A Discourse on the Phenomenon of Child Soldiering During the Sierra Leone Civil War.

Asma’u Isyaku Dutse1,2, Che Mohd Aziz bin Yaacob2, Mohammad Syafi’i Anwar2
1General Studies Department
Federal University Dutse,
Jigawa State, Nigeria.
2School of International Studies,
Universiti Utara Malaysia, Malaysia.

Abstract: The Sierra Leone civil war which began on 23rd March 1991 and ended on January 18, 2002, started when Revolutionary United Front and Charles Taylors National Patriotic Front of Liberia attempted to overthrow the government of Joseph Momoh. This has led to a bloody civil war which lasted for 11 years resulting in the death of over 50,000 people. The Rebel group had to resort to coercing youths and children to join the rebels, who became soldiers despite being in their tender age. The study explores the phenomenon of child soldiers during the Sierra Leone civil war.

Keywords: Child soldiers, Sierra Leone, Conflict, and War.

1.0 Introduction

In a universe that is more advanced, why do we in spite of everything still have the brutal problem of child soldiering? The answer to the problem is that people in power benefit from this abuse and exploitation. These people in authority do not use children in conflict as a final option, but because they are persuadable and cheap. They remain easy to manipulate. The problem of child soldiers is a part of the historical background of all human developments. In the European, Middle Ages, young boys from the high civilization relied upon to serve as “Squires” and get to be adventurers. From the time, these young men have trained the obligations of a knight also, for fighting abilities. The historical background of child soldiers found for, example, “infantry, the Italians called the child soldiers taking after the knights by walking Infante, which means child. Another verifiable illustration incorporates the "children’s campaign" of 1212, divisions of young men in the armed forces of Napoleon, and child soldiers utilized by the Nazis during the Second World War (Vautravers, 2008). While the issue exists in a few Asian nations, Latin America, Europe, and the Middle East, it is most predominant in Africa (Human Rights Watch, 2004).

In spite of a close general judgment from the global group (UNICEF, 2003) the utilization of child soldiers remains a continuous reality in numerous armed conflicts. The 2008 Child Soldiers Global Report the abduction and powerful enrollment of children (both girls and boys) into government powers and armed gatherings in no less than 86 nations to date (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2008). Since 2001, conflicts in Africa have included the enrollment of children into military and armed gatherings incorporating wars in Angola, in spite of a close general judgment from the global group (UNICEF, 2003) the utilization of child soldiers remains a continuous reality in numerous armed conflicts. The 2008 Child Soldiers Global Report the abduction and powerful enrollment of children (both girls and boys) into government powers and armed gatherings in no less than 86 nations to date (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2008). Since 2001, conflicts in Africa have included the enrollment of children into military and armed gatherings incorporating wars in Angola, Burundi, the Central African Republic, Chad, Cote d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Guinea, Liberia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, and northern Uganda (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2004, 2008).

Child soldiers incorporate girls and boys, many whom are not fighters but rather utilized as a part of different ways. Consequently, the 2007 Paris Principles set up the meaning of a child associated with an armed gathering as “any individual beneath 18 years old who is or who has been enrolled or utilized by an armed group in any way including however not restricted to children. Girls and boys, used as warriors, cooks, door attendants, errand people, spies or for sexual purposes. It doesn’t just allude to a child who is taking or has taken an immediate part in dangers” (UNICEF, 2007, p. 7). The Paris Principles and other policy endeavors have enlightened the child protection and reintegration issues vital to addressing the problem of child soldiers all universally.

Sierra Leone is a nation on the west coast of the African continent, which experienced the problem of child soldiers. The Sierra Leone civil war lasted for a decade from 1991-2002. At present, Sierra Leone is yet battling with the legacy of the civil war including the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), the Sierra Leonean Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), the Sierra Leone Army (SLA), and local gatherings like the Civil Defense Forces (CDF). This bloody civil war
prompted to human rights misuse, including mass mutilations and the unavoidable utilization of children in armed conflict. A great number child, some as youthful as seven years of age, were recruited into battling forces and paramilitary gatherings (Betancourt, Simmons, et al., 2008; The World Revolution, 2001). Numerous girls and boys were dehumanized into submission, drugged and after that compelled to battle on the bleeding edges of combat; other people who did not fight filled in as cooks, door attendants, messengers, guards, human shields, bush wives or guards.

While most indicate abducting as their purpose of the passageway into their role as child soldiers (McKay & Mazurana, 2004), a few children may have adopted a more dynamic part in their choice to take an interest in armed conflict clash. The breakdown of community and family's framework, combined with deficient educational opportunities, left numerous children with constrained reasonable alternatives for the future (Ashby, 2002). Thus, a militia gathering's guarantee of experience, security, and fellowship drove some to turn to enrollment into armed groups as their best among the most noticeably awful of choices (Machel, 2001; Peters and Richards, 1998; Shepler, 2005).

