

EFFECT OF THE PROLIFERATION OF SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS ON INSECURITY IN THE KERIO VALLEY REGION, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

The Kerio Valley region in Kenya continues to experience persistent insecurity characterized by banditry, loss of life, displacement, and destruction of livelihoods. Despite various security interventions, insecurity remains widespread due to structural and institutional challenges. While previous studies have examined multiple determinants of insecurity, limited empirical attention has focused on the role of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) in shaping insecurity outcomes. The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons on insecurity in the Kerio Valley region, Kenya. This study was anchored on Resource Conflict Theory and Rational Choice Theory, which explain how access to weapons intensifies competition over scarce resources and increases the likelihood of engaging in violent activities. The study adopted a descriptive survey design targeting 692 respondents drawn from security agencies, community members, and institutional stakeholders. A sample size of 253 respondents was determined using Yamane's (1967) formula and selected through purposive and simple random sampling techniques. Data were collected using structured questionnaires. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and regression analysis, while qualitative data from open-ended responses were analyzed thematically. The findings revealed a strong positive and statistically significant relationship between the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and insecurity ($\beta \approx .780$, $p < .05$), with SALW proliferation explaining approximately 60% of the variation in insecurity ($R^2 \approx .600$). The study concludes that the proliferation of small arms and light weapons is a significant predictor of insecurity in the Kerio Valley region. The study recommends strengthening disarmament initiatives, enhancing border control, improving inter-agency coordination, and promoting community-based security approaches to effectively address insecurity.

Keywords: Small Arms and Light Weapons Proliferation, Insecurity, Public Security

INTRODUCTION

Modern societies continue to prioritize their security needs because institutions and communities need to achieve safety and stability while protecting their livelihoods and conducting resource operations. The assessment of insecurity in developing regions happens through evaluating human fatalities, forced population movements, and destruction of property and interruptions to economic operations (UNDP, 2022). Insecurity serves as a demonstration of governance systems that fail to establish order and protect their citizens (Brinkerhoff & Wetterberg, 2021).

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons has emerged as a fundamental element that promotes insecure conditions throughout various environments. Firearms become accessible to people because of their widespread distribution, which drives both individual and group participation in violent conduct and combats. The increase in weapon availability results in greater violent capabilities, which empower criminal organizations to achieve their objectives while creating more dangerous environments (Florquin & McEvoy, 2021).

The global distribution of small arms and light weapons has emerged as a primary factor that creates insecure conditions throughout different regions of the world. The research conducted in Colombia demonstrated that unlawful weapons trafficking enabled armed groups to maintain their military operations and increase their power through territorial expansion, which resulted in ongoing violent conflict (Muggah, 2020). The research conducted in Afghanistan demonstrated that illegal weapons distribution enabled criminal organizations to increase their activities while the government lost control over security operations, which resulted in greater social disorder (Giustozzi, 2021).

In Africa, the growing number of small arms has created problems that make several areas unsafe throughout the continent. The research study in Nigeria showed that rising gun ownership leads to organized violence which forces people to flee their homes and creates economic damage across conflict regions (Okoli & Okpaleke, 2020). The research study in South Sudan demonstrated that people who obtained small weapons increased their participation in violent communal events, which created ongoing conflicts (de Vries & Schomerus, 2020).

Cattle rustling and armed banditry continue to create security problems within East African countries. The research study in Uganda's Karamoja region showed that firearms transformed traditional cattle raiding into organized and violent criminal activities (Stites & Howe, 2019). The research study in Ethiopia demonstrates that small arms proliferation leads to more frequent and intense resource-based conflicts, which threaten security in pastoral communities (Gebrehiwot & Haftu, 2020).

The country of Kenya faces ongoing safety difficulties which particularly impact its dry and semi-dry areas. The research study in Kenya showed that rising small arms ownership enables criminals to operate more freely while diminishing security efforts and creating more disputes between different community groups (Mkutu, 2020). The latest evidence shows that the availability of firearms has turned cattle rustling into more structured and commercialized banditry operations, which now exist throughout Kenya's pastoral areas (Ruteere, 2021). The research demonstrates that small arms proliferation harms community security because it enables criminal groups to grow while they decrease government control of their territories (UNODC, 2020).

