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The Proliferation of Child Soldier in Modern Warfare and Its Social-Economic and Security Implication

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Abstract: ***This paper qualitatively interrogated the use of child soldier in the modern warfare focusing its social-economic and security implication. The paper uses content analysis thereby limit the data only on to secondary data. The paper revealed that the intervention of UNICEF and Save the Children has to prevent the recruitment of children into the army and also serve as a bridge between the military and international actors. The paper discovered that there is no modicum of security for children within global community. It recommended that the response to use of children in armed conflict should be more proactive by taken measures to ensure accountability of any further conflict accompanied by child recruitment.***

Keywords: Child Soldier, Socio-Economic and Security

1. INTRODUCTION

Human rights have been a concern on the forefront of global politics since World War II. The United Nations has adopted many resolutions and conventions aimed at protecting the human race as a whole from the violence and injustice that occurs in times of war as well as in times of peace (Ki-moon, 2014). When it comes to the child, human rights have found a place in protecting this vulnerable population. The use of child soldier is probably the world's most unrecognized form of child abuse.

More than ever war is affecting children in a disturbing and direct manner. More than any other time in history, children are directly participating as perpetrators of violence. It is estimated that three hundred thousand (300,000) children are participating in armed conflict around the globe (Dallaire, 2010). Child soldier involvement in armed conflict violates the very rights that the global community has tried to protect for all children.

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Many documents have been created and passed as international laws which aim to enforce protection of child from participation in war such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) which was one of the first of its kind to address the rights of the child (UDHR, 1948). In 1989 the rights of the child were revisited with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC, 1989).

While some nations have come to a consensus that child soldier is a problem, there is a lukewarm attitude in part of some as regard the move. The disconnection between policy and implementation can be outlined in regards to child soldier and in all legislation regarding child soldier. International community must therefore make sure that children are protected from participation in armed conflict. The thought of a child as young an age as eight years old participating in combat is an appalling notion but it is precisely what occurred in modern say warfare.

Statement of the Problem
The problem of child soldier is not a trend that is unique to one country, let alone one continent. It is a global issue which requires a global response. The role that international law plays, and should play to a greater extent, in the protection of children holds the only hope for preventing the phenomenon of child soldier. The prosecution of those who violate international conventions and statutes aimed to protect the child, is how these instruments will be enforceable. The examination of the context that creates the environment and conditions for child soldier is just as important. Preventing the use of child soldier could be the most critical aspect to eliminating the problem. While international law plays the part of condemning violators, it also necessary to deter the use of children as soldier, preventing developing countries from slipping into the conflicts that produce child soldier, will prove to be the most effective way to protect child soldier phenomenon.

Objectives of the Study
The main objective of the study is to analyse the use of child soldier in global community, focusing the social-economic and security implication of the menace.

2. METHODOLOGY

The work adopts the historical method and it is therefore descriptive and analytical. It also entails a chronological and thematic presentation of the work in line with the historical method. However, the reality is that the theme ‘Child Soldier is a global and regional phenomenon, focuses different aspects of social relations. This study draws insights from the approaches of related disciplines and topics. The work utilized content analysis using mainly secondary materials as its sources.

Conceptualising Child Soldier and Security
There is an abundance of literature on the general phenomenon of child soldier. Most of the literature noted that child soldier is not a new concept. Since World War II child soldier have

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involved in armed conflict on a larger, more violent scale than ever before (Brett and McCallin, 1998; Dallaire, 2010; Fox 2005). The International Coalition to Stop the Use of Children as Soldiers (CSC) defines a child soldier as "any person under 18 years of age who is a member of, or attached to, government armed forces or any other regular or irregular armed force or group, whether or not an armed conflict exist. They may perform range of tasks including; participation in combat; logistical and support functions; and domestic and sexual services". (International Coalition, 2004). Another commonly used definition was formulated in the 'Cape Town Principles' drafted in 1997 and stating that a child soldier is "any person less than 18 years of age who is part of any kind of regular or irregular armed force or armed group in any capacity other than purely as a family member. The two "maximum" definitions qualify all children associated with armed forces and groups as soldiers and thus qualifying for special protection and demobilization and reintegration programs. International humanitarian law makes a distinction between children of fifteen and eighteen years old who adhere to the four criteria of a combatant and children associated with armed forces and groups that do not meet these criteria. In order to avoid the association of soldiers with combatants, 'child soldier' are often referred to as 'children associated with armed forces and groups'. The term child soldier does not just refer to a child who carries a weapon and participates in direct combat. Children in combat carry out a range of functions from being the perpetrators of violence and atrocious acts to less violent positions such as guard duty, patrolling, manning checkpoints, look out, cooks, porters, messengers and intelligence gathering. Those accompanying such groups, including girls recruited as concubines or for forced marriage. According to Imam (2014), security is a situation that depict freedom from danger or threat inthe activities of human beings. It represents a scenario where people, group of people,community or state carry out their assigned or daily activities freely without any fear of intimidation or threat. Security is dynamics, it has moved beyond pre-cold war understanding which limit it from either internal or external aggression. Security include freedom from anything that can threat ones existence, be it hunger, diseases, illiteracy or even environment. Security in all ramification is the primary responsibility of government. Security in the other hand, is a situation of uncertainty of been protected or when a subject is not adequately protected, thereby exposed to danger (Ladan, 2019).

