PEACEKEEPING MISSIONS IN AFRICA: RETROSPECTING ETHICAL DIMENSION OF NIGERIA'S PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS IN LIBERIA AND SIERRA LEONE, 1990-2002

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Abstract

Between 1990 and 2002, Nigeria was crucial in regional peacekeeping missions in Sierra Leone and Liberia, primarily to restore peace and stability in these two countries. There have been ethical questions regarding official engagements by the Nigerian peacekeeping personnel. There were cases of negation of rules of engagement, as well as involvement of the peacekeepers in illegal and corrupt practices. Although there have been studies on Nigeria's peacekeeping operations in Africa, ethical dimension of Nigeria's peacekeeping missions in the two countries has not been given adequate attention. Hence, this study examined sexual exploitation and human right abuses as two critical ethical issues involving Nigeria's peacekeeping troops in Sierra Leone and Liberia. The study employed qualitative-descriptive design and purposive sampling technique where 7 interviewees were selected to participate in a semi-structured interview. The responses of the interviewees were subjected to thematic and content analyses. Secondary data were gathered through review of books, journal articles, archival materials, official reports. Professional Ethics Theory was adopted as a theoretical framework of analysis. According to the findings, there were documented evidences of human rights violations which include: sexual exploitations, extrajudicial killings and abuses against civilians. These situations brought up moral and ethical questions regarding official military engagement and behavioural patterns of the Nigerian peacekeeper in two countries under investigation and Africa in general. The study

therefore concluded that Nigeria played a key role in ending the internal conflicts in the two countries but issues revolving around ethical considerations raised major concerns. The study recommended that Nigeria improves on the training of peacekeepers on international humanitarian law. Peacekeeping missions should prioritize ethical considerations to ensure that peacekeeping operations by the Nigerian troops are carried out in line with globally acceptable standards.

Introduction

Africa as the centerpiece of the Nigeria's foreign policy has influenced the involvement of the country in peacekeeping missions both at the regional and sub-regional levels. In the past, Nigeria had engaged in peacekeeping missions in countries such as Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Mali, and so forth. It has significantly contributed to integrative and peacebuilding initiatives, particularly at the sub-regional level (Morphet, 2002). Despite the significant contributions of Nigerian troops in peacekeeping in West Africa, ethical issues have been raised which more or less complicate their missions. For instance, there have been reports of Nigerian armed forces committing acts of indiscriminate violence, sexual exploitation, illegal executions, and looting. Their responsibility to protect people conflicted with these activities.

In fact, violation of rules of engagement and ethical code of conduct contravene United Nations (UN) peacekeeping norms which provide that:

i. both the host country and the parties involved in the dispute should approve operations.

ii. peacekeepers must maintain their neutrality and refrain from taking sides in the war.

iii. peacekeepers should only use force to defend themselves or to save the lives of those who are in immediate danger.

iv. prevent violations like torture, looting, and exploitation, troops must respect international human rights regulations.

Although soldiers are assigned the responsibility to safeguard and assist vulnerable communities, incidents of rape and sexual exploitation were recorded. According to studies, this scenario has contributed to proliferation of HIV within local populations. Beyond posing as a considerable threat to health of the people, it has undermined the confidence of the local communities in the peacekeepers (Tripodi, 2002). The transmission of HIV/AIDS by peacekeepers, notably Nigerian forces under ECOMOG have been accused of transmission of HIV/AIDS in their West African peacekeeping operations, particularly during the crises in Liberia and Sierra Leone in the 1990s (Roxanne, 2003). The Nigerian Operation Sandstorm was stationed in Sierra Leone for three years, during which the prevalence of HIV-infected soldiers increased in correlation with the duration of the operation: from 7% in the first year to 10% in the second year, and ultimately to 15% in the third year (Roxanne, 2003).

Nigerian peacekeepers were accused of different dimensions of corrupt practices. The UN assessment indicated that the obstruction of

peace initiatives in Sierra Leone was due to Nigerian officers and personnel profiting from illicit diamond trading. Various sources claimed that "the Nigerian army was significantly engaged in diamond trafficking, counterfeit passports, drug smuggling, and other illicit activities." Corrupt administration of peacekeeping finances was also identified as prominent ethical issue. Allowances are frequently postponed or artificially nonexistent. Soldiers complained that remuneration is inadequate compare to the risks involved in the operations (Ferragamo, 2023). When their living conditions are compared to those of senior officers within the peacekeeping missions soldiers conclude that they are subjected to inequitable treatment. They therefore concluded that their leaders are amassing wealth at their expense (Maggie, 2015). In the end, poor living standards of peacekeeper intensified ethical dilemmas, thus, compromised mission objectives was recorded.