The Kerio Valley region has emerged as one of the most affected areas by insecurity. The area features three main security weaknesses, which include its open borders, its rough landscape, and its low level of government security operations. The widespread availability of small weapons has created a situation that results in violence and human displacement. The security situation in Kenya's North Rift region, which includes the Kerio Valley, is affected by the flow of illegal firearms and the government security forces' weak response to control violence (Ruteere, 2021). The government has implemented security measures to control dangerous weapons, yet the

ongoing insecurity situation indicates that SALW weapon distribution creates major security challenges for the country.

Existing research on insecurity factors focuses on various geographical areas, yet the present evidence shows that it fails to capture how insecurity develops under the specific conditions of the Kerio Valley region. The regional security problems arising from the distribution of small arms and light weapons create a knowledge gap that needs to be addressed through research. This study, therefore, seeks to address this gap.

Statement of the Problem

The situation of insecurity in Kenya persists as an ongoing problem which affects arid and semi-arid areas including the Kerio Valley despite government efforts to establish peace and stability in the region. The region continues to experience frequent incidents of banditry and cattle rustling which result in loss of life and displacement and destruction of livelihoods. The Kerio Valley which contains parts of Elgeyo Marakwet Baringo and West Pokot counties features rough terrain and open borders and a weak government presence which create conditions that enable the spread of small arms and light weapons. The recent security reports show that violent incidents associated with armed groups have occurred throughout the region which demonstrates that insecurity persists while conflicts have become increasingly violent through firearm usage. The government and security agencies face an escalating insecurity problem because their disarmament programs, security personnel deployments, and peace-building efforts fail to reduce violence. Existing interventions face difficulties, which include weak enforcement mechanisms and insufficient surveillance, together with cross-border arms trafficking; this situation allows illegal firearms to keep circulating. The organizations responsible for enforcing these interventions have encountered barriers that restrict their ability to manage the spread of small arms and light weapons in the region. Previous studies have examined various determinants of insecurity, which include socio-cultural dynamics, governance challenges, and resource-based conflicts. However, limited empirical attention has been given to the specific role of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons as a significant driver of insecurity, particularly within the Kerio Valley region. Most existing studies have been conducted in different geographical contexts or have analyzed multiple factors without isolating the independent effect of arms proliferation on insecurity outcomes. This has created a contextual and empirical gap in understanding the extent to which the proliferation of small arms and light weapons contributes to insecurity in the Kerio Valley region. Therefore, this study sought to examine the effect of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons on insecurity in the Kerio Valley region, Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The section investigates empirical research studies and theoretical foundations together with the conceptual framework that supports the study. The section also identifies gaps in the literature that justify the current study.

Theoretical Framework

The study used Resource Conflict Theory and Rational Choice Theory as its foundational theories, which together created a complete understanding of how small arms and light weapons lead to increased security threats. The theories describe how structural aspects and individual behaviors interact to create violent conflicts, which emerge from competition over limited resources and the way people make decisions. The theories explain how weapon availability increases territorial conflict and creates persistent security problems in areas that have limited resources and inadequate governmental authority.

Resource Conflict Theory

Resource Conflict Theory, developed by Thomas Homer-Dixon (1994), explains that people in pastoral and semi-arid areas fight for land, water, and livestock because these resources exist in limited supply. The theory states that people and groups will fight over their resources when resource availability decreases or demand for resources exceeds what exists. Conflicts become more severe when weak governance systems and inadequate institutional capacity limit resource distribution management across different areas.

The theory states that resource scarcity starts conflicts, but the presence of small arms and light weapons makes these conflicts more intense and longer lasting. Resource disputes in traditional societies can be settled through either negotiation or the use of customary methods. Firearms enable people to engage in violent conflicts, which disrupt their capacity to settle disputes through traditional methods.

