



Global Policy vs. Local Reality: Resolutions Implementation and Challenges for Child Protection in Armed Conflicts

**Muhammad Fajhriyadi Hastira^{1*}, Dewi Sartika², A. Aliyah Ahmad³,
Ali Muhammad⁴**

^{1,4}Universitas Muhammdiyah Yogyakarta, ^{2,3}Universitas Hasanuddin
m.fajhriyadi.psc24@mail.umy.ac.id¹, dwsrtkan@gmail.com²,
aliyahahmad911@gmail.com³, alimuhammad@umy.ac.id⁴

Abstract: This study examines the effectiveness of United Nations Security Council (UNSC) child protection policies, focusing on Resolutions 1612 (2005) and 2764 (2024), and identifies key barriers to their implementation. Adopting a qualitative analytical approach, the research utilizes secondary sources, including UNSC documents, UN Secretary-General reports, UNICEF publications, and peer-reviewed studies. The findings indicate that, despite the UNSC's commitment to addressing grave violations against children in armed conflict, the implementation of its resolutions remains hindered by resistance to external intervention, political bargaining among permanent members, geopolitical rivalries, and institutional constraints within the UNSC itself. Through thematic analysis, this study highlights how the competing interests of permanent members significantly shape the outcomes of child protection efforts, thereby limiting policy effectiveness. By situating these challenges within broader debates on international governance, the research contributes to a deeper understanding of the structural and political dynamics that condition the UNSC's role in safeguarding children in conflict settings.

Keywords: *Children in armed conflict, Peace, Human Security, UNSC Resolutions.*

Abstrak: Penelitian ini mengkaji efektivitas kebijakan perlindungan anak yang diadopsi Dewan Keamanan Perserikatan Bangsa-Bangsa (DK PBB), dengan fokus pada Resolusi 1612 (2005) dan 2764 (2024), serta mengidentifikasi hambatan utama dalam implementasinya. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif-analitis, penelitian ini memanfaatkan data sekunder dari dokumen resmi DK PBB, laporan Sekretaris Jenderal PBB, publikasi UNICEF, dan studi akademik terpublikasi. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa meskipun DK PBB berkomitmen menangani pelanggaran berat terhadap anak dalam konflik bersenjata, implementasi resolusinya masih terhambat oleh penolakan terhadap intervensi eksternal, kompromi politik di antara anggota tetap, rivalitas geopolitik, serta keterbatasan institusional dalam tubuh DK PBB itu sendiri. Melalui analisis tematik, penelitian ini menyoroti bagaimana kepentingan yang saling bersaing di antara anggota tetap secara signifikan membentuk hasil upaya perlindungan anak, sehingga membatasi efektivitas kebijakan. Dengan menempatkan tantangan ini dalam perdebatan yang lebih luas tentang tata kelola internasional, penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi terhadap pemahaman yang lebih mendalam mengenai dinamika struktural dan politik yang mempengaruhi peran DK PBB dalam melindungi anak di wilayah konflik.

Kata Kunci: *Anak dalam konflik bersenjata, Perdamaian, Keamanan Manusia, Resolusi UNSC.*

INTRODUCTION

This study examines the dynamics of efforts undertaken by the permanent member states of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to address the involvement of children in armed conflict through a series of adopted resolutions. Armed conflict constitutes one of the most pressing challenges to global peace, and its gravest consequences are borne by vulnerable groups, particularly children. By analyzing the political, institutional, and geopolitical factors that shape the implementation of child protection policies, this study highlights the complexities that hinder the effectiveness of UNSC resolutions. In doing so, it highlights the crucial role

of permanent members in shaping both the scope and limitations of international initiatives aimed at safeguarding children in conflict settings. (Pakekong et al., 2023).

In recent decades, conflicts involving both state and non-state actors have become increasingly widespread, resulting in the deprivation of children's fundamental rights, including access to education, health, and protection. These children are often caught up in violence, experience prolonged trauma, and are even forced to become part of armed groups as combatants, spies, or couriers (General Assembly Security Council, 2023). According to a United Nations report, by 2022, approximately 468 million children, constituting 18.8% of the global child population, will reside in conflict zones, with Africa and the Middle East being the most affected regions (Ostby et al., 2023). Of these, approximately 96 million children are in high-conflict intensity areas, where at least 100 people perish due to violence within a 50-kilometer radius. This condition not only deprives them of their childhood but also endangers their future, thereby necessitating more assertive and structured international interventions (Kadir et al., 2019; Slone & Mann, 2016).