Although previous studies have examined the Nigerian peace keeping operations in West Africa, extant literature is yet to adequately interrogate ethical dimension of Nigerian peacekeeping operations in West African states such as Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Mali, respectively. Therefore, this study is poised to examine substantial ethical dilemmas that surrounded Nigeria's peacekeeping missions in the said states. In fact, the study of ethical dimension of peacekeeping operations of the Nigerian armed forces is very crucial because it helps us to strike a balance between upholding international standards, pursuing national interests, and fulfilling moral commitments to defend human rights. Therefore, the study is poised at interrogating ethical issues such as sexual exploitation and human rights abuse; financial corruption; and unofficial exploitation of natural resources in their peacekeeping missions in Liberia and Sierra Leone, respectively.

Theoretical Analysis

Professional Ethics Theory is employed in this study. The theory can be described as a collection of moral guidelines, norms, and standards that direct conduct and judgment in a work setting. These beliefs guarantee that professionals behave honourably, preserve their integrity, and keep the confidence of stakeholders and the general public. In every industry, including business, law, education, medical, and military institutions, professional ethics are crucial to upholding discipline, accountability, and respect. The Deontological ethics which is also described as the duty based ethics explains that ethical actions are based on duties, rules, and moral obligations rather than the consequences. Utilitarianism a branch of the professional ethics theory also explains that the right actions in any situation is the one that maximizes overall happiness or a situation or option that will minimize harm.

Respect for individuals' rights is a commonly accepted ethical norm. It contends that the foundation for respecting an individual based on the rule of law is loyalty, duty, respect, selflessness, service, honour, honesty, and personal bravery. However, the majority of these qualities, such as duty and loyalty, depend on an individual's devotion to a group (Asencio, Byrne, and Mujkic 2017). People are more likely to uphold human rights in practice, for instance, when they acknowledge their shared humanity. According to Snow (2009), emphasizing virtues in moral practice and ethical instruction probably lowers the likelihood of practical acts that are deemed harmful and incompatible with any ethical standard. A shift from war to peacekeeping, peace enforcement, and new military missions during humanitarian interventions are common characteristics of the use of force in armed conflict (Teson 2006). Understanding international law, international humanitarian

law, and international criminal law is evidently an ethical component of the traditional use of force, such as in times of war.

Based on Aristotle's theories, virtue ethics places a strong emphasis on developing moral qualities including courage, fairness, compassion, and integrity as well as excellent character. This ethical framework offers a prism through which to assess the positive and negative aspects of Nigeria's peacekeeping efforts in Sierra Leone and Liberia. The ethical dimension of Nigeria's peacekeeping operations in Liberia and sierra-Leone can be analysed using the virtue ethics of Professional ethics theory and this theory helps in assessing the moral justifications, obligations and challenges faced. First of all, allegations of human rights abuses and corruption by some Nigerian soldiers conflicted with the duty of impartiality. Secondly, there were reports of looting and misconduct by some ECOMOG troops which led to criticisms that the mission caused harm rather than peace. According to reports, several Nigerian peacekeeping teams engaged in a number of unethical practices, such as sexual misbehaviour, exploitation, corruption, and power abuse. Such conduct stands in sharp contrast to the values that are anticipated. From the perspective of virtue ethics, these behaviours show a failure to develop and put into practice virtues like empathy, justice, and integrity. When peacekeepers deviate from these principles, the mission's moral authority is called into question, and confidence between local residents and foreign observers is damaged. Even though many Nigerian soldiers displayed admirable bravery and commitment during their peacekeeping mission in Sierra Leone and Liberia, cases of wrongdoing point to a structural problem where moral virtue development may have been overlooked. By applying virtue ethics to Nigeria's peacekeeping missions in Liberia and Sierra Leone, we can better understand the intricate relationship between moral character on an individual basis and the larger ethical context of military operations.