Grazing land and water resources face competition among communities in the Kerio Valley region, which depends on pastoralism for its livelihood. The availability of small arms and light weapons has made conflicts more deadly and better organized because of their widespread distribution. Armed groups use their superior capabilities to conduct raids, protect their territories, and counter police activities. The outcome of this process leads to higher death tolls, the forced relocation of communities, and the destruction of their means of existence. Resource Conflict Theory provides essential insights for this research because it demonstrates how resource-based tensions combined with small arms proliferation create dangerous security conditions.

Rational Choice Theory

Rational Choice Theory, advanced by Becker (1968), establishes that people commit criminal or violent acts after they assess which costs and benefits will impact their decision. According to the theory, people will engage in illegal or violent behavior when they believe that the advantages they will gain from their actions exceed the dangers they will face. The decision-making process gets shaped through three components, which include success probability, enforcement intensity, and required resource access.

The spread of small arms and light weapons increases the probability that people will engage in violent activities because it reduces their danger perception while raising their expected rewards. Access to firearms enables individuals and groups to execute attacks and protect themselves and escape from law enforcement authorities. As a result, activities such as banditry and cattle rustling become more attractive and feasible.

Criminals in the Kerio Valley region view small arms as a weapon that provides them with a strategic benefit because it increases their success probability while decreasing their risk of getting caught. Weapons create a sense of power which leads to violent behavior because they enable people to control others. The combination of weak enforcement systems and limited state presence creates an environment where people believe they can engage in such actions without facing serious consequences.

Rational Choice Theory explains how people behave when they have access to small arms, which causes them to engage in violent activities, according to this study. It highlights that insecurity is not only driven by structural factors such as resource scarcity but also by rational decisions made by individuals in response to the opportunities and constraints within their environment.

Relevance of the Theories to the Study

The combined theories of Resource Conflict Theory and Rational Choice Theory create a complete framework that explains how small arms and light weapons spread in the Kerio Valley region, but result in decreased security. Resource Conflict Theory explains the structural causes of conflict which arise from competing groups that fight over limited resources while Rational Choice Theory explains the behavioral aspects of insecurity by

focusing on decision-making processes. The combined theories establish that environmental pressures and individual choices both lead to insecurity, and weapon accessibility serves as a major factor that determines their choices. The two theories show how resource-based conflicts escalate through their links to weapon availability, which people use to settle disputes through violent means. The two theories establish a fundamental framework that shows how small arms proliferation increases insecurity and demonstrates the need to implement resource-based and weapon control solutions in areas that experience ongoing conflicts.

Empirical Literature

Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons and Insecurity

Okoli and Okpaleke (2020) studied how small arms distribution affects security conditions in Nigeria. The research used a qualitative approach, which combined documentary evidence with conflict data to study armed violence patterns. The study found that small arms distribution led to increased banditry activities and forced people to flee their homes, which created economic problems for the country. The study provides strong empirical evidence on how arms proliferation sustains insecurity, although it is based in a West African context.

DeVries and Schomerus (2020) studied how small-arms weaponry sustained ongoing hostilities between rival groups in South Sudan. The research used a qualitative approach, gathering information through field interviews and conflict analysis to study local communities and security personnel. The research results showed that people who had access to firearms would escalate violence between different communities while making it easier for armed groups to execute their attacks. The study provides useful conflict insights, but its qualitative research methods restrict statistical generalizations through which its findings could be applied to other situations.

Gebrehiwot and Haftu (2020) examined how small arms availability affected pastoral conflicts that occurred in Ethiopia. The research study used mixed methods by combining survey research with key informant interviews to investigate pastoral communities located in areas with frequent conflicts. The researchers used descriptive statistics and thematic analysis to evaluate the collected data. The results indicated that small arms availability presented an obstacle, which led to more intense resource-based disputes and more frequent disputes between opposing parties. The study analyzes pastoral systems, which share similarities with Kenyan systems, but institutional differences between the two systems limit their direct application.

