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Article

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THE NEXUS BETWEEN SOCIOECONOMIC CONDITIONS AND PROLIFERATION OF SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS (SALWS) IN BENUE STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The proliferation of SALWs has become a global epidemic that has resulted in about a billion SALWs in civilians' possession across the world. In Africa, Nigeria ranks first as the country with SALWs in civilians' possession. In Benue State, there are indications that SALWs are also greatly proliferating. Although scholars have explored the situation, the socioeconomic conditions of the people of the state as a causative factor of the phenomenon seem not to attract their attention. This paper therefore explores the socioeconomic conditions of the people of Benue State to establish their correlation with the proliferation of SALWs in the state. The explanatory research design was adopted, the data collected were analyzed qualitatively while frustration-aggression theory explored as the framework for explanation. The study found that the socioeconomic conditions of the people of Benue State are deplorable. The study also found that SALWs are greatly proliferating in the state, which accounted for the high rate of deaths due to violent crimes, the frequency of armed attacks, the kinetic approaches to insecurity in the state, and the regularity of seizures of SALWs by security agents in the state, among others. The study also found that the lack of genuine sources of income has led some people to engage in criminal activities, which have seen the demand for SALWs as tools of operation. The study concluded that the proliferation of SALWs in the state cannot be curtailed unless the socioeconomic conditions of the people of the state are addressed. The study recommended government to ensure sustained sources of livelihoods for the people of the state for them to better their socioeconomic conditions and to refrain from engaging in criminal activities that demand the use of SALWs.

Keywords: Benue State, Proliferation of SALWs, Socioeconomic Conditions

Introduction

The advent of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs) has witnessed tremendous transformation in their design, build, and numbers, manufactured annually and proliferated globally. Karp (2018) averred that, as of 2017, there were one billion firearms in global circulation, out of which civilians hold 857 million, representing 85 percent. The increase to 857 million SALWs in civilians' hands was attained in 11 years from 2006, when it was 650 million, representing a 31.8 percent rise over the period. In Africa, Nigeria tops the ranks of SALWs in civilian possession and occupies the 16th position globally (Karp, 2018). The failure of the Nigerian Government to carry out total and complete post-civil war (1967–1971) disarmament and arms destruction programmes are seemingly responsible for civilians' SALWs' possession in the country. The lucrativeness of the SALWs business and the sheer size of Nigeria, serve as a massive market for SALWs entrepreneurs, the plethora of conflicts that pervade Nigeria's scenery, the pilfering of government and/or military arms stocks, the porousness of the country's borders and its elusive security checks, as well as weak arms control mechanisms, also apparently account for the proliferation of SALWs in Nigeria. As it were, Karp (2018) estimated that there are 6,200, 000 SALW in civilians' possession in Nigeria as of 2017, which represents 0.72 percent of the global SALW in civilians' possession.

Though there is no accurate data about the number of civilians with SALWs across the states in Nigeria, the data on the number of fatalities related to crime as provided by the Nigerian Stability and Reconciliation Programme over the years gives an inclination to civilian SALWs possessions across the states in the country. Since SALWs exacerbate crimes, using the number of fatalities due to crime as a yardstick for measuring civilians' SALWs possessions across the states in Nigeria is not out of place. This is more so because the proliferation of SALWs in itself would not have been an issue if they were not aggravating crimes. As it were, the trajectory of the fatalities recorded in the state due to armed crimes, the harvest of arms and ammunitions by the state's amnesty programme in 2016, the frequency and amount of seizures of SALWs by security agents in the state speaks to the level of the proliferation of SALWs in the state. The consequences of the proliferation of SALWs include but are not limited to fueling of conflicts, exacerbation of existing social and economic vulnerabilities, and undermining of peace and security across communities. Researchers and policy makers are agitated to exploring the phenomenon of the proliferation of SALWs in order to find actionable solution to it. While the proliferation of SALWs cannot be attributed to a single reason, socioeconomic conditions of the people of Benue State present a holistic and persuasive explanation of the phenomenon. As at 2005, (Benue State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy, 2005) averred that poverty in Benue State was total, complete, severe, wide spread, multidimensional, and had increased in the last decade. There is obvious worsening trend of the situation as Statista (n.db) and NBS (2023) indicates that the poverty rate in the state has galloped from 32.9 percent to 75 percent in 2022. It is against this background that we explored the socioeconomic conditions of the people of Benue State to ascertain how it has led to the proliferation of SALWs in the state.

