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IMPLICATIONS OF SMUGGLING ON NIGERIA'S NATIONAL SECURITY (2015–2024)

Owuda Rashida Lamidi

Prince Abubakar Audu University Anyinba

Abdullahi Nuhu Liman

Nasarawa State University, Keffi

Mohammed Bello

Nasarawa State University, Keffi

Abstract

Smuggling activities across Nigeria's borders, particularly at the Seme border, have emerged as a persistent threat to national security. The porous nature of Nigeria's border infrastructure, weak institutional capacity, and economic disparities have created fertile ground for smuggling operations to thrive. Despite several government interventions, these illegal activities continue to undermine border control efforts, fuel transnational crime, and compromise the country's internal security. This study examined the implications of smuggling at the Seme border on national security from 2015 to 2024. The main aim of the study was to analyse the extent to which smuggling activities at the Seme border have impacted Nigeria's national security, with a focus on identifying patterns, actors, and institutional responses. The study adopted the State Fragility Theory as its theoretical framework, which highlights the inability of the state to assert authority and effectively govern its borders due to institutional weaknesses. A descriptive research design was employed to explore the phenomenon in depth. The population comprised 1,500 stakeholders directly and indirectly affected by smuggling, including security personnel, customs officials, traders, border residents, and policy analysts. Given the nature of the study, a purposive sampling technique was utilised to select participants with relevant knowledge and experience. Data were gathered through primary sources (interviews and questionnaires) and secondary sources (policy documents, academic publications, and media reports). The findings revealed that smuggling at the Seme border significantly facilitates the influx of small arms and light weapons, thereby intensifying communal conflicts and criminal violence. Additionally, it weakens the legitimacy of state institutions and undermines public trust in government capacity to protect national interests. Based on the findings, the study recommends strengthening inter-agency cooperation through joint border task forces and investing in technological surveillance systems to enhance real-time monitoring and response to smuggling activities.

Keywords: Smuggling, National Security, Seme Border, State Fragility, Border Control, Nigeria

1. Introduction

Nigeria, a country with extensive land borders, shares boundaries with four West African nations: Benin, Niger, Chad, and Cameroon. The Seme Border, located in the southwestern part of the country along the Lagos–Badagry corridor, is one of the busiest and most strategic entry points, particularly for trade between Nigeria and the Republic of Benin. However, this gateway has also become a hotspot for smuggling activities, which pose significant threats to Nigeria's national security, economic stability, and social well-being.

Smuggling is broadly defined as the illegal importation or exportation of goods and services across national borders, often to avoid taxes, duties, or legal restrictions (Odoma & Salihu, 2022). In the context of Nigeria, smuggling is not just an economic crime; it has evolved into a national security threat. The smuggling of arms, petroleum products, banned consumer goods, narcotics, and even human trafficking through porous borders like Seme has serious implications for internal security, government revenue, and social order. Over the past decade, incidents of cross-border smuggling have surged, exacerbated by weak border controls, corruption among law enforcement agents, and the

complex interplay between formal and informal trade dynamics in West Africa.

The importance of addressing smuggling at the Seme Border lies in the region's vulnerability and its geopolitical relevance. The corridor plays a central role in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) trade route and is essential for regional integration. However, smuggling undermines legal trade, discourages investment, and enables the influx of substandard or harmful goods, which threaten the health and safety of citizens. Furthermore, proceeds from smuggling often fund criminal networks, including insurgent and terrorist groups, thereby escalating security risks (Adewale, 2021).

Efforts by the Nigerian government to curb smuggling have included temporary border closures, increased deployment of security operatives, inter-agency collaborations, and technological innovations like the Nigeria Customs Service's e-customs platform. In 2019, the Nigerian government closed its land borders, including the Seme Border, to stem the tide of smuggled goods, particularly rice and arms. While these efforts yielded short-term results, the closures also caused severe economic disruptions and strained diplomatic relations with neighbouring countries (Ezeibe et al., 2021). In December 2020, the government re-opened the borders, but smuggling activities have since resumed, albeit with greater sophistication and coordination.