Ruteere (2021) investigated how banditry operations developed in North Rift, which is located in Kenya, while assessing how small weapons systems operated in this region. The research used qualitative methods to conduct fieldwork analysis and review existing policy documents. The findings showed that small arms weapons distribution has enabled organized bandit groups to operate more successfully, while making it difficult for local security teams to protect their territories, which has resulted in ongoing security issues. The research provides crucial evidence that directly applies to Kenyan areas that share similarities with Kerio Valley.

Krause (2021) studied how small arms and light weapons systems affect the worldwide development of armed conflicts. The researchers used a comparative research method to analyze data from various countries that experienced different types of conflict. The study revealed that small arms availability enabled armed groups to operate with greater efficiency during violent conflicts, which led to more lethal outcomes and extended battles. The research study provides multiple pieces of global evidence that demonstrate that arms proliferation leads to security problems.

Identified Gaps

The existing empirical research shows that small arms and light weapons create security problems in multiple regions, including East Africa and West Africa, and countries experiencing ongoing conflicts. The research

studies from Nigeria, South Sudan, and Ethiopia demonstrate that when people can access firearms without restriction, violent conflicts increase in both intensity and frequency, which especially affects fragile and pastoral areas (Okoli & Okpaleke, 2020; DeVries & Schomerus, 2020; Gebrehiwot & Haftu, 2020). The research demonstrates that when people gain access to small arms, their ability to organize violent acts increases, which results in higher levels of security threats. The existing research examines general conflict patterns and pastoral violence and armed group operations, but did not demonstrate how small arms proliferation specifically contributes to security problems. The current study focused on resource competition, governance problems and socioeconomic factors as primary reasons for conflict because it does not measure how arms proliferation directly affects security results. The existing research shows that firearms create a connection to conflict but the research does not yet understand how small arms proliferation affects different levels of security problems.

The research conducted by Ruteere (2021) demonstrates how small arms enable organized banditry for which criminals use to weaken security systems in North Rift of Kenya. However, existing Kenyan scholarship mainly examines general patterns of insecurity together with security policies without providing local empirical research that focuses on high-risk areas like Kerio Valley. As a result, there is limited context-specific evidence on how the proliferation of small arms directly shapes insecurity dynamics within this region.

Moreover, limited attention has been given to how specific dimensions of small arms proliferation, such as accessibility, circulation, and institutional control, contribute to measurable insecurity outcomes. Existing studies rarely integrate quantitative approaches to determine the strength, direction, and statistical significance of the relationship between arms proliferation and insecurity. This lack of empirical quantification creates a gap in understanding the magnitude of influence that small arms exert on insecurity.

Therefore, there remains a clear need for context-specific empirical research examining how the proliferation of small arms and light weapons influences insecurity in the Kerio Valley region. This study addresses that gap by analyzing the extent to which SALW proliferation contributes to insecurity outcomes using both quantitative and qualitative evidence.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework illustrates the relationship between the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and insecurity in the Kerio Valley region. The proliferation of small arms and light weapons is operationalized through key dimensions including sources of firearms, firearms trafficking routes, and the contribution of firearms to banditry commercialization which influences insecurity.

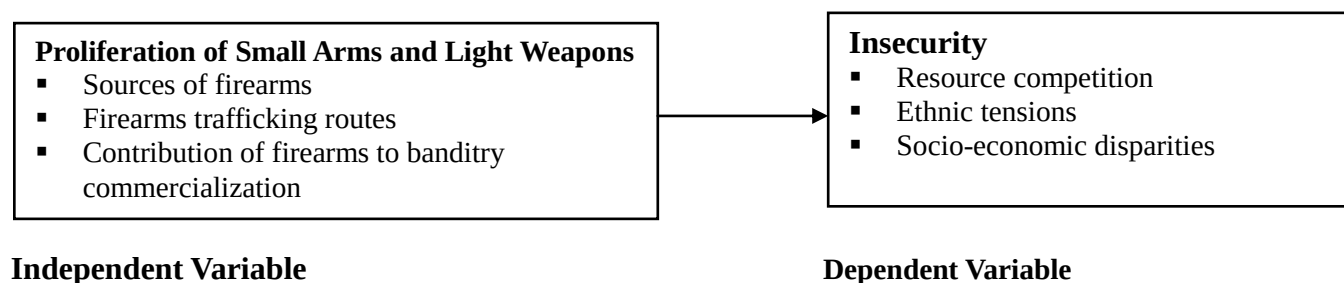


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework. Source: (Researcher, 2026)