Subsequently, of their inclusion with military and armed gatherings, many adolescents were witnesses and additionally culprits of extreme physical viciousness, including immediate executions and death squad killings, torment, detainment, assault, bombings, forced displacement, destruction of homes, and murder of relatives. They were denied their rights to the care and protection of their families and denied education and other developmental opportunities.

The objective of the paper is to provide a discourse of the phenomenon of child soldiering during the Sierra Leone civil war. Looking at the role played by child soldiers in the conflict and its impact on the war in general.

2.0 Methodology

This paper utilizes secondary sources of data for the research; this includes journals, relevant books, periodicals, newspapers reports, internet sources, government releases, and pronouncement.

3.0 Concept of Child Soldiers

Emphasis on the causes of child soldiers, that is, those reasons leading to child conscription were the socioeconomic factors such as low pay levels and a plenitude of children (Singer, 2006; 2010; Tynes, 2011). Other factors were conflict qualities, longer conflict length or more elevated amounts of brutality and the way that children are more effortlessly constrained and indoctrinated may make it more probable that child soldiering happens during battle (Achvarina & Reich, 2010; Beber & Blattman, 2013; Blattman & Annan, 2010; Brett & Specht, 2004; Reich, 2005). Therefore, from the above discussion, the scholarly argument is adequate as to the causes of child soldiering are the less privileged children may be vulnerable due to their socio-economic factors. Deprived of nourishment or primary wealth for existence, children turned off to the RUF for sustenance as well as the RUF saw children as superfuzzles and easy to control. Consequently, the results of children enlistment amid war for post-conflict security appears to be astonishing since global associations, the media, policymakers and other public sources regularly underline the conceivably very adverse effect that child soldiering may have on social orders once a war is over (Blattman & Annan, 2010). The United Nations Children's Fund fears that previous child soldiers may turn into a 'lost era,' which is probably going to be excessively irritated, making it impossible to work in a post-conflict environment (UNICEF, 2013). The above stated scholarly argument of (Achvarina & Reich, 2010; Beber & Blattman, 2013; Blattman & Annan, 2010; Brett & Specht, 2004; Reich & Achvarina, 2005). Child soldiers may turn into lost era; this is because presently former child soldiers are still leaving with the pains and consequences of war.

4.0 Child Soldiers and Sierra Leone Conflict.

This study connects to Sierra Leone's history of inter-ethnic tensions and political corruption to the growth of the RUF (Woods & Timothy 2010). Furthermore, the occurrence of young persons in Sierra Leone and the easiness in influencing children to fight as causes for the RUF's utilizing of child soldiers (TRC, 2002). Therefore, the above findings on the inter-ethnic tension and political corruption in Sierra Leone is a major reason for under development to their adverse consequences on public goods. The Temne ethnic groups dominate and control most of the affairs of government. Consequently, Children remained abundant resources for the RUF to utilize to fight, with fifty-five percent of the populace of Sierra Leone under the age of eighteen top up towards the civil war. Children only changed into combatants when the RUF killed off adult populations of the rural community they plundered (Vellaccio, 2015). Also, to the find scholarly findings, I agree there is a correlation in the results as poor economic circumstances, like Sierra Leone throughout the history leading up to as well as throughout the civil war, leading to revolts are a significant factor in conducting a guerrilla war high enough to tumble a legal regime.
There are several studies conducted on resources and violence, greed and grievance in Sierra Leone. Bringing up that ‘institutional failure, and not criminal ‘greed’ ought to be viewed as the engine of violence. Both at the level of the state (Keen, 2005; Acemoglu, Osafo-Kwaako, & Robinson, 2014; Fanthorpe & Maconachie, 2010; Mokuwa, Voors, Bulte, and Richards, 2011). In their findings on resource and governance. Sierra Leone includes an all-around recorded checkered history regarding unaccountable leadership, corruption, and policy making that is a long way from comprehension. Therefore, from the above arguments, there are adequate findings because Sierra Leone seems to offer support for both the administration and resource point of view on the conflict. Rebellious groups remain more suitable to utilize young boys as child soldiers as they do not have the monetary incomes to pay adult soldiers. More so, children are likely to become soldiers in poorer countries. Consequently, in the findings inequality in education, opportunity, and health among the Sierra Leonean youth for the reason that of internal and external factors such as failed government infrastructure and Colonialism, which steered to severe conditions and instability for the RUF to beginning the civil war (Riddle, 1985). In line with these reviews, I would like to propose that education interrelates to the occurrence of child soldiers in the conflict. Poorer educational ranks create young boys extra vulnerable to fighting in battle because they have little positive exits and little psychological growth to save them as of conscientiously deciding to fight. Sierra Leone has deprived economy likewise create fighting for rebellious group economically attractive. If a nation’s government cannot reimburse their armed forces or help with relieving poverty, fighting for a rebellious gathering can remain an appealing option for men that need to make incomes.