Conceptual Discourse

Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs): According to Schroeder (2013, p. 284), "SALWs are, by definition, armaments that are produced, transferred, held, or used in violation of national or international laws." This definition brings to mind the copious forms of illegal flows of 857 million SALWs that are held by civilians in the world as of the end of 2017. Removed from its legal context, we can extrapolate from the definition that there are no

SALWs. This is because, in so far as the production, transfer, and possession or use of armaments do not violate national or international laws, they are by the spirit and letters of this definition, not SALWs. This, however, is grossly misleading, especially when one looks at SALWs in the context of their configuration, size, and user perspectives, which this definition completely ignores. Okeke and Oji in Danwanka (2021, p. 455) give credence to the inadequacy of Schroeder's (2013) definition when they held that:

Any reference to SALWs basically refers to the basic infantry weapons, such as firearms that an individual could carry, and is generally restricted to revolvers, pistols, submachine guns, short guns, carbines, assault rifles, rifle squads, automatic weapons, light machine guns, and grenades.

So, whether the production, transfer, possession, or use of these categories of arms violates national or international laws or not, they are and remain SALWs.

From the perspective of the International Committee of the Red Cross, as cited in Tsuwa (2021, p. 376), small arms as a sub-division of SALWs are “major weapons that are quite light, extremely durable, and require little upkeep, logistic support, and above all, minimal maintenance.” The use of the word “major” to qualify weapons that constitute small arms excludes or seemingly intends to exclude some weapons that possess features and characteristics that naturally make them fall within the category of small arms. For example, knives, clubs, daggers, and cutlasses may not be viewed as considerable weapons, but they do possess the features and characteristics of small arms, and they indeed belong to that category because of the poison coated in some of them; they are deadly and fatal. Conceivably, it is in this light that Alimba (2017, p. 42) contends:

Small arms can, therefore, be defined as anything used by an individual to injure or cause the death of a person or persons other than sheer physical strength. Thus, small arms range from sticks, stones, and knives to the conventional weapons contained in the 1997 Report of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms.

Though the United Nations Economic and Social Council (1997) was in agreement with this definition when it held that earlier typologies of SALWs included a few non-military-style firearms such as clubs, knives, machetes, etc., it is not devoid of inadequacies. The insufficiency of the definition rests on the use of the phrase “anything used by an individual to...” The use of anything supposedly includes slow and acute poison and diabolic means that do not have the features and characteristics of small arms.

According to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (2017), SALW is all crew-portable direct weapons of a caliber of less than 50mm and includes a secondary capability to defeat light armor and helicopters. This is a marked departure from the other definitions explored so far. The inference that can be made from this definition is that arms or weapons that do not have the capability to defeat light armor and helicopters fall short of being considered SALWs, however lethal they may be. This perhaps explains the United States undermining of firearms and non-military rifles in the United Nations discussions of small arms and light weapons control. Stohl (2022) recalled that the United States has always maintained that the UN should tackle only the illicit transfer of military-style weapons and should not discuss firearms and non-military rifles. This is in spite of the fact that these firearms and non-military rifles account for the most deaths and destruction caused each year. If the definition of SALWs by NATO is to be upheld and the position of the US, which is a staunch member of

NATO, is universally adopted, SALWs will no longer be literally viewed as dangerous weapons that could be handled by an individual, as conceived by Renner in Ola (2018).

Socioeconomic Conditions

Some authors, such as Malone and Rovere (n.d.), UN-Habitat (2022), Gobena (2018), Hauschildt et al. (2015), and Foster et al. (2018), have extensively written on socioeconomic conditions but did not expressively conceptualize socioeconomic conditions. However, an exploration of the works of these scholars reveals that economic and financial means, education, employment, family background, health, housing, including the geographic location, and social class are the focus of socioeconomic conditions. It is assumed that the concept is known to everyone, and as such, it does not need clarification. But the basis for debating anything is to first and foremost know what that thing is. It is against this background that Braveman (2010, p. 32) averred that socioeconomic conditions refer to:

potentially modifiable characteristics of both social and physical environments at the individual, household, and community levels; that is, features of homes, schools, workplaces, and neighborhoods that could be shaped by policies (at least in theory and given sufficient political will).

