, it is often alleged that many weapons circulating in the country, including those that came in by rebels from the Central African Republic, originate from the Libyan conflict. Some of the weapons were also diverted from already existing national stockpiles. These include the following:

Firstly, shotguns were smuggled from Cameroon to the Central African Republic in 2014, some of which had been imported from Europe only two weeks earlier. Authorised transfers can be quickly diverted and reach conflict actors through the “Ant trade (Small Arms Survey-AU report, quoting UNREC, 2016).

Secondly, craft arms or artisan weapons produced locally or in neighbouring countries, particularly Nigeria.

Furthermore, a policeman in Bertoua, east region, whose weapon was initially an anti-riot weapon for use with lead bullets, gave his weapon to his security guard, who in return gave it to the police commissioner’s twelve-year-old son. The latter took the weapon to school, but the police were called, and the incident was addressed without any casualties. The weapon used in the incident can become lethal when used with real bullets.(Interview with Police Commissioner in Bertoua, east region, Cameroon, 2019)

Also, trafficking of firearm parts and components easily concealed in vehicles or among other commodities. (Small arms survey-AU report, 2018)

Actors Moving Small Arms and Light Weapons

There are several categories of actors moving weapons across territories. Some of them include;

Firstly, Armed Groups. These include particularly armed groups in the North-West and South-West conflicts (secessionist fighters) and former rebels from the Central African Republic. In the East region, former Seleka and Anti-Balaka fighters who often cross Cameroon allegedly sell weapons. Sometimes these people stay in Cameroon; other times they return to the Central African Republic. (ENACT, 2019)

Also, small-scale traffickers such as refugees (Adamawa and East Regions). The crisis in the Central African Republic that started in 2013 has particularly affected the East and Adamawa regions of Cameroon, as these regions have seen an unprecedented flux of refugees from CAR over the years. Cameroon currently hosts 291 000 registered refugees from CAR at the United Nations Agency for refugees. But there are more that are not identified, as some residents from CAR who have sought refuge in Cameroon are not registered. These refugees, both official and impromptu, are often accused of carrying weapons into Cameroon. (ENACT, 2019)

Furthermore, transnational organised crime involving poachers is an increasing phenomenon in the East and Adamawa regions in particular. Criminals have been identified to originate as far as Sudan, transiting through CAR and operating along the East, Adamawa, North, and Far North Regions of Cameroon.

In addition, Fulani and Mbororo pastoralists in the East and Adamawa principally have been victims of increasing criminality involving arms in the past few years. (ENACT interview with Aliou Bouba, member of the Mbororo Social Development association in Ngaoundere, Adamawa region, 2019)

Terrorists (Boko Haram in the Lake Chad), border communities seeking to escape poverty (boat riders, travellers, motor-taxis from Adamawa region), Transporters such as truck drivers who regularly cross borders and corrupt security and law enforcement officials. (ENACT, 2019)

When dealing with gender issues, it is also important to remember that the relationship between women and weapons is far more complex. For example, in some cases women are also perpetrators of gun violence (in the case of female combatants); therefore, they should not be viewed as just the passive victims of armed violence. Moreover, even when women have been excluded from military combat during conflict, they may have been associated with other aspects, such as smuggling weapons. Girls and women have also been associated with and play multiple roles in criminal gangs or fighting forces. Female combatants and gang members increasingly receive the same initiation and training in the use of weapons as their male counterparts. For all these reasons, when drawing women as both victims and perpetrators of deadly aggression, it is important to properly know what constitutes an actor and who is a victim of armed violence.

The Influence of Small Arms and Light Weapons on Women Security

Women and girls are clear victims of SALW violence. There is in particular gender-specific violence (domestic violence, rape, and other sexual abuses) committed against women using SALW. The proliferation of small arms and light weapons is recognised as an obstacle to development. In addition to facilitating criminal and armed violence, SALW are used to facilitate sexual and gender-based violence and to reinforce violent, gendered social norms. The UN Platform for Action (1995) described how girls and women are especially affected by armed conflict because of their unequal status in society and their sex. Existing research demonstrates that notions of masculinity are often linked to the possession of weapons (SIPRI, 2022). Among the specific effects experienced by women of all ages are displacement, loss of home and property, loss or involuntary disappearance of close relatives, poverty and family separation and disintegration, victimisation through acts of murder, terrorism, torture, involuntary disappearance, sexual slavery, rape, and sexual abuse. If one intends to destroy a culture, women are tactical targets of special significance because of their important roles within the family structure (Seifert, 1993). Compounding these gender-specific effects are the lifelong social, economic, and psychologically traumatic consequences of armed conflict and foreign occupation and domination (UN, 1995).