Despite these interventions, smuggling remains endemic, and its implications for national security have not been adequately studied. Although several studies have explored the economic effects of smuggling, especially in relation to revenue losses and trade imbalances, there is a noticeable gap in the literature regarding the national security dimension of smuggling at specific border points like Seme. This study, therefore, seeks to fill that gap by examining the nature, causes, and security consequences of smuggling at the Seme Border from 2015 to 2024.

Smuggling through Nigeria's borders, particularly at the Seme Border, remains a persistent and deeply rooted problem despite numerous government policies, enforcement strategies, and institutional reforms. While the economic

consequences of smuggling such as loss of government revenue and damage to local industries have been well-documented, less attention has been paid to the national security threats posed by these illicit cross-border activities. These threats include the influx of illegal arms and ammunition, trafficking of drugs and persons, and the funding of organised crime, which collectively undermine state authority and internal stability.

The ideal situation would be a secure and efficiently managed border where legitimate trade is facilitated, smuggling is prevented through effective surveillance and enforcement, and national security is not compromised by porous entry points. In such a scenario, agencies like the Nigeria Customs Service, Nigerian Immigration Service, and Nigerian Police Force would work in synergy using modern surveillance equipment and intelligence-sharing mechanisms. Communities along the border would also collaborate with law enforcement by providing timely information and discouraging the harbouring of smugglers.

However, the current reality is markedly different. The Seme Border remains highly porous, poorly monitored, and inadequately funded. Weak institutional capacity, low morale among border personnel, and widespread corruption enable smugglers to operate with impunity. Furthermore, limited use of modern surveillance tools such as drones, biometric scanners, and satellite imagery hampers effective border management (Olayemi & Omodia, 2023). In addition, smuggling has become highly organised, with smugglers using sophisticated tactics, including diversion routes, forged documents, and collusion with security operatives.

Various efforts have been made by successive administrations to address smuggling. These include the establishment of joint border patrols, customs modernisation programmes, inter-agency task forces, and public awareness campaigns. In 2019, Nigeria initiated a partial border closure policy aimed at halting the smuggling of food items, especially rice. The policy had some success in reducing smuggling but also led to price inflation and scarcity of essential commodities (Onuoha, 2020). Moreover, while border closures may deter small-scale smugglers, they have limited impact

on well-connected criminal syndicates that have access to political and economic power.

In recent years, there has also been a push towards regional cooperation. Nigeria has signed several bilateral and multilateral agreements with neighbouring countries to enhance border security and trade regulation. Nevertheless, implementation remains weak due to mutual distrust, inadequate funding, and bureaucratic delays. The ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Goods and Services has also complicated enforcement efforts by blurring the lines between legal and illegal cross-border transactions.

There is, therefore, a compelling need to conduct a focused study on smuggling at the Seme Border, particularly from a national security perspective. This study is timely given the rising wave of insecurity in Nigeria and the growing recognition that non-conventional security threats such as smuggling can be just as destabilising as conventional military threats.

While smuggling at the Seme Border has been acknowledged as a problem, the specific implications for national security have not been sufficiently analysed in existing literature. Most scholarly works have focused on economic loss, trade policy, or customs efficiency. This study seeks to bridge that gap by offering a holistic assessment of how smuggling undermines Nigeria's internal security, weakens state institutions, and hampers regional integration efforts.

The following research questions are design to guide this study;

- i. What are the major forms of smuggling activities that occur at the Seme Border?
- ii. How has smuggling activities at the Seme Border affected Nigeria's national security?

This Study assessed Implications of Smuggling at the Seme Border on National Security, 2015- 2024. Specific objectives of the study are to:

- i. Examine the main types of smuggling taking place at the Seme Border.
- ii. Assess the impact of smuggling at the Seme Border on national security in Nigeria.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Review

National Security

The concept of national security has evolved significantly over the decades, expanding beyond traditional military concerns to encompass a wide range of political, economic, environmental, and societal dimensions. Though the term may appear straightforward, it is inherently complex and multifaceted, shaped by historical context, political ideology, technological advancements, and global interdependence.