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC), as the principal body responsible for maintaining international peace and security, has introduced a range of policies aimed at safeguarding children in situations of armed conflict. A significant milestone was the adoption of Resolution 1612 in 2005, which established the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) to oversee six grave violations against children, including forced recruitment, killing, and sexual violence. (Marasabessy et al., 2023). This mechanism facilitates collaboration between the UNSC and international agencies, such as UNICEF, in collecting data, advocating for child protection, and recommending actions against armed actors who violate children's rights. Nevertheless, although these resolutions represent normatively significant

milestones, their implementation continues to encounter considerable challenges. These include restricted access to conflict zones, weak enforcement of sanctions, and the predominance of the political interests of UNSC permanent members, which frequently obstruct timely and effective decision-making. (Bode, 2018).

In addition to UNSC resolutions, international legal instruments such as the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and its 2000 Optional Protocol provide an important legal foundation for protecting children from involvement in armed conflict. Article 38 of the CRC emphasizes the obligation of state parties to safeguard children from direct participation in hostilities and affirms their right to physical and psychological recovery in post-conflict settings. (MacPherson, 1989; Todres et al., 2009). Despite the fact that the KHA has been ratified by nearly all countries worldwide, its implementation on the ground remains significantly deficient. Numerous countries grappling with armed conflict are unable to enforce child protection policies, while non-state armed groups frequently disregard international legal standards with impunity (Hamin et al., 2022).

Research indicates that despite the adoption of various international policies, systematic violations of children's rights in armed conflict persist, leaving children vulnerable to long-term trauma that hinders reintegration (Ostby et al., 2023). Effective rehabilitation requires inter-agency collaboration, as highlighted by John (2014), with UNICEF and the Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict providing psychosocial, educational, and reintegration programs, though these efforts often face political and structural constraints (Bode, 2018). This study applies the Human Security framework, which emphasizes freedom from fear and want (Burd-Sharps et al., 2016; Hanlon & Christie, 2016; Ostby et al., 2023), alongside Institutionalism theory, which explains how UNSC dynamics and

geopolitical interests shape the formulation and implementation of child protection measures (Bode, 2018; Marrone, 2013).

This research assesses the effectiveness of UNSC child protection policies, with a focus on Resolution 1612, while examining obstacles such as geopolitics, monitoring limitations, and internal politics. It explores opportunities to strengthen cooperation with international institutions and civil society, integrating instruments like the CRC into sustainable policies. Using Human Security and Institutionalism perspectives, the study offers academic and policy contributions to enhance child protection in conflict. It also highlights women's empowerment as vital for inclusive and lasting peace, encouraging policies that position women as genuine agents of change.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive-analytical approach to examine the implementation of UNSC child protection policies, particularly Resolution 1612, through the analysis of secondary data. The findings reveal that while these policies establish important frameworks, their effectiveness is constrained by geopolitical interests, limited monitoring capacity, and internal institutional dynamics. By applying the perspectives of Human Security and Institutionalism, the study highlights the need to strengthen cooperation between the UNSC, international organizations, and civil society, alongside integrating instruments such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It further emphasizes that women's empowerment is central to inclusive and sustainable peacebuilding, underscoring the importance of political commitment, institutional reform, and adaptive strategies to bridge the gap between global frameworks and local realities in child protection during armed conflict.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Dynamics of Efforts to Resolve Child Involvement in Armed Conflict by Permanent Members of the UN Security Council

The resolution of child involvement in armed conflict is a matter that falls under the purview of the UN Security Council, which is entrusted with the responsibility of maintaining peace and enforcing the rules in the conflict arena. However, the dynamics of efforts to resolve child involvement in armed conflict have historically been primarily managed by UNICEF, a UN entity entrusted with implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child. A notable illustration of this role is UNICEF's involvement in disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programs, which are instrumental in the rehabilitation and reintegration of former combatants. Child soldiers coupled with a significant humanitarian response in the midst of a global crisis. This is evidenced by data from 2024, which shows that more than 473 million children live in conflict zones (Ayman, 2020; Howe & Covell, 2024; UNICEF Middle East and North Africa, 2022). Recent data also revealed 32,990 serious violations against children in 2023, highlighting enforcement challenges and the gap between normative frameworks and conditions on the ground (Watchlist, 2024).