In modern wars, civilians are killed at far higher rates than combatants; women and children are the majority

of civilians killed in the process. As war disrupts social, economic, and gender hierarchies, women also take on economic and political responsibilities as heads of households and communities and as leaders in peace and reconciliation projects. Global justice frames concern about women in multinational conflicts as refugees and as targets of violence that is punishable under international humanitarian laws and the laws of war. Although women in conflict and post-conflict situations often lack institutional resources to address their concerns, international

Treaties have brought some measure of global justice to them in elevating women's status (OECD, 2009). As a result of armed conflicts, systematic rape and other forms of sexual abuse of women and girls have been reported in many war zones around the world.

In Bosnia Herzegovina and Yemen, systematic rape, forced marriages, and other forms of sexual abuse are often used as a tool of war. Past studies have indicated that female adolescents are up to six times more likely than male adolescents to develop PTSD symptomatology (BICC, 2007).

In some countries that have had a past experience of conflict, such as Rwanda and the DRC, there may be so few men that women were called upon to assume the responsibilities of both mother and father, in addition to dealing with their own deep wounds. Because armed conflict often requires women to take on expanded and sometimes new roles and responsibilities, they may experience greater equality with men. After fighting stops, the resumption of normal life and traditional roles often curtails progress made (Human Rights Watch Africa, 1996).

Cameroon is facing several security challenges that are a major threat to peace and affect, in particular, women's lives. The Boko Haram crisis and the violence in the South West and North West regions have profound impacts on the people in the affected areas, especially women and girls. The conflicts worsened the living conditions of women, exposing them to food and water insecurity and causing the destruction of socio-economic infrastructure such as hospitals, health centres, and schools (WILPF, 2018). Armed conflicts have also led to the increased circulation of weapons, and the immediate impact of these armed conflicts is the massive displacement of women and children. Women are also victims of threats, rape, and assault committed under the threat of weapons.

Recommendations Regarding the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

Over the years, the United Nations has significantly enhanced the global efforts to combat the proliferation of SALW. In 2001, the adoption of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat, and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects (PoA), the subsequent adoption of the International Tracing Instrument, and the Firearms Protocol of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime established an overall framework within which Member States and regional organisations have, both individually and collectively, enacted numerous legislative and administrative measures to combat the proliferation of these weapons. Of these, only the Firearms Protocol, which entered into force in 2005, is legally binding.

In early 2011, CARICOM Heads of State and Government adopted the CARICOM Declaration on Small Arms and Light Weapons, a politically binding agreement reinforcing our joint commitment to fully implement the PoA, and took all necessary measures to combat the proliferation of SALW. The efforts of CARICOM Member States to tackle this problem in a coordinated manner are mirrored in other parts of the globe, particularly in Africa. Regional efforts, such as those being undertaken within CARICOM and in other parts of the globe, form one tier of global action to combat the proliferation of SALW, and we count the United Nations as one of our main partners. The United Nations, and in particular the Programme of Action Implementation Support System, has been instrumental in assisting Member States in identifying their priority implementation needs and in recognising those in a position to help meet these needs (UN

Chronicle, 2011).

Awareness has been raised regarding the devastating impact of the proliferation of these weapons on the lives and livelihoods of people across the globe, including in countries that are not in conflict.

The UN worked on strengthening the legal and administrative framework of many states to combat and prevent the illicit flow of these categories of weapons across their borders. Member States now recognise the importance of efforts to combat the illicit flow of SALW and have begun to integrate such efforts into wider national development planning documents. Member States have begun to implement the highest international standards for the storage and safe disposal of SALW (UN Chronicle, 2011).

To adequately combat the illicit trade in and the proliferation of SALW, these issues have to be addressed in a holistic manner. Member States, with the assistance of the United Nations, will have to build on this framework in order to realise more tangible, quantifiable benefits. Member States must begin to demonstrate the political will to, at the very least, address seemingly taboo topics, such as ammunition and trade across borders. The United Nations and the international community of non-governmental organisations should continue to play a key role in this respect by ensuring that there is adequate research to assist Member States to hold factual, evidence-based discussions on these issues (UN Chronicle, 2011).

There must also be a greater exchange of information and sharing of best practices at the state-to-state and region-to-regional levels to enable individual Member States and regions to ensure that programs and policies that are developed are ahead of the curve and to forestall the repetition of the failures and setbacks already experienced by others.

The vital role played by the International Tracing Instrument in combating the illicit trade in and the proliferation of SALW cannot be overstated. While many Member States frequently reinforce their political commitment to implementing the provisions of the instrument, the limited number of states reporting on its implementation is a problematic issue that should be addressed (UN Chronicle, 2011).