METHODOLOGY

The study used a descriptive survey design because it enabled researchers to investigate how small arms and light weapons contributed to security problems in the Kerio Valley region of Kenya. Descriptive research design allows for the systematic collection and analysis of data to describe relationships among variables without manipulation (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2009). The research design enabled researchers to gather both quantitative and qualitative data which enabled them to study the connection between arms proliferation and insecurity without changing the studied elements. The target population consisted of 692 respondents drawn from key stakeholders involved in security administration and community leadership within the Kerio Valley region which included National Government Administrative Officers security personnel community leaders local residents and representatives from non-governmental organizations. The calculation of sample size was conducted using Yamane's 1967 formula which determined a sample size of 253 respondents at a 95 percent confidence interval. The study used purposive sampling to find respondents who had relevant knowledge about insecurity and small arms proliferation while simple random sampling was used to give all target population members an equal opportunity to be selected.

Data collection involved the use of structured questionnaires which researchers administered to selected respondents in the Kerio Valley region. Expert review validated the research instrument which researchers tested for reliability through a pilot study conducted in Laikipia County. The instrument showed internal consistency through Cronbach's alpha coefficients which ranged from 0.70 to 0.82. Researchers coded quantitative data and performed analysis with SPSS software. The researchers used descriptive statistics to summarize data through means and standard deviations while regression analysis measured the effect of small arms and light weapons proliferation on insecurity. Thematic analysis was used to analyze qualitative data from open-ended questions which helped to explain the quantitative results.

The relationship between the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and insecurity in the Kerio Valley region was modeled using the following regression equation:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \epsilon \dots \dots \dots \text{Equation [1]}$$

Where:

- Y = Insecurity
- X_1 = Proliferation of small arms and light weapons
- β_0 = Constant
- β_1 = Coefficient estimating the effect of small arms and light weapons proliferation on insecurity
- ϵ = Error term.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW)

Table 1: Perceptions of SALW Contribution to Insecurity

Item	Mean	SD	Interpretation
SALW increase insecurity	4.56	0.62	Very high agreement
SALW are easily accessible	4.20	0.74	High agreement
Incidents involving SALW exacerbate insecurity	4.42	0.69	Very high agreement
Authorities control SALW effectively	2.98	0.88	Neutral

Source: Researcher, 2025

Table 1 displays how people in the Kerio Valley area believe small arms and light weapons (SALW) contribute to their regional security problems. The study results demonstrate that participants view SALW as the primary cause of security problems because they assigned high ratings to the statements "SALW increase insecurity" (Mean = 4.56, SD = 0.62) and "incidents involving SALW exacerbate insecurity" (Mean = 4.42, SD = 0.69). The results demonstrate that people believe firearm proliferation creates security problems that make violent conflicts more dangerous and destructive because they consider SALW to be weapons that increase both the size and deadliness of attacks. The high mean score for "SALW are easily accessible" (Mean = 4.20, SD = 0.74) further shows that people can easily access firearms which leads to more people participating in violent events that increase conflict situations. The study results match the findings from Gebrehiwot and Haftu (2020) study which showed that small arms availability raises both violent conflict intensity and conflict frequency in pastoral areas because it helps people fight over resources.

The authorities' control of SALW received a neutral rating which showed their institutional capacity to control arms proliferation through their assessment that their current abilities only reached a mean rating of 2.98 with standard deviation of 0.88. This finding aligns with the study conducted by de Vries and Schomerus in South Sudan who noted that weak institutional control over firearms enables armed actors to sustain prolonged conflict and increases community vulnerability to violence which this finding supports. The item shows higher standard deviation because respondents from different places experienced different enforcement procedures which made them see things differently. SALW proliferation drives insecurity in the Kerio Valley area because it causes violence to increase while making weapons more available and showing weak institutional control.