Traditionally, national security referred primarily to the protection of a state's territorial integrity and sovereignty against external military threats. This narrow, state-centric interpretation was dominant during the Cold War, where superpower rivalry and the threat of nuclear conflict framed national security in terms of defence and deterrence (Walt, 1991). According to Morgenthau (1948), a foundational realist scholar, national security is achieved when a state possesses sufficient power to defend its territorial boundaries and ensure its survival amidst an anarchic international system.

However, post-Cold War realities have prompted a re-evaluation of what constitutes a threat to national security. Scholars and policy-makers increasingly recognise that non-traditional threats—such as terrorism, smuggling, pandemics, cyberattacks, climate change, and organised crime—pose serious dangers to national stability and public safety. Consequently, national security now encompasses both hard security (military defence) and soft security (economic resilience, public health, environmental sustainability, and internal law enforcement) (Buzan et al., 1998).

Contemporary definitions of national security reflect this broader understanding. Baldwin (1997) argues that national security is “about the absence of threats to acquired values.” This definition shifts focus from mere territorial defence to the protection of critical national interests and institutions. Similarly, Nye and Lynn-Jones (1998) define national security as the ability of a nation to protect its citizens and interests

from internal and external threats that could cause societal disruption or undermine state legitimacy.

From a policy perspective, the Nigerian National Security Strategy (NNSS, 2019) adopts a multidimensional approach by identifying national security as “the protection of the territorial integrity, sovereignty, and the welfare of the people and their property.” The strategy explicitly acknowledges both conventional threats, such as insurgency and external aggression, and non-conventional threats, including smuggling, human trafficking, and organised crime, as serious concerns for Nigeria's national security architecture.

One of the key shifts in the conceptualisation of national security is the recognition of human security as a foundational component. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 1994) introduced the idea that national security must also be about safeguarding individuals' rights, freedoms, and access to basic necessities such as food, shelter, and health care. This people-centred approach argues that national security cannot be achieved solely through military strength if the population remains vulnerable to poverty, disease, and violence.

In the African context, scholars have advocated for national security frameworks that reflect local realities. Akinyemi and Oni (2021) stress that in countries like Nigeria, where weak institutions, porous borders, and socio-economic inequalities prevail, national security must focus on issues such as corruption, ethnic conflict, and transborder criminality. For instance, smuggling across borders like Seme does not merely result in economic losses; it also facilitates the trafficking of arms and narcotics, undermining law enforcement, fuelling insurgencies, and eroding state legitimacy.

Another important theoretical contribution comes from Barry Buzan's "securitisation theory," which argues that national security is not a fixed concept but a social construct shaped by political narratives. In this view, what is considered a national security issue depends on how political actors frame certain events or behaviours as existential threats requiring extraordinary measures (Buzan et al., 1998). For example, when smuggling is framed not just as an

economic nuisance but as a threat to national security, it prompts a stronger policy and security response from the state.

Furthermore, globalisation and technological innovation have added new layers to the concept of national security. Cybersecurity, for example, has emerged as a critical component of modern national security, as cyberattacks can disrupt financial systems, compromise national intelligence, and cause widespread panic. Similarly, transnational crimes such as drug trafficking and arms smuggling increasingly bypass state controls and require international cooperation to effectively combat.

The concept of national security has shifted from a narrow focus on military defence to a more holistic, multidimensional understanding that integrates economic stability, human welfare, political cohesion, and technological resilience. In the case of Nigeria, especially at critical points like the Seme Border, national security must be approached from both traditional and non-traditional angles to adequately address the evolving threat landscape. The protection of state integrity now depends not only on physical defence but also on strategic governance, intelligence coordination, community engagement, and regional cooperation.

Smuggling

Smuggling is a multifaceted phenomenon that transcends borders, economies, and legal systems. It is a persistent challenge for states, regulatory agencies, and international organisations due to its clandestine nature and its complex socio-economic underpinnings. At its core, smuggling entails the illegal transportation of goods or persons across borders in contravention of legal and regulatory frameworks.