Method of Data Collection and Analysis

This study made use of the qualitative-descriptive research design and purposive sampling technique to analyse the ethical dimensions of Nigeria's peacekeeping operations in West Africa, with specific focus on Sierra Leone and Liberia. The study made a combination of documentary materials and interview guide. This method ensured a well-rounded study of the ethical dimensions through the collection of primary and secondary data. The descriptive research design provided an overview of the role of the Nigeria's peacekeeping troops and their involvement in peacekeeping missions. The study descriptively analysed their actions and contributions, thereby enabling a deep analytical examination into the impacts of their upholding of ethics in their operations in the two countries. Consequently, the adoption of this research method is appropriate for the study, since it gives the researcher a way to methodically collect, evaluate, and analyse the data in thematic order. The study adopted the purposive sampling technique, as this enabled the study to select a sample of people with the requisite knowledge concerning the research topic. The study chose 7 (seven) interviewees who were selected to participate in a face-to-face semi-structured interview.

Understanding the Concepts: Peacekeeping, Ethics and Ethical Dimension

Peacekeeping refers to the act of ensuring and maintaining peace in nations who are affected by armed conflict, and it involves deploying troops to help stop violence, protect civilians, and ensure political stability. The separation of combatants to maintain peace or establish a cease-fire that both sides may adhere

to is the standard meaning of peacekeeping operations. The term "ethics" refers to well-founded moral principles that dictate what officially assigned peacekeepers should do or not do, in terms of code of conduct, loyalty, honesty, obligations, integrity, justice, rights, and so forth. For instance, ethical standards entail reasonable obligations to abstain from rape, theft, murder, assault, slander, and other crimes (Velasquez, 2015). Within the context of Nigerian peacekeeping operations in Liberia and Sierra Leone, ethical dimension takes into account, the actions of the armed forces that deal with morals, values, and the concepts of right and wrong during peacekeeping missions. It takes into account the moral obligations that define the peacekeepers activities, to know whether they are in line with acceptable standard behaviour. Generally, the moral standards and ideals that direct peacekeepers' behaviour in conflict areas are referred to as the ethical dimension of peacekeeping operations.

The Ethical Dimension of Official Corruption, Sexual Exploitation and Human Rights Abuses

Corruption in the administration of peacekeeping finances appears to be a very important issue in Ghana, Nigeria, and Senegal. Various forms of "protocol" benefits are provided by junior officers to their senior counterparts, either to secure extensions of their duty tours or to gain selection for participation in peacekeeping operations. The most prominent and thoroughly documented instance of corruption in peacekeeping operations involves a Nigerian contingent in Sierra Leone. An internal UN audit study on purported corruption instances explained the significant disparity between the United Nations' articulated principles of peace operations and the actual conditions in conflict zones like Sierra Leone (Aoi, 2007). The UN assessment indicated that the obstruction of peace initiatives in Sierra Leone was due to Nigerian officers and troops whose major interest was in personnel profiting from illicit diamond trading. Various reports claimed that “the Nigerian army was significantly engaged in illicit activities like diamond trafficking, counterfeit passports, drug smuggling, and other illicit activities." At the top of this corruption network was Brigadier-General Maxwell Khobe, the commander of the Nigerian forces in Sierra Leone, who was dubbed "Ten Million Man" who received substantial payments from the Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone (RUF/SL) to facilitate their operations (Aoi, 2007).

Sexual Misconduct as a Possible Unforeseen Effect of Peacekeeping Missions

The book titled: Unintended Consequences of Peacekeeping Operations which Aoi, De Coning edited, Thakur identifies and explains the concept of sexual misconduct and how it has developed into an unintended consequence of peacekeeping missions (Aoi, 2007). The authors argued that although peace operations are essential in international conflict, the post-Cold War shift in focus and the alteration of the role and scope of these missions have subjected the UN to a new series of the term “potential unintended consequences.” Majorly because of the disintegration of law and order in a conflicting state, sexual and gender-based violence is perceived as a consequence of the permissive environment (Aoi, 2007). Socioeconomic infrastructure, and socio-cultural norms in post-conflict societies, where the natural checks and balances that typically mitigate potential adverse effects are lacking. The authors identify this permissive atmosphere as an unplanned outcome of peacekeeping operations. The authors also indicated that although no peacekeeping mission has failed because of this unintended consequence, they have produced but most of these operations conducted by peacekeeping

organisations experienced diminished efficacy as a result of certain unanticipated repercussions (Aning, 1999).