The results receive further explanation from qualitative research findings. Thematic analysis revealed three key themes, which include accessibility of firearms, cross-border trafficking, and weak institutional control. The respondents identified firearms as the main resource which enables violent activities to occur during banditry and cattle rustling events. Armed groups use weapons which their members can obtain easily to launch attacks with better success which results in more violent incidents that occur with greater intensity. Respondents highlighted that cross-border arms trafficking serves as a primary source of firearms which helps to sustain the flow of illegal weapons throughout the region. Authorities expressed their concerns about three security issues which include poor enforcement methods, insufficient security resources, and weak collaboration between security organizations that hinder small arms control efforts. These qualitative insights provide contextual explanations for the high levels of agreement observed in the quantitative findings. These findings are further supported by Okoli and Okpaleke (2020), who noted that the availability of small arms enhances the capacity of armed groups to execute violent activities more efficiently, thereby intensifying insecurity.

Correlation Analysis

Table 2: Correlation between Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons and Insecurity

Variables	Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons	Insecurity
Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons	1.000	
Insecurity	0.775**	1.000

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The results in Table 2 show a strong and statistically significant positive relationship between the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and insecurity ($r = 0.775$, $p < 0.01$). The study found that increased small arms and light weapons usage leads to greater security problems in the Kerio Valley region. The strength of this correlation shows that people who have easy access to firearms will experience higher levels of violent conflict which includes bandit attacks and resource-related fights. The study results show that small arms distribution creates serious security problems which lead to further violence. The findings are consistent with Marsh (2020), who established that illicit arms flow significantly contribute to the escalation and persistence of violent conflicts by strengthening the capacity of armed groups and weakening state control mechanisms.

Regression Analysis

To assess the extent to which the proliferation of small arms and light weapons predicts insecurity, a regression analysis was conducted.

Table 3: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.775a	.600	.596	.402

Predictor: Proliferation of small arms and light weapons

Table 3 shows that small arms and light weapons proliferation accounts for a major part of the existing security problems. The determination coefficient shows that R^2 value of 0.600 demonstrates that 60.0% of security problems result from small arms and light weapons spread. The adjusted R^2 value of 0.596 confirms that small arms proliferation is a strong predictor of insecurity. The model fails to explain 40.0% of security problems because other factors like socio-cultural dynamics and law enforcement effectiveness and economic conditions also affect security problems. The standard error of the estimate (0.402) indicates that the model provides a reliable prediction of the relationship between small arms proliferation and insecurity. The results support the findings of Marsh and McEvoy (2021), who found that variations in armed violence across conflict-affected regions are significantly explained by the availability and circulation of small arms, highlighting their strong predictive influence on insecurity outcomes.

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

To evaluate the overall significance of the regression model, an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted. The F-statistic tests whether the independent variable significantly predicts the dependent variable.

Table 4: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	96.480	1	96.480	121.395	.000 ^b
	Residual	64.320	251	0.256		
	Total	160.800	252			

The ANOVA results in Table 4 demonstrate that the regression model achieved statistical significance with an F value of 121.395 and a p value that exceeded 0.001. The study results show that small arms and light weapons proliferation act as a major predictor for security problems throughout the Kerio Valley region. The regression model shows excellent data fit according to the large F-value and statistically significant p-value while the relationship between small arms proliferation and insecurity exists because of actual factors not random occurrence. The findings show that small arms and light weapons proliferation act as a major factor which explains different levels of insecurity. The results show that small arms proliferation acts as a main factor which creates security problems throughout the Kerio Valley area.

Regression Coefficients

The regression coefficients were used to determine the extent to which the proliferation of small arms and light weapons influences insecurity in the Kerio Valley region.