Research Design

The study employed a mixed-methods approach, which involves both quantitative and qualitative approaches. A mixed method involves the collection and integration of both quantitative and qualitative data in the study (Creswel, 2018). The descriptive research is a suitable design that allows many variables to be studied at the same time with ease. A descriptive research design was adopted because it enables the researcher to describe the phenomenon accurately and systematically as it exists among the subjects (Yeomans, 2017). The study used descriptive statistics to identify characteristics, frequencies, and patterns

to answer what, when, where, and how of the study variables.

Description of the Area or Location of the Study

Ngaoundere is the capital of the Adamawa Region of Cameroon. Ngaoundere is important as a traditional Fulani capital. It was founded in the first half of the 19th century as a part of the Adamawa emirate by the Fulani emir Modibbo Adama. Ngaoundere is the northern terminus of the Trans-Cameroon Railway to Yaoundé and Douala and lies on the major north-south road from Garoua to Bertoua and Yaoundé; by those routes it exports livestock and peanuts (groundnuts) to southern Cameroon. Local development projects focus on animal husbandry. The town's industries include dairying, slaughtering, preparation of hides and skins, perfume manufacture, and cotton ginning. Major bauxite deposits are exploited to the south. Tourism is significant, encouraged by the large game reserve to the northwest and two national parks to the north and northeast, respectively. A hospital, an airport, and customs and meteorological stations serve the town.

Target Population

Target population represents the collection of cases the researcher is interested in and which he intends to make generalizations (Sim and Wright, 2000). The study was conducted in Ngaoundere, Adamawa region, Cameroon. The population of Ngaoundere is estimated to be around 290,000 inhabitants (Cameroon open data portal, 2020).

Research Instrument

The choice of data and data collection instrument depends on the attributes of the subjects, research topic, problem questions, objectives, designs, and expected results (Hennik et al., 2020). A questionnaire consisting of open and closed-ended questions was used to collect data from the participants of the study. The questionnaire was an appropriate research instrument for this study for its ease of collecting qualitative and quantitative data. Moreover, the respondents had the liberty to fill in information in anonymity to avoid unnecessary fear of victimisation due to the sensitivity of the research topic. A semi-structured questionnaire was thus used in the study to obtain primary data. A semi-structured questionnaire was appropriate for this study because it allowed a mix of both qualitative and quantitative information targeted by this study.

Description of Samples and Sampling Procedures

Orodho (2003) defines sampling as a procedure of selecting a representative of a population on which research can be conducted and inferential conclusions from the study can be applied in general terms to the entire population. Sampling is a process of selecting a few members from a bigger group to work with and to estimate the prevalence of unknown information, situation, or outcome of the bigger group (Kumar, 2005). With a total number of 290,000 inhabitants in Ngaoundere (Cameroon open data portal, 2020), and not all of them reachable due to the large size of the population, this study used both simple random and purposive sampling techniques. These techniques give a chance to a good number of participants to be included in the sample.

A sample is a small group selected from the bigger group that a researcher is interested in. The sample size for the research will be determined using Yamane's 1967 formula, which is:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where; n= sample size

N = Total Population

e = margin of error

Therefore,

N= 290,000

e= 0.05

Applying the formula to the number of inhabitants in Ngaoundere (290,000), the sample size for the study was:

$$n = \frac{290,000}{1+290,000(0.05)^2}$$

Sample Size (n)= 400 participants

The sample for the study was 400 participants. In addition, the study purposefully selected 10 experts in the question of defence and security. The sample size for the study will therefore be a total of 410 participants. The inclusion and exclusion criteria being of great importance during the current study, the researcher therefore specifies that the participants included in the present research were exclusively current residents of Ngaoundere, Adamawa region, Cameroon.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of organising data into meaningful and useful information that is used to answer research questions (Ott and Longnecker, 2015). The researcher collected information from the field of research, which was further analysed using the statistical software SPSS version 28 (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) for statistical as well as descriptive data analysis methodology. After collection, the data was grouped according to the relevant research questions. Data was then summarized. The researcher used narrative analysis to analyse the qualitative data. This method is used to analyse content from various sources, such as interviews of respondents, observations from the field, or surveys. It focusses on using the stories and experiences shared by participants to answer the research questions.

