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Child Soldiers' Vulnerability in David Hartness Amani's River

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Abstract

The use of child soldiers in Africa has been an age-long social phenomenon which is far widespread more than the sparse attention it receives. Children as innocent as they are maybe the smallest victims of armed conflict, but are always the recipients of the brunt. During conflicts, children and young people's rights are violated on a massive scale. Their rights to live in dignity and be supported, protected from violence, abuse, neglect and develop to their full potentials are usually impeded. Wars have claimed the lives of many innocent children, displaced several families and have negative impacts on the significant numbers of children participating as active combatants. This study therefore examines child soldiers' vulnerability in David Hartness' *Amani's River*. Using Caruth's aspect of Trauma theory, this paper uncovers the traumatic experiences of child victims, the effects of such experiences on the victims and the coping strategies adopted by them. Findings revealed that traumatic events can provoke emotional and psychological reactions such as hyper-vigilance, jumpiness, intrusive images related to the traumatic events, repeated flashbacks, racing heart and trembling. The study demonstrated that armed conflict victims, as narrators in literary novels, are able to convincingly recount the horrors and agonies of child soldiering. It was recommended that literary writers should use victims to tell their own stories.

Keywords: Africa, Armed Conflict, Child Soldiers, Trauma, Narration, Experience