He further gave examples of socioeconomic conditions to include poverty, quality of housing, homelessness, educational attainment and quality, unemployment, wage levels, lack of control over the organization of work, racial residential segregation, and other forms of discrimination. An important takeaway from Braveman's conception of socioeconomic conditions is that these conditions are not fixed; they can be changed for the better by the government. So, the role of government is very critical, and it must demonstrate sufficient political will if it so desires to better the lot of the masses. It is the lack of that political will that has seen the deplorable state of the socioeconomic condition of the masses of people across countries of the world, especially in the third-world countries and particularly in our chosen area of study. If the ruling elite had demonstrated sufficient political will, there would not have been pervasive poverty, inequalities, and a huge number of out-of-school children in Benue State (National Bureau of Statistics, 2022).

Methodology

The method of data collection for this study was a key informant interview (KII). Though 30 respondents were earmarked to be interviewed, 28 were actually interviewed for the study. A key informant interview was conducted with people from the sampled local government areas and council wards who are believed to have experienced or witnessed deplorable socioeconomic conditions, and SALWs are proliferating in their areas. Open-ended questions were presented in a conversational manner. The questions were hinged on the objectives of the study. The informants were interviewed individually at places and times of their convenience. An electronic gadget, a handset, was used to record the responses of the informants. Transcription was done at the end of the exercise, which enabled the researcher to gather vital information on the topic under study for detailed analyses. Secondary sources such as text books, journals, internet materials and newspapers were also used in the course of the analysis.

Literature Review

Socioeconomic Conditions and the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Benue State: Insider Time, the National Newspaper for Prisoners and Detainees, March 31, 2023, indicates that there is a strong relationship between poverty and criminal activity. It

further explains that the cost of being unable to afford necessities, combined with the lack of opportunity for socioeconomic advancement, creates a breeding ground for criminal activity. This implies that people who are faced with socioeconomic conditions are susceptible to criminal activity. Jackson (n.d.) also aligned with this submission, as she held that people are bound in bitterness as a result of unmet expectations. And bitterness leads from one negative thought to another that breeds criminality. It is against this background that this study found out how the socioeconomic conditions of the people of Benue State, which are reflected in unemployment and the inequalities between the ruling elite and the poor masses, unmet expectations, and poverty, are correlated with the commission of crimes as a source of livelihood that has led to the proliferation of SALWs.

The analysis of the data obtained from both primary and secondary sources reveals that there is a strong relationship between the socioeconomic conditions of the people of Benue State and the proliferation of SALWs in the state. It is unarguable that the masses in Benue State are frustrated with their socioeconomic conditions, and there is sufficient evidence to prove this. Blaire (2020) outlined the indices of frustration, which include, but are not limited to, lower expectations of life in general (and low self-esteem), higher rates of drug and alcohol abuse, abject and debilitating poverty, susceptibility to mental illness, and a low life expectancy. All these indices are palpable in Benue State, and the respondents corroborate them, as evidenced in the responses on how the socioeconomic conditions of the people of Benue State have led to the proliferation of SALWs. The high rate of unemployment and underemployment, income inequalities between the ruling elite and the masses, low income rates, poverty, and unmet expectations of the people mirror the socioeconomic conditions of the people of Benue State, which are occasioned by the ruling elite. Exploitation of the masses in Benue State is also reflected in multiple taxation, irregular payment of salaries and pensions, inadequate provision of access roads, portable water, electricity, and health facilities, the charging of exorbitant school fees for students of especially the government-owned higher institutions, the deprivation of civil servants of their entitlements such as leave allowance, medical refunds, refresher trainings, irregular promotions, and refusal to pay arrears of promotions. The refusal to pay pensioners their due and labeling them as “dead” people that should be ignored and their maltreatment by the ruling elite-sponsored thugs dehumanizes the pensioners and frustrates them. Referring to civil servants as animals and ingrates by the ruling elite and their cronies in the face of their agitation for arrears of salaries and salaries to be paid also shows the socioeconomic conditions of the people of the state.

Though some of the indices of socioeconomic conditions that have made the people dissatisfied with the ruling elite and have seen them take to criminality were present in the pre-Fourth Republic period, people were still patient and expectant. This is corroborated by a former president of the Nigerian Senate and Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Chief Pius Anyim on Channel TV (15 April, 2022) when he held that:

You need to give people comfort and confidence in the system in order for them to support and protect it. When elections were being run in 1999 to usher in the Fourth Republic, we had zero levels of criminality because people expected much from democracy. Everybody was eagerly waiting for the dividends of democracy. After the election, just about six months to one year later, criminality started rearing its head. And the armed part of it was the militia in the Niger Delta.