The Phenomenon 'Child Soldier and Its Dilemma

Children have been carried out some of the tasks associated with war as far back as Medieval Times, nevertheless the use of children as the perpetrators of violent war crimes and atrocities is a disturbing trend in the modern era (Dallaire, 2010; Fox, 2005). Child soldier can be found on either side of a conflict; in government troops, rebel troops and paramilitary groups purposely because children are small and naturally assumed innocent, they can be the best cover. Rarely does one expect the innocence associated with a child to be the enemy (Brett and McCallin, 2008; Dallaire, 2010). The use of a child as a soldier is frowned upon by the international community, no government or opposition group seeking international validation for their cause is eager to admit to using children to fight their wars. This dilemma means that child soldier areundocumented, hidden and unknown fighters in conflicts around the globe. "Invisible soldiers" is a term that adequately describes the child combatant (Brett and

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McCallin, 1998; Dallaire, 2010). As Brett and McCallin (1998) aptly say, "they are invisible because those who employ them deny their existence. No record is kept of their numbers and ages, or the ages are falsified. Many are not part of the formal strength of the armed forces or armed groups to which they are attached, but are unacknowledged servants or hangers on". The issue of invisibility of perpetrator of child soldier is challenging as well as rehabilitation and demobilization. The employment of child soldier is an international issue that has many implications for the future of humanity. International law and human rights norms have tried to find its place in the issue of child soldier the results have been effective in creating international law and statutes pertaining to the prevention of children being conscripted or employed as soldiers but that the enforcement of violators of such law has room for improvement. One of the major problems with child soldier and international law is the age threshold in which a child is protected. Many of the instruments designed to protect children frombecoming combatants set the age of fifteen years old which is too low for many critics. Whereas the maturity age of eighteen years old, as it is in the United States, would better protect children from participation. The issue here is that many cultures consider a child to be an adult earlier than eighteen years old. The defining age of what a child soldier is and what is not becomes one of the most frustrating and difficult aspects of child soldier examination. Even though the western construct of majority at eighteen years old is found in international legal documents, the cultural construct of what age a child becomes an adult can be considerably lower in countries where children are actually found in armed groups (Dallaire, 2010; Wessells, 2009).

Child Soldier and International Law

Extensive literature is available on child soldier and international law but the major problem with child soldier and international law is the age threshold in which a child is protected (Dallaire, 2010 and Wessells, 2009). The first time that the issue of child soldier was addressed formally in international law was 1977 with Additional Protocols I and II to the Geneva Conventions of 1949. The Protocols set the protected age of a child at under 15 years old and makes mention of those who are fifteen to eighteen years of age. Protocol I addresses issues related to victims of international conflict (Dallaire, 2010). Protocol I Article 77(2) states that children who are under fifteen years of age are not to take "direct part" in combat. If the child falls within the range of fifteen to eighteen years old then the military should give priority to the older of the recruits. The Protocol specifically mentions the intentional recruitment of children under fifteen. Thus, "the parties to theconflict shall take all feasible measures in order that children who have not attained the age of fifteen years do not take a direct part in hostilities and, in particular, they shall refrain from recruiting them into their armed forces" (Dallaire, 2010). Article 77(4) addresses issues of detainment or imprisonment of children related to conflict inthat they should be kept separate from adults unless they are able to reside with their family. Article 77(5) states that the death penalty shall not apply to those who are under eighteen years old. Protocol II addresses everything that Protocol I does in Article 4(3) and Article 6(4) as it relates to victims of non-international conflict, such as civil war.