Nevertheless, the UN Security Council has taken strategic steps through resolutions such as Resolution 1612 (2005), which established a "list of shame" mechanism to monitor and act on violations against children in armed conflict (Watchlist, 2024). Additionally, Resolution 2764 (2024) underscored the imperative for ongoing child protection and accountability in conflict zones (ReliefWeb, 2024; UNICEF, 2013; United Nations, 2024). Since 1999, a series of resolutions have established a normative framework covering aspects of child soldier recruitment, sexual violence, and attacks on vital facilities such as schools and hospitals (Schultheis, 2008; Watchlist, 2024). It can be posited that the efforts of the UN Security Council, through its

permanent members, to address the involvement of children in armed conflict have reflected the intricacies of the interplay between the international normative framework and its implementation on the ground (Kahl & Davis-Kahl, 2010).

For instance, within the council's membership, each permanent member (the P5) exhibits a distinct approach underpinned by national and geopolitical interests. The United States, for instance, has consistently underscored the imperative for decisive action against child rights violations through the imposition of international sanctions and the enhancement of monitoring mechanisms. This commitment is exemplified by its endorsement of the "Children, Not Soldiers" initiative (Watchlist, 2024). The United States also tends to support resolutions related to child protection and seeks to strengthen monitoring mechanisms through financial and technical support. However, its policies regarding the handling of conflicts in several regions, such as Afghanistan, are controversial. The United States has been criticized for detaining children as "enemy combatants," reflecting an apparent ambivalence between a commitment to child protection and the more pragmatic realities of national security policy. This has often resulted in imbalances in the implementation of established international policies (Bode, 2018)

Conversely, Russia has historically tended to oppose external interventions that are regarded as encroaching upon national sovereignty. This proclivity has led Russia to frequently exercise its veto power to impede resolutions that are considered potentially harmful to its allies, thereby hindering collective initiatives aimed at safeguarding children (IISS, 2018). A notable illustration of this dynamic can be observed in Russia's consistent avoidance of accountability for abuses perpetrated in conflict zones; a phenomenon in the attacks on schools and hospitals in Ukraine has been

exemplified. The consistent use of the veto by Russia to block resolutions that condemn its actions indicates a prioritization of national political interests over universal child protection. This dynamic underscores the inherent internal conflicts within the UNSC that impede a collective response to child rights violations (Marasabessy et al., 2023).

In contrast, China's approach to child protection involves the promotion of international cooperation and the implementation of post-conflict rehabilitation programs. However, China maintains a cautious stance regarding potential political intervention, as reported by Antara News (2024). China also avoids measures that could be perceived as direct pressure on other countries, a strategy that reflects its efforts to balance support for global initiatives with the protection of its domestic interests and strategic bilateral relationships (Antara News, 2024; John, 2014).

Meanwhile, the United Kingdom and France have demonstrated a more substantial commitment to promoting the child protection agenda on the global stage. For instance, the two nations have been actively promoting the "Children and Armed Conflict" agenda through efforts to strengthen the international legal framework and impose sanctions on grave violations, thereby demonstrating their commitment to minimizing the impact of armed conflict on children (Watchlist, 2024). The two nations have played an active role in the formulation and adoption of resolutions that underscore the necessity to fortify monitoring mechanisms and enhance transparency in reporting violations. Their proactive approach encompasses not only support for international initiatives but also direct engagement in diplomatic endeavors to surmount obstacles impeding policy implementation, thereby making substantial contributions to policy reformulation at the UNSC (Kadir et al., 2019; Slone & Mann, 2016)

The UN Security Council has established a normative framework to address child involvement in armed conflict through resolutions such as 1612 and 2764, as well as the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM). While these instruments provide a foundation for policy-making, their effectiveness is undermined by structural and political barriers, including veto power, divergent geopolitical interests, limited access to conflict zones, and weak monitoring capacity. These internal dynamics often delay decision-making and weaken the implementation of child protection measures, creating a persistent gap between global policy frameworks and realities on the ground. This study concludes that the effectiveness of child protection in armed conflict depends not only on comprehensive international legal instruments but also on strong political commitment, effective resource allocation, and cross-sectoral coordination to ensure timely and decisive responses.