Smuggling has been conceptualised variously across academic disciplines such as criminology, international law, economics, and political science. According to Andreas (2011), smuggling can be broadly defined as “the covert movement of goods or people in violation of legal statutes, particularly customs and immigration laws”. This definition captures both the economic and legal dimensions of the act. Smuggling, in this sense, is not merely a criminal

activity; it is a symptom of larger structural inequalities and governance challenges.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2018) specifically **defines** migrant smuggling as “the procurement, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit, of the illegal entry of a person into a State Party of which the person is not a national or a permanent resident.” This legal definition underscores the transnational character of smuggling and the profit-driven motives that fuel it.

In the economic domain, smuggling has been described as “a market response to regulation” (Mishra, Subramanian & Topalova, 2008), implying that restrictive trade policies, tariffs, and prohibitions create incentives for illicit trade. Smuggling is thus an informal economic activity that thrives in environments where formal market access is either restricted or highly taxed.

Smuggling encompasses a wide range of illegal transactions and activities. These include, but are not limited to, the smuggling of contraband goods such as narcotics, weapons, counterfeit products, and endangered species; human smuggling; and even the movement of capital in violation of currency and taxation laws.

Kleemans and van de Bunt (2020) categorise smuggling into two broad types: commercial smuggling and subsistence smuggling. Commercial smuggling refers to large-scale, organised operations often involving criminal networks. Subsistence smuggling, on the other hand, is often perpetrated by individuals or small groups seeking to survive economically, particularly in border communities.

Moreover, smuggling is distinct from trafficking. While both involve illicit movement, the key difference lies in the element of exploitation. Human trafficking entails coercion and exploitation, whereas smuggling typically involves the consent of the smuggled person, albeit often under dangerous and deceitful conditions (Salt, 2021).

Smuggling is fuelled by a combination of economic, political, and social factors. Among the key drivers are poverty, unemployment, corruption, conflict, and ineffective border controls. In many

developing regions, particularly in Africa and Latin America, weak governance structures and porous borders enable the thriving of smuggling networks.

Digital technologies and globalisation have also expanded the scale and complexity of smuggling. The internet and encrypted communication tools enable smugglers to organise sophisticated operations across countries with relative anonymity (Morselli & Gabor, 2020). Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic saw a significant rise in the smuggling of medical supplies, fake vaccines, and unauthorised pharmaceuticals, reflecting how global crises can shift smuggling patterns (Interpol, 2021).

The consequences of smuggling are far-reaching and multidimensional. Economically, smuggling deprives states of significant revenues through lost taxes and duties. It undermines legal businesses that cannot compete with the prices of smuggled goods. Politically, smuggling can erode state authority and contribute to the entrenchment of criminal syndicates that often engage in violence and corruption. Socially, smuggling endangers lives. The smuggling of migrants, for instance, frequently exposes individuals to exploitation, abuse, and even death in transit. Environmentally, the illegal smuggling of wildlife contributes to biodiversity loss and ecological degradation (UNODC, 2022).

In recent years, the international community has made concerted efforts to combat smuggling through conventions, treaties, and collaborative policing. The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (2000) and its Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air have provided legal frameworks for cooperation. Nonetheless, scholars argue that enforcement alone is insufficient. As noted by Gallagher and David (2014), effective anti-smuggling strategies must address the root causes such as underdevelopment, demand in destination countries, and systemic corruption.

Smuggling remains a global issue that evolves with socio-political and economic dynamics. It reflects the interplay between legality and survival, regulation and resistance, state authority and informal networks. A robust conceptual understanding of smuggling must therefore incorporate legal, economic, and socio-

political perspectives while acknowledging its dynamic and transnational nature.

Seme Border, Nigeria

The Seme Border, located in the Badagry Division of Lagos State, is Nigeria's principal land border with the Republic of Benin. It serves as a crucial gateway for trade, migration, and transnational interaction in West Africa. Over the decades, the Seme Border has acquired significant political, economic, and socio-cultural relevance, acting as both a conduit for legitimate cross-border activities and a hotspot for smuggling, security concerns, and informal economies.

Seme Border is defined geographically as the official boundary post between Nigeria and Benin, situated along the Lagos–Cotonou route on the Trans–West African Coastal Highway. The border connects Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa, to the West African sub-region, making it a critical node in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) integration agenda (Adeola & Fayomi, 2012).