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The protection afforded to children is problematic because the age a child may become a soldier and what constitutes child 'soldiering' fluctuates between states and cultures. Differing levels of children soldiers' protection leave them vulnerable to particular abuses. However, fifteen years old seems to be a common number in which a child is defined in legal texts pertaining to armed conflict. To corroborate the stand of the critics of the instrument that stipulated fifteen years old as child soldier, the maturity age of eighteen years old, as it is in the United States, is a better threshold to protect young people from being involved in armed conflict early in life. The issue here is that many cultures consider a child to be an adult earlier than eighteen years old (Wessells, 2009). In non-Western societies such as sub-Saharan Africa, particularly in rural area where traditional ways remain strong, a person is regarded as an adult once he or she has completed the culturally scripted initiation ceremony or rite of passage into manhood or womanhood. Typically such rites occur around fourteen years of age (Wessells, 2009). In 1989, The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) was adopted by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly. It is a treaty which is monitored by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. The CRC also uses fifteen as the protected age a child is not to be conscripted or recruited into armed conflict. The UN Convention was ratified by one hundred and ninety one (191) countries with exception of US. On February 12, 2002, the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict to the CRC came into force. Due to overwhelming international consensus that fifteen years old is too young for children to participate in armed conflict, the Optional Protocol thereby raises the age that a person should be participating in armed conflict to eighteen years old. Governments who are party to the Optional Protocol are to take all "feasible" measures to prevent anyone under eighteen years of age in their armed forces from participation in direct combat. The Optional Protocol additionally calls for governments to refrain from recruiting persons less than eighteen years of age. Article 4(1) of the protocol states: non-state groups will not recruit children under eighteen years old "under any circumstances". This is important as the issue of how to deal with non-state actors and the use of child soldier is a major one when it comes to enforcement. This aspect of the child soldier phenomenon is difficult to position and that is because governments are held accountable to international treaties and conventions so non-state actors mentioned in the Optional Protocol is an important step in the protection of child soldier. Addressing non-state cases is more problematic, however, and not simply because non-state entities exist and operate beyond legal reach (Fox, 2005). In addition to the Protocols and treaties mentioned above, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court of July 1, 2002 makes conscription of children under fifteen years old into the armed forces a war crime. The Rome Statute is important in regards to the issue of child soldier as it was instrumental in the case study of Sierra Leone. In the aftermathof the Civil War in Sierra Leone the Rome Statute was the basis for making it the first case where recruitment of child soldier resulted in a guilty verdict in international law (Wessells, 2009). Wessells (2009) also noted: It is an open question whether the prosecutions by the International Criminal Court and the Special Courts will in fact deter child recruitment. To succeed, the courts will need the moral support and resources of countries worldwide, but the United States has revoked its signature on the treaty that established the Court. Also, it is questionable whether the Courts can manage the number

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of cases needed to deterchild recruitment on a large scale. The importance of international collaboration by countries, especially such as the United States is outlined in the above quote. Much of the progress that has been made through international law and domestic legislation in such countries is only as strong on the support provided for enforcement and legitimization of these mechanisms.

Child Soldier and Recruitment

Recruitment is a general term covering any means, whether compulsory, forced or voluntary, by which a person becomes part of a group. The manner in which children are recruited into the armed varies. According to Machel (1996) cited in Sesay and Ismail (2003), there are two forms of recruiting children into soldier, one of it is forced recruitment which includes but not limited to raids, kidnapping and conscriptions. The other modes of recruitment is voluntary recruitment which involves the personal decision of the children to enlist for the service of armed group of which could either be government or rebels. However the most common form of compulsory recruitment is conscription by governments. The legal minimum age for the recruitment and use of children for military purposes as defined in the Convection on the Right of Child (CRC) stems from international humanitarian law setting fifteen years as the minimum age for recruitment by national armed forces in international and non-international conflicts. Due to intensive lobbying an Optional Protocol on Children in Armed Conflict was adopted in 2000, raising the minimum legal age to eighteen years for compulsory recruitment and sixteen for voluntary recruitment. Some conscripted children may be younger due to a lack of identity records like a birth registration, or because they were caught up in a quota enlistment carried out by persons or agencies that do not check the age of the conscripts. When an enlarged force is needed, the conscription policy might be changed or ignored, which merges into forced recruitment. Forced recruitment is per definition illegal and often targeted at certain ethnic groups, tribe or families that are expected to support the armed group.