Ethical Consideration of the study

Ethical considerations relate to the moral standards that the researcher should consider at all stages of the research process. Research deals with people, and therefore the responsibility of protecting participants must be respected. Caution should be taken on the need for a researcher to obtain official permission from the affiliated institutions before doing the research for purposes of regulation. Before getting on the field, the researcher sought permission from the Centre for Social Justice and Ethics of the Catholic University of Eastern Africa. The researcher also obtained a research permit from the Centre for Political and Strategic Research (CREPS). Before administering the questionnaire to the respondents, the researcher made prior arrangements with the respondents on the date and time to administer the questionnaire at their own convenience. The researcher explained the purpose of research to the respondent. The aims and objectives of the research were explained before and after undertaking the research. This helped in attaining informed consent from the respondents. The researcher maintained extreme confidentiality about the respondents'

responses by keeping all responses secure and using them only for academic purposes. In addition, the respondents' identities were confidential and assured through the use of pseudonyms in cases where there was particular editing. Finally, a psychological counsellor was part of the data collection and helped in cases where any sensitive questions triggered any respondents into reliving a trauma.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Origins And Types Of Small Arms And Light Weapons

The first objective of the study was to examine the origins and types of small arms and light weapons in Ngaoundere, Adamawa region.

The study revealed that most (247, or 92%) of the population in the area of study had a broad understanding on the subject of small arms and light weapons.

The study found out that most of the respondents, 225, or 83.8%, have never been or are not currently owners of small arms, and the participants who indicated to be owners of SALW were mostly law enforcement officers.

Furthermore, the study informed the researcher that most (135 people, or 50.5%) of the participants do not personally know gun owners or do not know the status of gun ownership around them.

The study also found out that most of the respondents have seen a gun or any other form of weapon before at least once. This is noticeable in the country because most law enforcement officers have belted handguns during their duty times, so most of the population of Ngaoundere has actually encountered these at least once.

Effects Of Small Arms And Light Weapons On Women Security

The second objective of the study was to determine the effects of small arms and light weapons on women's security in Ngaoundere, Adamawa region, Cameroon.

The study found that most of the respondents (138, or 51.5%), indicated to know a woman who had been a victim of armed aggression. This revealed that most of the participants know at least a woman who has been a victim of armed aggression.

The study also established that the majority (188, or 70%) of the participants believed that women are more vulnerable to armed aggressions. In the same light, the majority 110 (40.6%) of the respondents indicated that they strongly agreed that the level of violence towards women has increased over the past year.

Additionally, the study found that most (47%) of the respondents in the area of the study have little or no knowledge about campaigns of education against gendered-based violence in their area of residence.

Also, the study revealed that most of the residents (92.9%) in the area of study have not been victims or have never experienced domestic armed violence; however, there is still cause for alarm because still some people have either been victims or have experienced domestic armed violence.

Role Played by Women in the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons

The third objective of the study was to identify the role played by women in the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Ngaoundere, Adamawa region, Cameroon.

The study revealed that many participants (41.3%) were not sure (or had no knowledge) of women's implication in the movement and trafficking of SALW. The results therefore implied that most of the residents of Ngaoundere have little or no knowledge on the role of women in the movement and trafficking of SALW.

The study also showed that the majority of the participants (42.2%) indicated that they strongly agreed with the statement that women contribute to the escalation of violence in the area of the study.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

This study concludes that most of Ngaoundere's residents come from the country's northern regions. However, Ngaoundere is also home to people from the country's other regions and neighbouring countries. The research region's central location in Cameroon may make it attractive to people seeking refuge from insecurity, which could contribute to the region's demographic diversity but also to the increase in violent crimes as the population grows more and more. The majority of people in Ngaoundere, Adamawa Region, Cameroon are familiar with the concept of small arms and light weapons but do not really possess any. In one way or another, most people will come into contact with them. The principal outcome of this research is that women are particularly susceptible to threats made with SALW because they account for the great majority of victims of assault committed with SALW. Antagonism toward women has increased dramatically over the previous decade and even more so over the past year. Women in Ngaoundere, Adamawa Region, Cameroon, contribute to the rise in violence by taking part in migration and trafficking of SALW while being victims of armed assault themselves. There are initiatives addressing SALW and women's security, but the local community is not aware of them.

Recommendations

From the summary of the findings and conclusions made in this study, there are several recommendations that are made.

This study recommends that there is a need for the United Nations Women-related Organs, such as UNWOMEN, to broaden the perspective of the security of women in relation to SALW.

Additionally, the study recommends that the government of Cameroon should look into the creation of a national commission on small arms and light weapons.

This study also recommends that the government should encourage the inclusion of more women in discussions related to security and disarmament.

Further, the effective implementation of international, regional, and national legislation pertaining to women's security and the fight against the illicit trafficking of SALW should be ensured.

Finally, the Cameroon government should more effectively address internal conflicts in order to reduce the demand for SALW by traffickers and smugglers.

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