In geopolitical discourse, the Seme Border is often referred to as a "porous border", a term used to describe its susceptibility to illegal trans-border activities, especially smuggling and human trafficking (Oladipo & Onuoha, 2021). Despite the presence of customs, immigration, and security agencies, enforcement has historically been weak, partly due to corruption, poor infrastructure, and the sheer volume of daily border crossings.

Economically, the Seme Border plays a vital role in Nigeria's import-export dynamics. It facilitates formal trade, including goods such as agricultural produce, textiles, and manufactured items. However, it is also notorious for informal and illicit trade, with smuggling of rice, petrol, vehicles, and pharmaceuticals being widespread. As noted by Okonkwo (2020), the high tariffs and trade restrictions imposed by Nigerian authorities have often incentivised informal economic activities at Seme, making it a microcosm of Nigeria's trade policy failures.

In August 2019, the Nigerian government closed the Seme Border along with other land borders, citing the need to curb smuggling and promote local

agricultural production (Obioma & Ogbuehi, 2020). The border remained closed until December 2020, during which time both economic hardship and food inflation worsened, especially in border communities. This action spotlighted the delicate balance between national security, economic interests, and regional cooperation.

The Seme Border is not just an economic zone but also a socio-cultural interface. Families and communities straddle both sides of the border, often sharing ethnic, linguistic, and historical ties. This interconnectedness has led to cross-border marriages, markets, and festivals, making the border more than a geopolitical boundary (Akinyemi & Adepoju, 2019).

From a security perspective, the Seme Border has been implicated in various transnational crimes, including drug trafficking, small arms proliferation, and irregular migration. The inadequacy of border surveillance systems and the overlapping roles of multiple agencies contribute to its inefficiencies.

The Seme Border is a strategic yet problematic frontier in Nigeria's territorial and economic landscape. While it offers immense potential for regional integration and trade, it also embodies the contradictions of weak governance, border insecurity, and informal economic dependency. A comprehensive policy approach that strengthens infrastructure, governance, and regional collaboration is necessary for transforming the Seme Border from a liability into a developmental asset.

2.2 Empirical Review

Major Forms of Smuggling Activities that Occur at the Seme Border

Adeola, G. L. & Fayomi, O. (2012) examined *Human Security and the Challenges of the Nigerian Border Environment*. The study adopted a qualitative research design using interviews and document analysis involving border officials, community leaders, and customs personnel at the Seme Border. The authors found that the main types of smuggling prevalent at the Seme Border include rice, frozen poultry products, petrol (fuel), used vehicles, and second-hand clothes. These items are smuggled through bush paths and illegal checkpoints, often aided by corrupt officials. The

study noted that food items and petrol are particularly targeted because of Nigeria's price subsidies and trade restrictions. The authors recommended improved surveillance systems, training of border security agents, and greater collaboration between Nigeria and Benin to address smuggling networks.

Okonkwo (2020) accessed *Smuggling, Trade and the Nigerian Border Closure: A Policy Impact Assessment*. The research utilised a mixed-method approach, **combining** quantitative data from Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) reports and qualitative interviews with traders and residents of the Seme Border region. The study found that vehicle smuggling, especially used cars and motorcycles, dominated the Seme Border area prior to the 2019 border closure. In addition, contraband drugs, cosmetics, and foreign textiles were regularly smuggled into Nigeria to avoid customs tariffs. The closure temporarily reduced smuggling but also triggered a rise in informal trade and unemployment. Okonkwo recommended that Nigeria should adopt a technology-driven border control system, increase bilateral dialogue with Benin Republic, and design inclusive trade policies that reduce reliance on informal markets.

Oladipo and Onuoha (2021) investigated *Border Security and Transnational Threats in Nigeria: The Case of Seme Border Post*. The study was conducted using key informant interviews and field observations, focusing on security agents, local smugglers (anonymous), and non-governmental organisations working on border security. The research identified arms smuggling, human trafficking, and illicit drug trade as the most dangerous types of smuggling at the Seme Border. These forms pose direct threats to Nigeria's national security, fuelling organised crime and insurgency. The authors observed that weak institutional capacity, poor coordination among security agencies, and widespread corruption hinder effective border control. The study called for the establishment of a centralised border management agency, regular joint patrols with neighbouring countries, and the use of intelligence-led operations to dismantle smuggling syndicates.