Factors Influence Involvement of Children in War

There are various reasons why children join armed group which may either be forceful conscription or voluntary. Many children have fought because they have been forced to, in the most brutal way. However, voluntary recruitment into armed groups or forces is significantly influenced by children's personal experience. Few of the reasons for children involvement in modern warfare are highlighted below:

Poor Countries with Large Number of Children: Abundant supply of children constitute another factor aiding child recruitment (Haer, 2018). Most of these countries are poor, as a result cannot perform their constitutional responsibility to their subjects. This, notwithstanding turn out large population of children and adolescents. Rebel or government group have easier time of recruiting children into armed group due to poor economic situation coupled with population explosion of young one (Schauer, 2009).

Lack of Quality Education: Children with little or no education are more prone to be

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enlisted into child soldier (Faulkner, 2001). Many boys grew up in violence especially in rural areas where access to quality education and other opportunities are especially low. Boys between the ages of fourteen and eighteen in some tribe usually viewed themselves as children, especially in the context of education, as members of an age set who would ideally be in school full-time. Another reason for children joining willingly in the context of the conflict was to provide for the best chance of surviving the war. Without the protection of a gun and an armed group, many boys believed they would have been even more vulnerable to being killed because of their ethnicity or assumptions about their allegiances (Human Rights Watch, 2015). In many cases including they were recruited at gun point by soldiers, some were arrested and then put in detention facilities until they agreed to fight or were simply abducted, handed a gun and then, sometimes within a day, thrown into battle (Schauer, 2009). Influence of Technological Advancement of weaponry and the proliferation of small weapons is another vital factor that encourage children to join armed group. Technology has facilitated the involvement of children into fights as bold as adult in the warfront (Haer, 2018).

In the wreckage of the conflict, some joined to access food or money. Insecurity of food coupled with famine during war is a noticeable occurrence. The need for food therefore make armed group inevitable. There is tendency that children from the most disadvantaged socio-economic groups will willingly join armed group for the sake of survival (Faulkner, 2001). Food and other essential needs are inevitable either in peace time or war time. Poor conditions in the provision of these essential needs for civilians during war also significantly contributed to children most especially boys leaving their family to join armed forces (Human Rights Watch, 2015).

Strong Sense of Responsibility: Fighting has often been seen as part of fulfilling a necessary role, especially as army and police have done little over the years to protect communities during war. A way to get a gun to be able to continue as a community protector became inevitable. In some of the culture, child soldier often perceived themselves as able warriors, and as such with a duty not only to those they loved, but also to themselves. Culturally, children don't run away from war, instead they fight to defend their territory. Child soldier are not stigmatized in some culture and, although their loss of access to education is widely regretted, however they are usually seen as valuable fighters, not victims (Human Rights Watch, 2015). Children's commitment to the armed group may have been part of their upbringing and the idealization of a culture of resistance or violence.

Added to the above is the influence of globalization. The social and economic crisis which is offshoots of globalization has negatively affected economy of many states thereby widening the existing inequalities and weakening family as a result of this, family were unable to take proper care of their wards. Many families resulted into commodification of their children to make ends meet, this has significantly brought an increase in child soldiering (Haer, 2018). State poverty level (economic meltdown) has therefore become a driving force for child recruitment.

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Retaining Mentality: children are have found be easier to retain in the armed group than the adult group. Children are more liable to change and easily adaptable to any doctrine introduced to them by the authorities without questioning (Blattman, 2007). Though being weak fighters, children have been most likely to stay due to easier means of their indoctrination. However, adults seems to the most skilled fighters, they were most likely to desert. Disrupted family background is also a vital reason for children to join armed group during war. Orphans, children that have separated from family as a result of divorce or separation of the parents or willingly separated. These groups have the tendency of metamorphosis into street boys which therefore become instrument in the hand of armed groups in war time (Faulkner, 2001). War and Conflict also serve as means of recruiting children into soldiers. War breeds refugees and internally displaced persons which their various camp become a recruiting ground of children into combatants. Numerous number of children living in refugees or internally displaced persons camp are vulnerable to child soldier (Faulkner, 2001). Positive reward and incentive is another major reason for joining armed groups: Promises of money, security, adventure, forms of belonging, desired to become famous and admired has make some children to willingly join the armed group (Redress, 2006). To some is a desire for revenge, there are boys who had willingly joined the opposition forces out of a desire to avenge the killings of their loved one at the beginning of the conflict (Human Rights Watch, 2015).