Table 5: Regression Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	0.436	0.285	–	1.530	0.127
	Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons	0.689	0.058	0.780	11.879	0.000

The results show that small arms and light weapons expansion results in a positive and statistically significant effect on insecurity ($B = 0.689$, $\beta = 0.780$, $p < 0.001$). The data show that growing small arms stocks will result in higher levels of security threats. The study shows that one unit of small arms proliferation leads to 0.689 units of increased insecurity when all other variables remain unchanged. The standardized coefficient ($\beta = 0.780$) proves that small arms proliferation functions as an important predictor of insecurity in the Kerio Valley region.

Discussion of Findings

The study examined the effect of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons on insecurity in the Kerio Valley region, Kenya. The findings showed that small arms and light weapons are present throughout the region which creates major security challenges for the area. Respondents strongly agreed that the presence of firearms increases violence, intensifies conflict, and contributes to community instability. The overall responses indicated that small arms proliferation is a major factor influencing insecurity, particularly through increased banditry, resource-based conflicts, and displacement of communities.

The correlation analysis showed that the proliferation of small arms and light weapons established a strong connection which reached statistical significance with a positive relationship to insecurity ($r = 0.775$, $p < 0.01$). This indicates that higher levels of arms proliferation are associated with increased levels of insecurity. The

regression analysis further confirmed that small arms proliferation explains a substantial proportion of variation in insecurity ($R^2 \approx 0.600$), which shows that approximately 60% of security outcomes result from small arms and light weapons proliferation. The study found 40 percent of the security outcomes remained unexplained, suggesting that other factors such as socio-economic conditions, governance challenges, and law enforcement effectiveness may also influence insecurity.

The regression analysis showed that small arms and light weapons diminish security through their increased availability which produces a statistical security threat ($B \approx 0.689$, $\beta \approx 0.780$, $p < 0.001$) to communities. The research discovered that small arms proliferation stands as the main factor which determines insecurity levels within Kerio Valley. The qualitative research findings confirmed the quantitative results by showing that people and groups use firearms to carry out violent acts which include banditry and cattle rustling. The respondents reported that cross-border arms trafficking and weak enforcement mechanisms create conditions which enable illegal firearms to continue circulating in the area. The respondents identified three main challenges which include insufficient control measures, minimal security activities, and poor coordination among institutions as factors that increase regional insecurity.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concludes that the proliferation of small arms and light weapons has a significant and positive influence on insecurity in the Kerio Valley region. The availability and accessibility of firearms increase the likelihood, intensity, and frequency of violent conflicts, thereby undermining security and stability in the region.

The study further concludes that small arms proliferation is a significant driver of insecurity, as it enhances the capacity for organized violence, facilitates criminal activities such as banditry, and escalates resource-based conflicts. The presence of firearms transforms localized disputes into more severe and prolonged conflicts.

Overall, the study concludes that while insecurity in the Kerio Valley region may be influenced by multiple factors, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons remains a critical factor that significantly shapes insecurity dynamics. Addressing insecurity in the region therefore requires targeted interventions aimed at controlling arms proliferation and strengthening institutional capacity.

The study recommends security interventions to strengthen their efforts against small arms and light weapons which currently dominate the Kerio Valley region. The government needs to improve its disarmament programs through organized and continuous operations which aim to decrease the movement of unlicensed weapons.

The study recommends better border control systems which need to establish stronger surveillance systems that will prevent illegal cross-border movement of small arms and light weapons. The region will experience decreased illegal firearm movements through improved monitoring systems which will enhance partnerships with neighbouring areas.

The study recommends institutions to establish better security agency collaboration which will lead to stronger arms control operations. The system would benefit from better inter-agency work together with improved sharing of information and joint operations between different agencies.

The study recommends law enforcement agencies to strengthen their capabilities through training programs and access to modern technologies and better financial resources which will help them fight armed violence.

The study recommends security solutions which involve people from the community to create better solutions through public awareness campaigns and community engagement programs. Community members should report illegal weapons while they support peace initiatives because this will help create a safer and more stable region.

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