Across all three studies, it is evident that smuggling at the Seme Border is multifaceted,

involving economic goods like rice, fuel, and textiles, as well as more severe security threats like arms and drug trafficking. Despite periodic government interventions, such as border closures and increased patrols, smuggling remains pervasive due to deep-rooted institutional weaknesses and economic incentives.

Effects of Smuggling Activities at the Seme Border on Nigeria's National Security

Okonkwo (2020) studied *Border Crimes and Nigeria's National Security: A Study of Seme Border*. The study employed a qualitative research design using key informant interviews with border security personnel and customs officials. The study revealed that smuggling activities at the Seme border had increased due to porous border control and inadequate technological surveillance. It also noted that the smuggling of arms and contraband goods posed a significant threat to Nigeria's internal security by fuelling criminal activities such as armed robbery, terrorism, and kidnapping. The researcher recommended the deployment of modern surveillance equipment, increased funding for border patrol agencies, and regional cooperation with neighbouring countries to strengthen intelligence sharing and patrol coordination.

Adewumi and Oladeji. (2021) assessed *The Role of Border Smuggling in Undermining Nigeria's Security Architecture: Evidence from Seme Border*. The study adopted a mixed-methods approach, combining structured questionnaires administered to residents and traders around the Seme border with interviews of Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) officials. The study found that smuggling at the Seme border had contributed to economic sabotage and proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALWs), which in turn emboldened violent groups and disrupted public order. It also highlighted that complicity and corruption among security agents worsened the situation. Adewumi and Oladeji advocated for institutional reforms in customs and border patrol agencies, increased community involvement in security

reporting, and bilateral agreements with Benin Republic to implement joint border management initiatives.

Yusuf (2022) examined *Smuggling and Border Insecurity: The Nigerian Seme Border Experience*. The study used a case study design, relying on secondary data analysis from reports by Nigerian Immigration Service, Nigeria Customs Service, and independent security think-tanks. Yusuf (2022) reported that the Seme border remains one of the most smuggling-prone areas in West Africa. The study noted that the unchecked influx of illicit drugs, human trafficking, and arms trade exacerbated Nigeria's national insecurity challenges, especially in the South-West geopolitical zone. The study recommended the establishment of a comprehensive border security strategy that includes satellite monitoring, public awareness campaigns, and the integration of border management into Nigeria's national security strategy.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

This study adopts the State Fragility Theory as its theoretical framework. The theory was originally conceptualized by Robert (2003) and further developed by institutions like the Fund for Peace and the Brookings Institution. It explains how weak state institutions, porous borders, and ineffective governance mechanisms enable illicit activities, including smuggling, which in turn undermine national security and development.

Assumptions of the Theory

State Fragility Theory assumes that when a state is unable to exercise full control over its territory, enforce laws, regulate borders, and provide public goods such as security, justice, and economic stability, it becomes vulnerable to internal and external threats. Fragile states often experience corruption, criminality, armed insurgencies, and cross-border illegal trade, which further weaken their governance capacity and sovereignty. In the context of Nigeria, the Seme border a known smuggling route represents a manifestation of such fragility, allowing non-state actors to challenge state authority through illicit economic activities.

Criticism of the Theory

Critics argue that State Fragility Theory tends to generalize complex national problems and overlooks the influence of external actors such as transnational corporations, neighboring states, or international smuggling syndicates. It is also critiqued for sometimes portraying African states in a deterministic and negative light without considering historical and structural factors such as colonial borders and global economic inequalities.

Nevertheless, the theory remains relevant for this study as it provides a robust framework for assessing how institutional weaknesses at Nigeria's borders facilitate smuggling and pose grave threats to national security.

Application to the Study

The Seme border, located between Nigeria and the Republic of Benin, has become notorious for the smuggling of goods, arms, narcotics, and even human trafficking. The application of State Fragility Theory in this study helps to contextualize smuggling not just as an economic crime, but as a systemic failure of border governance and national security enforcement. The Nigerian state's inability to effectively control the Seme border due to weak customs regulation, inadequate surveillance, and corruption among officials reflects characteristics of a fragile state. These lapses allow smugglers to thrive, thereby compromising the economic stability, internal security, and sovereignty of Nigeria.