Effects of Involvement of Children in War

The rate at which armed groups recruit children to fight in war is worrisome with untold consequences. It effect transcends personal injury of the victims and affect families and the society as whole. Few of the effects are discussed underneath.

1. **Drug Abuse**: Systematic taking of drugs to induce the children to do what they might not have ordinarily done is mostly common in West Africa. Drug controls children in war, it makes them to act courageously, ultra-violently and fearlessly. The excess of this drug affect them after the war thereby becomes emotional burden (Schauer, 2009). It can also make children to be addicted consistently demanding for excessive drug (Nkememena, 2009).
2. **Mental Health Problem**: Unpleasant experiences children have during war make them upset or unhappy thereby lead to traumatic stress. Children undergo worse process during and after their recruitment. Some are forced to have sex, keep in captivity, beating and negative experience of war. These combined together become issue of health and spiritual unbalanced for children (Hear, 2018).
3. **Depression and Suicidality**: Depression can develop from mental problem of former child soldier when the challenges persist more than expected. The state of depression can later metamorphosis into suicidal (Schauer, 2009).
4. **Economic Consequence**: Children recruited into soldier constitute skill and production stage of the economy. Their engagement in war is a big lost to economy and national development. Majority of them after the war becomes burden to the government as they are hardly employable. This affect the workforce which negatively affect sustainable development of their various countries (Aisedion and Edoghogho, 2021).

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5. **Education Consequence:** Children are denied the rights to basic education as they spend most of their childhood and preparative time in warfront. Child soldier contributes to low enrolment in school and increases high drop outs. These directly increase the ratio of illiteracy among the young ones (Haer, 2018).
6. **Prolong War**: Child soldier with their strength increases the strength of rebel organisation as well as that of government thereby prolong the war more than expected (Haer, 2018). The prolonging increases the causality of citizenry and cause damages to economy of the affected nations.
7. **Risk of Conflict Reoccurrence**: Failure of adequate and successful Disarmament, Demobilisation, Reintegration and Reintegration (DDRR) of child soldier pose a threat to peace and tranquility of the affected state (Haer, 2018). The ratio for former child soldier to return to war is high due to the availability of weapons to prosecute war.
8. **Crime Promotion**: In addition to above, failure of government to properly rehabilitate the former child soldier with economic empowerment programme can lead them to vices such as armed robbery, drug trafficking, burglary, kidnapping and other vices (Nkememena, 2009). They can as well join terrorist group.

3. CONCLUSION

The issue of child solder has featured on the international peace and security agenda due to involvement of almost all the countries who immerse in one form of arm conflict or the others. Recruitment and deployment of children younger than fifteen years of age is classified as a war crime for the ICC. Compulsory recruitment or conscription by States of persons younger than eighteen years old is now forbidden. A global agreement emerged to end the impunity of those committing crimes against children and to include serious violations of children rights in truth seeking processes. Despite all these positive development, scores of children are still recruited and used for military purposes, and perpetrators are not hold accountable. There is clearly a need to move from lawmaking, program development, and training to monitoring, reporting and law enforcement.

Recommendations

Having took a critical evaluation on child soldier in global community and it been established as a crime against humanity. Following recommendations are put forward for policy implementation:

1. Governments, who have not done so yet, should be urged to sign and respect all relevant international legal instruments put in place to prevent recruitment and use of child soldier. Non-state actors must be held accountable to the same standards of respecting international legal instruments
2. Specialized agency should be established, with qualified staff ensuring reliable data on the situation of children, including child soldier. Their reports should be shared among relevant agencies, networks and institutions and used for joint planning and implementation of child focused short- and long-term interventions. The issuing of birth registration and discharge documents is also crucial to prevent recruitment.

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3. The concerns of children affected by armed conflict, including child soldier, should be mainstreamed in humanitarian interventions and diplomatic activities from UN entities and regional and national bodies.
4. Awareness raising, access to education and vocational training opportunities, and assistance with job-placement should be invigorated
5. Demilitarization, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration of former child soldier should involve the family and community of the child. Gender sensitive initiatives for girls affected by sexual exploitation and violence, should be developed and implemented as part of DDRR program.
6. Perpetrators of crimes against children should be held accountable and brought to national or international courts. National laws should be in line with international humanitarian law, human rights law and customary law.

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