What this means is that the people have run out of patience with the coercive, suppressive, aggressive, and exploitative ruling elite in Benue State. It was Fanon who held as recollected by Forsythe (1973) that “all forms of exploitation are identical because all of them are applied against the same object, man,” and that “I want the enslavement of man by man to cease forever. In order to extricate from the slavery of the ruling elite, some sections of the people in Benue State have engaged in nefarious activities with the ruling elite as the target, though not exclusively, which demand the use of SALWs, hence their proliferation in the state. As Fanon (1961, p. 93) noted, “Violence is a cleansing force; it frees the native of his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect”. The recognition of the importance of violence and the fact that SALWs are its tools probably have informed some sections of the people of Benue State to acquire SALWs in order to perpetrate it as a source of livelihood, hence the proliferation of SALWs in the state.

The point being made is that there is a strong correlation between socioeconomic conditions and the proliferation of SALWs in Benue State. The deplorable socioeconomic conditions that are expressed in endemic poverty have given rise to the widespread SALWs in the state. The responses of the respondents indicate this, as almost all the respondents explained in diverse ways how unemployment and inequalities between the ruling elite and the masses are associated with the proliferation of SALWs in the state; how the people are frustrated by poverty, unemployment, and low-income rates; how the commission of crimes has become a source of livelihood for some people; and how unmet expectations of the people from the ruling elite in the state result in the masses frustration and aggression. All these have culminated in the high level of deaths as a result of armed crimes, the frequency of armed attacks, the regularity of seizures of SALWs by security agents in the state, and the existence of SALWs fabricating factories in the state. Besides the responses of the respondents, the continuous increase in the percentage of people in poverty in Benue State from 2006 to 2022 corresponds with the astronomical increase in the proliferation of SALWs in the country. Though the yearly rates of people in poverty in Benue State are not accessible, the available data, which is given by Statista (n.d.) and NBS (2023), indicates that the poverty headcount rate in Benue State was 12.6 percent in 2009, 32.9 percent in 2019, and 75 percent in 2022. This shows that the percentage of people in multidimensional poverty in the state increased by 2.03 percent within the period of 10 years, from 2009 to 2019. If the percentage increase in the poverty rate is evenly distributed over the referenced period, it would mean that there has been an increase in the poverty rate of 2.03 percent every year from 2009 to 2019. From 2019 to 2022, the poverty rate of the state increased by 42.1 percent over a period of just three years. If the increment is evenly distributed, it would therefore mean that there has been a 14.03 percent increase in the poverty rate of the people of Benue State every year under the referenced period.

The continuous increase in the deplorable socioeconomic conditions of the people as expressed in the poverty rate of the people also corresponds with the enormous, steady increase in the number of SALWs in civilian's possession in the state as represented by the figures given for the whole country. The lack of aggregate data on SALWs by states in the country explains the use of the figures provided for the whole country. Even for the whole country, the Small Arms Survey only gave the figures for the years 2006 and 2017. In 2006, there were 2,000,000 SALWs in civilian's possession in Nigeria. That figure increased to 6,200,000 in 2017, which represents a 210 percent increase in a period of 11 years. If the numbers of the increased SALWs are evenly distributed by the 11 years, it would mean that

there is an increment of 381,818.2 SALWs every year, which represents 19.1 percent yearly. And by that, we can determine the yearly SALWs proliferated in the country and also make projections of the number of SALWs in civilians' possession. From the foregoing, one can assert that there is actually a relationship between deplorable socioeconomic conditions of the people and widespread SALWs in Benue State, as represented by the figures for the whole country.

Theory (FAT)

This study adopts the Frustration-Aggression Theory (FAT) in analyzing the nexus between socioeconomic conditions and the proliferation of SALWs in Benue State. The theory was propounded by John Dollard, Neal Miller, Leonard William Doob, Orval Hobart Mowrer and Robert Richardson Sears in their work "Frustration and Aggression" which was published in 1939. However, many other scholars have built on Dollard and his colleagues' theory to strengthen it, grow it, and refine it over the years. The Frustration-aggression theory seeks to scientifically clarify the causes of frustration and the resultant aggression in people: how frustration starts and varies, and the effects it brings which is essentially aggression. The basic premise of the frustration-aggression theory as held by Crawford (2015) is that people will become frustrated if they are kept from the satisfactions they expect due to their goal-directed behaviour. There are about five major assumptions of the frustration-aggression theory which include, aggression is always the result of frustration, the notion of relative deprivation, the revolution of rising expectations, the direction of aggression, and that frustration sometimes may not necessarily result in aggression because of the perceived and/or real consequences of the aggression.