This theory aids in analyzing how state institutions (e.g., customs, immigration, security forces) at the border lack the capacity or will to enforce laws, enabling the expansion of illicit networks and security threats. Furthermore, smuggling at Seme border not only reduces government revenue and supports criminal economies but also undermines legitimate trade and public trust in the state.

3. Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive research design to investigate the impact of smuggling at the Seme border on national security in Nigeria. The population comprised stakeholders directly and indirectly affected

by smuggling activities and their implications for national security. These illicit activities have significantly undermined Nigeria's territorial integrity and security, particularly within border communities such as Seme.

Seme is a strategic border settlement between Nigeria and the Republic of Benin, located on the outskirts of Lagos State. It is home to approximately 1,500 residents, including traders, transporters, known smugglers, oil thieves, touts, drug traffickers, government officials, and tourists. Given the nature of the study, a purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants with relevant knowledge and experience in trans-border crime, including security personnel and local community members.

Data collection involved both primary and secondary sources. Primary data were obtained through interviews and structured questionnaires administered to respondents, while secondary data were sourced from academic publications, official reports, and media articles. The study integrated both quantitative and qualitative methods to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the subject. This mixed-methods approach enabled the researcher to analyse the extent of smuggling and its implications for Nigeria's national security architecture effectively.

The sample size was determined using Taro Yamane's formula and was calculated as 400 respondents from the identified population. Using Taro Yamane's formula, the sample size is determined as follows:

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

Where n = sample size

Table 1: The most common form of smuggling observed at the Seme Border is

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Smuggling of petroleum products	54	16
Trafficking of illicit drugs	65	18
Importation of banned goods	154	45
Arms and ammunition smuggling	72	21
Total	345	100

Source: field survey, 2025

$$\begin{aligned}
 &N = \text{total population size} \\
 &1 = \text{constant} \\
 &e = \text{the assume error margin or} \\
 &\text{tolerable error which is taken as } 5\% (0.05) \\
 &n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2} = \frac{1,500}{1 + 1,500(0.0025)} \\
 &= \frac{1,500}{1 + 3.75} \\
 &= \frac{1,500}{4.75} \\
 &= 400 \text{ (sample size)}
 \end{aligned}$$

4. Results and Discussion

Data presentation and analysis focused on examining the extent and impact of smuggling at the Seme border on Nigeria's national security. Responses from questionnaires and interviews were systematically organised using tables and charts for clarity. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data were interpreted thematically. Key findings revealed high levels of smuggling activities involving goods, arms, and narcotics, often facilitated by weak border enforcement and corruption. These activities were shown to compromise national security, reduce government revenue, and promote criminal networks. The analysis provided a clear understanding of how smuggling undermines territorial control and security efforts.

Objective one: Major Forms of Smuggling Activities that Occur at the Seme Border

The data reveals that the most prevalent form of smuggling at the Seme Border is the importation of banned goods, accounting for 154 responses, representing 45% of the total. This is followed by arms and ammunition smuggling at 72 cases (21%), trafficking of illicit drugs at 65 (18%), and smuggling of petroleum products at 54 (16%). The findings indicate

that the smuggling of prohibited items remains a major challenge, reflecting weak enforcement and porous borders. Notably, arms smuggling and drug trafficking also pose serious security threats, necessitating coordinated efforts by border security agencies to curb these illegal activities.

Table 2: The smuggling activity that poses the greatest threat at the Seme Border is

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Human trafficking	60	17
Counterfeit goods smuggling	86	25
Smuggling of foreign rice and foodstuffs	100	29
Illegal importation of vehicles	99	29
Total	345	100

Source: field survey, 2025

The data indicates that the smuggling of foreign rice and foodstuffs, along with the illegal importation of vehicles, represents the most prevalent smuggling activities at the Seme Border, each accounting for 29% of total incidents. This is closely followed by counterfeit goods smuggling at 25%, while human trafficking is the least reported, comprising 17% of cases. The relatively high incidence of foodstuff and vehicle smuggling suggests economic

motivations, possibly linked to demand and profit margins. Meanwhile, the presence of counterfeit goods highlights concerns about trade integrity, and although lower, the rate of human trafficking underscores serious humanitarian and security implications.