Sexual violence, exploitation, and abuse are serious infringements of the human rights of the victims. Irrespective of the extent of explicit physical force, the victims affected endure significant physical and psychological consequences. Issues like direct injuries to the human body encompass intense pain, infection, and infertility (Keith, 2006). Severe sexual assault can also lead to post traumatic stress disorder. Issues like rape may result in abortion, which is very risky to the victim affected. The psychological ramifications of sexual violence are equally intense (Kathleen, 2008). The surviving victims often endure intense trauma and depression, which might lead to suicide. Most of these victims are infected with sexually transmitted infections, including HIV from peacekeeping troops. A significant number of the population affected by this conflict in West Africa have limited or no access to healthcare or counseling services.

The misconduct of peacekeeping troops fostered by sexual exploitation and abuse undermines the effectiveness of the peacekeeping missions, particularly during conflict. Issues of sexual exploitation and abuse may also represent a break of international humanitarian law and international human rights law (Alex, 2007). A peacekeeping operation does not have the credibility to counsel any government of a state on compliance with international human rights norms and legal or judicial reform if its troops are involved in acts of sexual exploitation and abuse, including rape. Sexual misconduct by peacekeeping forces can render both the individuals, victims, and the mission susceptible to blackmail and violent retribution by these peacekeeping troops, most especially when the conflicting state is lawless. Sexual misbehaviour also elevates the prevalence of medical issues.. Also, the Infants conceived from unions between victims and peacekeepers may encounter stigmatization from their families and communities, which at the end of the day deprives them of economic, social, and emotional support, thereby compelling victims to engage in further exploitative relationships with peacekeepers for survival (Roxanne, 2003).

Contributing Elements to Misconduct in Peacekeeping Operations

The issue of punishing offenders involved in misconduct cannot be overemphasized and it consists of multiple challenges. First of all a significant underlying challenge is the restricted authority that the UN possesses over individual peacekeepers. The United Nations personnel constitute a small fraction of the membership within a peacekeeping deployment in the United Nations. The majority of the peacekeeping troops are usually military personnel who are been provided by troop contributing nations and the UN lacks disciplinary jurisdiction over these troops (United Nations, 2005). These troops work under the authority of their respective national entities and are only accountable to the authority of their nation. Furthermore, in the majority of cases, UN officials have been granted immunity from local jurisdictions and are solely accountable to the national laws of their home countries. Legal statutes in different nations vary, and certain actions may be permitted or ignored in one location while being classified as serious offenses in another region. Peacekeepers also view themselves as immune to prosecution for crimes committed in a state during deployment. When a Troop contributing nation provides peacekeeping troops to the UN, it operates under a memorandum of understanding (MOA) which retains its authority to discipline its personnel. The UN subsequently establishes a status of forces agreement with the host nation where

peacekeepers will be deployed, in which the host government relinquishes jurisdiction over peacekeepers for infractions of its laws (Langholtz, 2019). Consequently, the Troop-contributing nations possess exclusive jurisdiction to discipline their soldiers after misconduct, while the host nation where the peacekeeping troops were deployed lacks any authority or power to punish or pass judgment on peacekeeping troops. The absence of host nation jurisdiction grants these forces de facto immunity from prosecution within the territory where they are deployed. (United Nations, 2008).

A peacekeeping operation may have up to five kinds of personnel, including military personnel, UN volunteers, civilian police, and military observers, each with distinct legal statuses and varying degrees of immunity. Military men, who occupy the major population of peacekeepers, are exclusively under the control of the Troop Contributing Nation. Their grant of actual immunity is confined to actions performed in the course of official duties, although their immunity from local law is absolute. Numerous issues render Troop troop-contributing nations unlikely to assert jurisdiction over their troops, resulting in the impunity of numerous offenses perpetrated by deployed peacekeepers (Gusky, 2021). Troop contributing nation's most of the time refuse to act in accordance with the UN's protocols. Troop Contributing Nations states that the material collected by mission boards of inquiry and previous preliminary investigations is either inadequate under their national legislation for further judicial or court martial procedures or has not been obtained in accordance with their legal requirements (Kazuko, 2023). The Troop Contributing Nations frequently does not receive the complete set of documentation due to a UN policy prohibiting the release of documents that could be utilized against the organisation by other entities. Also, these Peacekeeping operations lack routinely accessible professional people to assist in investigations, and they do not possess an expert prosecutor from the relevant Troop contributing nations to guide the prerequisites for further actions.