Application of FAT as Nexus between SALWs and Socioeconomic Conditions of the People of Benue State

In relation to the first assumption of the FAT that aggression is always the result of frustration, it is unarguable that the masses in Benue State are frustrated. There exists sufficient evidence to prove this. Blaire (2020) outlined the indices of frustration to include but are not limited to lower expectations of life in general (and low self-esteem), higher rates of drug and alcohol abuse, abject, debilitating poverty, susceptibility to mental illness and low life expectancy. All these indices individually and collectively are not in short supply in Benue State. It is not an overstatement to say that the majority of the masses in Benue State have low expectations of their lives in general. The human development index which captures a multidimensional and capacity approach to economic development including especially health, education and income shows that Benue State occupies a distant 26th position out of the 36 States and the Federal Capital Territory with a score of 0.582 for the year 2022 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2022). So having established that the masses in Benue State are sufficiently frustrated it is only natural as assumed by this theory that some section of the masses will engage in aggressive behaviour. And aggression cannot be carried out with a profound effect without the use of SALWs. As it were, the frustrated masses in Benue State find these SALWs necessary and useful tools of aggression hence their proliferation in Nigeria and Benue State in particular.

The second assumption of the FAT which is the notion of relative deprivation is also congruent with the realities on the ground in Benue State. What the masses in Benue State seek from the ruling elite in the State is not further from issues of regular payment of workers' salaries, their entitlements, pension to retirees, and provision of welfare packages for the masses to improve human development by building human capacity. Others are the

provision of affordable public schools to ensure high school enrolment and high literacy level, provision of employment and creation of the enabling environment for people to engage in sustained productive businesses among others. The seemingly deliberate refusal of the ruling elite to provide these has seen the wide gap in income and wealth inequalities between the rich and the poor that has frustrated the masses in the state. This has created a discrepancy between what the masses in Benue State seek and what is attainable and it is significant enough that it has generated anger and the propensity toward violence hence the proliferation of SALWs in the state as the tools of violence. Also the inability of the ruling elite in Benue State to provide functional, affordable and staff-motivated public schools for the people has created significant differences between what the masses in Benue State seek and what is attainable. As it were, it has generated anger and the inclination to violence which has escalated hence the proliferation of SALWs in the state as tools of aggression.

The situation of unemployment in Benue State is also pathetic and at variance with the expectations of the people from the ruling elite. Sasu (2022) averred that Benue State registered by the end of 2020 the highest unemployment rate in Nigeria as the figures were 43.5 percent using the most common international definition of unemployment as a gauge. This means that 43.5 percent of the labour force in Benue State did nothing or worked for less than 20 hours a week. With these statistics, it is crystal clear that there is a great difference between what people in Benue State seek and what is realizable. The situation is not anything different from the creation of an enabling environment for businesses to thrive in the State. So, anger and the inclination to violence are not in short supply in this unfortunate situation and as it were, the proliferation of SALWs which are tools of aggression has become necessary. The revolution of rising expectations which is the third assumption of the FAT is also very relevant to the situation in Benue State. The assumption places the causes of aggression on hope, not despair, which instigates violent behaviour. Though what the masses in Benue State seek from the ruling elite which include but are not limited to workers' entitlements, pension to retirees, and provision of welfare packages for the masses is not completely met, there have been other increasing expectations of the masses from the ruling elite. These include salary increments and better working conditions for the state civil servants, issues of sanitation and waste management, building of drainages to control the perennial incidences of flooding and building of modern infrastructures such as flyover and pedestrian bridges especially in the State capital to ease traffic congestion. So, the persistent increase in expectations without adequate attention given to addressing the issues by the ruling elite has ruined the hopes of the people. This has therefore given rise to intensified aggression demanding the use of SALWs as the most potent tools of aggression hence their proliferation in Benue State.