In accordance with the precepts of Human Security theory, the implementation of child protection policies in conflict zones must encompass both normative aspects and operational capabilities to ensure their practical realization. This theoretical framework underscores the imperative for safeguarding every individual, particularly vulnerable groups such as children, from the perils of violence and hunger. However, the implementation of these policies is often hindered by operational constraints and a lack of resource support, impeding the realization of the principles of Human Security (Bode, 2018). The Institutionalism perspective elucidates how internal dynamics within institutional structures and the interplay of political interests among member states can impede the effectiveness of child protection policies. The Security Council's decision-making process, rife with political compromise and the use of veto power, underscores the challenges in achieving an international consensus to protect children in armed conflict, often due to conflicting national interests. This highlights the multifaceted nature of policy success,

suggesting that it is influenced not only by the normative legal framework but also by political commitment and operational alignment among international institutions (Marasabessy et al., 2023).

In line with previous research, this finding shows that despite progress in the international legal framework, operational and political challenges significantly hinder the achievement of optimal child protection. Comparisons with prior studies substantiate that institutional constraints and political interventions are predominant factors that diminish the efficacy of policy implementation. Consequently, enhancing coordination and collective commitment among member states, in conjunction with bolstering operational capacity at the local level, is paramount in addressing the issue of child involvement in armed conflict (Ostby et al., 2023; Slone & Mann, 2016). Moreover, this research underscores the necessity to reformulate implementation strategies through enhanced coordination between international and local institutions and more adequate resource allocation. Enhanced monitoring capacity, transparency in reporting, and proper funding are identified as pivotal in overcoming existing obstacles. Additionally, the integration of a gender perspective in every child protection strategy is emphasized, given the potential of the symbolic role of women in peace efforts to serve as a significant supporting factor if fully optimized (John, 2014; Kadir et al., 2019).

Implementation Challenges of UN Security Council Resolutions on Resolving Child Involvement in Armed Conflicts

The initial UN Security Council resolution addressing the involvement of children in armed conflict was adopted in 2005 through Resolution 1612. It was followed in 2024 by Resolution 2764 (Nations, 2024; Watchlist, 2024). The purpose of both resolutions was to establish a Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) and ongoing protection

standards with the objective of safeguarding children involved in armed conflict (Nations, 2024). However, despite the theoretical idealism of these normative frameworks, their implementation on the ground is fraught with significant challenges. From a human security perspective, the concept of freedom from fear is paramount, ensuring that children are not subjected to direct violence. Meanwhile, the idea of freedom from want underscores the imperative to address factors such as poverty and social inequality, which often serve as drivers of child recruitment (Hamin et al., 2022; Nations, 2024).

The intricacy of modern conflicts stands as a primary obstacle to the efficacy of such resolutions, as evidenced by the prevalence of non-state actors, including militias and terrorist groups, that often evade international legal constraints. These actors frequently operate in inaccessible regions, complicating the implementation of established monitoring mechanisms. This dearth of data, in turn, undermines the efficacy of anticipated interventions (Hamin et al., 2022; United Nations, 2024; Wekerle, 2024). Moreover, the discordance between global policies and the realities on the ground is further compounded by the limited national capacities in conflict-affected countries. Numerous countries grapple with constrained resources, including funding, expertise, and infrastructure, hindering their ability to implement reintegration and rehabilitation programs for children embroiled in conflict (Hamin et al., 2022; Nations, 2024; Wekerle, 2024). This limitation contributes to the suboptimal operation of the MRM mechanism, resulting in inadequate documentation of violations of children's rights (Hamin et al., 2022; Slone & Mann, 2016).