The outcomes of the beginning and personality of the Revolutionary United Front/Sierra Leone origin and associations with the Pan African Union were from the early 1940s, beneath a renowned Sierra Leonean Pan-Africanist. The child soldiers remained between the ages of seven to fourteen, and that they consist of forty to fifty percent of the RUF’s overall force. The RUF is conscripting methods like cutting rebellious initials into children by way of stigmatization (Abdullah, 1998). Consequently, there is a correlation with the findings of (Ramgoolie’s, 2001). The findings show that eighty percent of the child soldiers remained amongst the years of seven to fourteen, as well as they included forty to fifty percent of the RUF’s aggregate power. The RUF enforced, children to combat and thus, child soldiers ought to be suspended from the legal power of universal courts. However, from the discussion of scholars (Abdullah, 1998; Ramgoolie’s, 2001). I agree that children were not matured enough to comprehend the effect of their acts, particularly whereas drugged. The RUF exactly aimed at children during the civil war to utilize as combatants and sex slaves because children are easy to manipulate. The nature of conflict criminalities committed during the conflict as well as the mindset of child soldiers. The RUF’s killing adult village dweller generates a sense of desperation that influenced children to fight. Medications dead child soldiers and trust them to commit atrocities on the Frontline (Beah, 2007). Therefore, from the above outcomes, I would like to submit that children were under the influence of drugs conscripted into fighting because of their immaturity makes better fighters and are less likely to ask questions. Inversely, (Faulker, 2001) ascribed a rise in child soldiers through conflict was as the result of conflicts distressing civilian populations as wars change from conventional warfare to conflict in failed states. Rather than drug addiction and immaturity of the Child soldiers. Therefore, in my view from the above results the coming of cheap and easy to operate weaponry methods like the AK-47, guerilla gatherings can train and provide children to fight.

Furthermore, Denov, (2010). On Child Soldiers in Sierra Leone. The result of the findings of conflict was through the lenses of both structuralism and agency. On the structuralist perspective, child soldiers developed from Sierra Leone colonization and failed state position that permitted the RUF to coerce children, illiterate and vulnerable to fight. Therefore, about the above scholarly findings, I agree that Children from failed states are most prone to the forceful conscription to fight because they are poorly educated, deprived socio-economically, detached from family members, and perhaps internally displaced. However, in the instance of the RUF’s utilizing of child soldiers, children, complemented these personalities and remained casualty to the RUF’s guerilla warfare crusade. Conflict a “new” war based on aspirations held up by rebellious groups for the determinations of riches (Richards, 2004). The result of the findings that the abandoned and young were socially rejected, which prompted a feeling of isolation and forced several to get plea with the RUF’s grounds. His findings point out that some child soldiers in the RUF turn out to be ardent followers to the reason as well as that the gathering took on a “children’s crusade” personal identity. Therefore, the utilization of child soldiers, even though cruel, was systematic. This impression shows into comprehension the powers that moved the governance of the RUF to the use child soldiers. The RUF’s management chose child soldiers, rather than utilizing them as a final option.
Consequently, concerning new civil wars such as conflicts struggled for “loot seeking” as well as old civil wars as wars struggled for “justice seeking” ends. A shared opinion of African conflict is the thefting characteristic otherwise the fighter gang constituent, whereby gatherings try to seize control of administrating wealth for their benefit. His findings state that even though the RUF was an outside group, their utilization of viciousness was intentional and organized (Kalyvas, 2001). Similarly, I agree with the above scholarly discussion because of the use of child soldiers on behalf of the RUF such as a deliberate arrangement, particularly in the initial stage of the guerilla war. The RUF believed children would become excellent combatants. Reviewing the governance of the RUF leading to the assumption that there existed rational importance between their leadership eventually rejecting the impression that this was only a criminal system. Because of the RUF utilization of child to fight the war. This thesis seeks to examine the reason for the conscription of children to fight the war.

5.0 Conclusion
The research concludes the issue of child soldiers was instrumental in helping the rebels during the war; this is because the youths are easily coerced to join various rebel groups in the country, and the impact of these was the abuse of children rights as enshrined in different conventions. Factors such poverty, low education standards, poor health standards among other were said to have contributed to the recruitment of the children’s during the war.

References