The fourth assumption of the FAT which has to do with the direction of aggression towards the cause of frustration and/or another person or object in order to vent the accumulated anger arising from frustration is also relevant to the situation in Benue State. For the masses in Benue State, the ruling elite are the major cause of their frustration. This is because the ruling elite has seemingly deliberately refused to provide what the masses seek from them both in quantity and quality and disproportionate to the teeming population of the people. The ruling elite in Benue State are also the major cause of the masses' frustration because they have consistently dashed the hopes of the masses in the face of persistent increases in expectations without a genuine commitment to addressing the issues. In effect, there has been the demand for SALWs as the most potent tools of aggression with the ruling elite as the major target. Aggression has also been directed at the security agents

who shield the ruling elite because they constitute a threat to the SALWs-bearing people in Benue State. As a result, many security agents have been killed by these SALWs-bearing people in addition to some of the ruling elite they shield. As held by the proponents of the theory, not only the ruling elite who are the major cause of frustration of the masses in the State are the target of aggression. Very many people's lives have been cut short by SALWs bearing people in the State. In this category are real and/or perceived informants of the ruling elite and security agents, people who are opposed to the aggression of the frustrated SALWs-bearing aggressors, those who resist the "authority" of the SALWs-bearing people and innocent people who are caught in crossfires between these aggressors and security agents.

The fifth assumption of the FAT which held that frustration sometimes may not necessarily result in aggression because of the perceived and/or real consequences of the aggression is also relevant in the Benue situation. Certainly, not all the masses in Benue State possess SALWs and are involved in aggressive behaviour. This is not because they are not frustrated but most of them are afraid of the consequences of aggression. These consequences include but are not limited to legal problems, including arrest, fines, incarceration and even death by hanging. Others are social isolation, depression, strained or ruined interpersonal relationships, physical injury and an on-set of mental health disorders. Perhaps, if not because of these consequences, many more people may have engaged in aggressive behaviour in a manner that requires more SALWs as the most potent tools. This implies that the rate of proliferation of SALWs in the State would have been higher than what it is now. Though the theory has its weaknesses, its analytical prowess of the nexus between the socioeconomic conditions and the proliferation of SALWs in Benue State is not in doubt.

Conclusion and Recommendations

From the foregoing analysis, it is clear that the socioeconomic conditions of the people of Benue State are deplorable. This is evident from the inability of a lot of people, especially rural dwellers to often attend health facilities when they fall ill. And this inability is explained in the context of lack of funds, unavailability of health facilities in some communities, lack of access roads, and the deplorable state of some of the health facilities, among others. It is also an open secret that SALWs are also greatly proliferated in Benue State and is reflected in the high rate of death due to crime, the regularity of seizures of SALWs, and the existence of SALWs fabricating factories in the state, which has ensured the availability and accessibility of the same at a very cheap rate compared to the professionally made ones. As it were, there is a strong correlation between the deplorable socioeconomic conditions of the people of Benue State and the widespread SALWs in the state. This is because the high rate of unemployment, low income rate, inequalities, and unmet expectations from the ruling elite, among others, have made the people of the state susceptible to crime, which demands the use of SALWs as tools, hence the widespread of the same in the state. As such, reversing the trend of proliferation of SALWs is not foreseeable in the near future, unless the socioeconomic conditions of the people of the state are given the attention they deserve. Based on the above analysis and conclusions reached, the following recommendations were made:

- i. The government should create jobs and employ people for them to earn income in order to improve their socioeconomic conditions.
- ii. The government should step up the provision of social amenities such as roads, electricity, and portable public water supply for people to leverage them and establish

- business ventures that would earn them income. If this is done, it will improve the socioeconomic conditions of the people, and most people will turn away from criminal activities that demand the use of SALWs.
- iii. The government should create an enabling environment for people to engage in productive and profitable ventures. If people are productively and profitably engaged, the rate of crime that demands the use of SALWs will be reduced to the barest minimum, and so will the proliferation of SALWs in the state.
 - iv. The government should train people in skills acquisition for them to leverage it as a source of income and improve their socioeconomic conditions. This will get people meaningfully engaged, and they will not have time to think, plan, and execute criminal acts that will demand their use of SALWs.
 - v. The government should give people grants and loans to start and/or expand productive and profitable ventures. This will also improve their socioeconomic conditions and forestall their possibility of engaging in criminal activities, thereby curtailing the proliferation of SALWs in the state.
 - vi. The government should regularly pay workers their salaries and pensioners their entitlements for them to be able to settle their bills and those of their dependents to avoid their dependents engaging in extrajudicial means of making ends meet. This will also forestall the proliferation of SALWs.
 - vii. The government should subsidize agricultural farm inputs and improve farmers' methods of farming to increase their yields and income. This will improve their socioeconomic conditions and forestall the possibility of engaging in criminal activities to meet their demands.
 - viii. The government should establish industries and companies that will employ people in the state to earn income. This will also prevent the teeming unemployed from engaging in criminal activities that demand the use of SALWs.

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