Another significant challenge is impunity for perpetrators. While the resolution has set legal standards that require accountability, in practice, child abuses, such as the recruitment of children for conflict, often occur without severe legal consequences. This obstacle is exacerbated by the political and

economic support given by some states to offending parties, thus reducing the deterrent effect expected from the implementation of the resolution. Operational barriers are also a crucial issue in the implementation of resolutions. Limited access to conflict areas, coupled with administrative barriers in those areas, makes data collection and verification of child rights violations extremely challenging. This lack of information has a direct impact on the effectiveness of the MRM in detecting, documenting, and following up on violations, reducing the overall effectiveness of the resolution in protecting children (Bode, 2018; Hamin et al., 2022; Kadir et al., 2019).

The challenges associated with implementing Resolution 1612 in the Democratic Republic of Congo are particularly evident when considering the protracted conflict involving non-state groups, such as the M23, the Allied Democratic Forces, and the Mai-Mai. This conflict has resulted in widespread child recruitment. Despite the establishment of a Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) to identify and document violations, constrained access to conflict zones and the absence of commitment from armed groups (with only a few signing action plans to halt child recruitment) has led to imprecise data collection and negligible implementation of preventive measures (Bodineau, 2015; Report, 2024; Slone & Mann, 2016). Myanmar faces similar challenges, with reports indicating child recruitment by military forces, including the Tatmadaw and various ethnic militias. Despite initiatives such as the Karenni Army's voluntary commitment to reduce recruitment, constraints in verification by UN missions due to limited access further complicate the effectiveness of monitoring mechanisms (ReliefWeb, 2024; UNICEF, 2013). Furthermore, conflict zones in Israel and Palestine are facing an escalation in gross violations of children's rights. Incidents such as attacks on schools and health facilities have been observed, and the complicity of state and non-state

actors, as well as the indifference to international legal norms, have been identified as contributing factors (Cross, 2016; Report, 2024).

Furthermore, the internal structure of the UNSC also contributes to barriers to resolution implementation. The veto power held by the five permanent members of the UNSC is often used to protect their respective national interests, hindering the adoption of stronger collective measures. Differences in geopolitical interests between member states continue to create delays and even failures in the overall implementation of resolutions, which ultimately reduces the effectiveness of protection for children (IISS), 2018; Nations, 2024; United Nations, 2024). This is the case in Ukraine, Palestine, and other conflict areas where permanent UNSC members are involved. In fact, the challenge is even more acute in the transition of UN peacekeeping missions, where child protection responsibilities are often not effectively transferred to national governments or local security teams, as was the case in South Sudan and Mali. This protection vacuum, combined with structural issues such as impunity for perpetrators and limited financial and operational resources, makes child protection efforts even more fragile.

The circumstances in South Sudan, Mali, and other African conflict zones demonstrate the efficacy of a human security theory-based approach, which prioritizes the concepts of "freedom from fear" and "freedom from want." This approach underscores the necessity of safeguarding children from direct violence while also addressing the underlying factors that contribute to poverty and social inequality, which serve as catalysts for child recruitment. While both resolutions have directed efforts to reduce violence against children, in practice, these efforts often focus on security aspects alone, without being accompanied by comprehensive development measures to reduce the socioeconomic vulnerabilities underlying child recruitment (Slone

& Mann, 2016; UNICEF, 2019; United Nations Development Programme, 1994).

The challenges associated with the implementation of Resolutions 1612 and 2764 by the UNSC underscore the discord between normative aspirations and the prevailing circumstances on the ground. A comprehensive strategy reformulation is imperative to surmount these impediments, encompassing not only the augmentation of law enforcement and national resources but also the refinement of the institutional framework of the UNSC, such as the mitigation of the repercussions of the exercise of veto power on humanitarian matters. The integration of the Human Security perspective with institutionalism theory is imperative to formulate a holistic approach that can bridge the gap between global policy and operational conditions and ensure adequate protection for children in armed conflict.

CONCLUSION

This study finds that while UNSC resolutions such as 1612 and 2764 provide important frameworks for child protection in armed conflict, their effectiveness is hindered by geopolitical interests, veto power, weak enforcement, and limited institutional capacity in affected states. By applying Human Security and Institutionalism perspectives, the study emphasizes the need for integrating normative regulations with institutional reform and enhanced coordination between the UNSC, international organizations, and local actors. It also highlights the importance of exploring community-based and non-UN approaches, particularly the role of civil society and non-state actors, to develop adaptive and context-sensitive mechanisms that can more effectively safeguard children in conflict situations.

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