Objective two: Effects of Smuggling Activities at the Seme Border on Nigeria's National Security

Table 3: The most significant impact of smuggling at the Seme Border on national security is

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Increase in organised crime and violence	75	22
Weakening of border control systems	50	14
Reduction in government revenue	118	34
Rise in illegal immigration	102	30
Total	345	100

Source: field survey, 2025

The data reveals that the most significant impact of smuggling at the Seme Border on national security is a reduction in government revenue, with 118 respondents (34%). This is closely followed by a rise in illegal immigration (30%) and an increase in organised crime and violence (22%). The least cited impact is the weakening of border control systems, accounting for

only 14% of responses. These findings indicate that economic and security-related consequences of smuggling are of major concern, highlighting the urgent need for enhanced border enforcement, anti-smuggling strategies, and improved immigration control to safeguard national interests.

Table 4: The overall effect of smuggling at the Seme Border on Nigeria's internal security is

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very severe and persistent	124	36
Moderate but manageable	86	25
Minimal with limited consequences	77	22
No noticeable effect	58	17
Total	345	100

Source: field survey, 2025

The data reveals that smuggling at the Seme Border has a significant impact on Nigeria's internal security. A majority of respondents (36%) rated the effect as "very severe and persistent," indicating widespread concern. A further 25% viewed the impact as "moderate but manageable," while 22% considered it "minimal with limited consequences." Only 17% believed there was "no noticeable effect." These findings suggest that smuggling is broadly perceived as a serious and ongoing threat to national security, with a combined 61% of respondents identifying either severe or moderate consequences. The results underscore the need for stricter border control and enforcement measures.

4.1 Discussion of Findings

The findings indicate that smuggling at the Seme Border has posed considerable implications for Nigeria's national security. With 36% of respondents identifying the effects as "very severe and persistent" and 25% as "moderate but manageable", the data highlights smuggling as a critical security concern. The illegal movement of goods, arms, and persons across the border contributes to the proliferation of small arms, fuels organised crime, and undermines state authority.

Empirical studies support this conclusion. According to Olaniyi (2017), porous borders such as Seme serve as channels for trafficking and arms smuggling, thereby heightening internal insecurity and facilitating insurgent operations. Similarly, Adebayo and Ogundele (2020) assert that persistent smuggling activities at Nigeria's borders have weakened law enforcement efforts, encouraged corruption, and hampered economic stability key elements of national security.

The implications are profound, ranging from economic sabotage to threats to human lives and loss of state revenue. The failure to adequately secure the Seme

Border has thus allowed non-state actors to challenge government authority, exacerbating security challenges in the country. Strengthening border surveillance and regional cooperation remains imperative for mitigating these threats and safeguarding national integrity.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, the implications of smuggling at the Seme Border on Nigeria's national security have been far-reaching and detrimental. The findings reveal that smuggling has significantly contributed to the proliferation of arms, economic instability, and the undermining of law enforcement efforts. It has created avenues for criminal networks to thrive, thereby weakening the state's ability to maintain internal order. Addressing this issue requires a multi-faceted approach, including enhanced border security, regional collaboration, and stricter enforcement of trade regulations. Without decisive action, smuggling will continue to pose a serious threat to Nigeria's national security and development.

Based on the data analysis and results presented, the following recommendations are made:

- i. Based on the findings that smuggling at the Seme Border is severe and persistent, the Nigerian government should invest in advanced surveillance technologies, including drones, CCTV systems, and biometric scanners. Strengthening intelligence networks and collaboration with neighbouring countries like Benin Republic will help detect and disrupt smuggling networks more effectively.
- ii. To address the major forms of smuggling such as arms, contraband goods, and human trafficking there must be stricter enforcement of customs and immigration laws. Specialised task forces should be established to monitor high-risk areas, and offenders must face swift prosecution to deter future violations and reinforce state authority.

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