The UN has discontinued the previous requirement for troop-contributing nations to pledge jurisdiction over misbehaving troops. The Troop contributing nation possesses the authority, but not the requirement, to contemplate disciplinary measures. If the Troop contributing nations assert their authority to discipline troops who are involved in misconduct abroad, this system will function effectively; nonetheless, troop-contributing nations are unable to genuinely exercise complete jurisdiction over their troops, resulting in numerous offenses of misconducted by deployed peacekeepers remaining unpunished (Askin, 2015). Troop Contributing nations frequently feel shame regarding claims of their troops perpetrating crimes overseas and tend to suppress criminal allegations, which include human trafficking, rape, and pedophilia (United Nations, 2015). Despite Troop Contributing nations being upright and holding their troops accountable for misconduct abroad, they frequently encounter the challenge of inadequacies or incompleteness in criminal investigations against their own troops, or they fail to gather enough evidence in accordance with Troop Contributing nation's law. Secklow and Lauria (2011) explain that several years post-implementation of a zero-tolerance policy for sexual misconduct among its peacekeepers, the United Nations continues to face challenges in compelling member states to investigate and sanction accused troops of misconduct (Defeis, 2011). Interviews and UN documents show that the issue of misconduct continues and is, in fact, increasing. The issue can be attributed to both troop-contributing nations and the United Nations (Fiona, 2015). The performance of Troop Contributing nations in resolving issues of Sexual exploitation and abuse has been

inconsistent (Svoboda, 2023). Numerous troop-contributing nations remain slow and ineffective in implementing the necessary procedures, encompassing both preventative actions which include pre-deployment training, and punitive ones which involve the repatriation of personnel due to misconduct. Troop contributors have been ineffective in acknowledging the need for training and the enforcement of uniform regulations due to cultural disparities in the acceptance of specific behaviours. In 2009, out of 82 inquiries regarding sexually related investigations or their results, only 14 responses were received. A 2007 resolution in the General Assembly prohibits the UN from assuming the primary role in investigating misconduct by peacekeepers; this obligation rests with the Troop-Contributing Countries (TCCs) themselves (Langholtz, 2019).

Analysis of Ethical Sexual Exploitation and Human Rights Abuses

This section is focused on the analysis of sexual exploitation and human rights abuse involving Nigerian peacekeeping troops in Liberia and Sierra Leone. The interview responses were guided by the study objective.

Table 1: Ethical violations by Nigerian troops during the peacekeeping operations in Liberia and Sierra Leone

In an interview with a Researcher in Peacekeeping operations in Nigerian Institute of International Affairs (NIIA) Lagos on (12/12/24), she revealed that:	*"Nigerian troops, primarily working under the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), were accused of ethical transgressions during the peacekeeping missions in Liberia and Sierra Leone (1990–2002). First and foremost, the Nigerian military was charged with carrying out arbitrary killings of alleged rebels and fighters, occasionally without adequate justification or due process. There have been reports of terrible circumstances, torture, and degrading treatment of captives. Thirdly, there have been claims that Nigerian soldiers raped civilians in both Sierra Leone and Liberia.*
In the same vein, an interview with a Senior lecturer in the Department of peace and conflict at Lead City University Ibadan (10/12/24) revealed that:	*"Nigerian troops participated in multiple recorded ethical transgressions during the peacekeeping missions in Sierra Leone (1991–2002) and Liberia (1990–2003). Several concerns were brought up about the actions of certain Nigerian troops during these operations, even if it is crucial to realize that not all of them acted unethically. Nigerian peacekeepers were accused of occasionally using excessive force to keep the peace or quell disturbances. Human rights and the proportionality principle in the use of force were violated as a result. There were reports that eacekeepers abusing and sexually exploiting people, particularly women and children.*
In line with the forgoing responses, an interview conducted with the Head of the Department of Politics and	*"Various Documents and reports clearly shows that Ethics were violated by troops who indulged in sexual*

International Relations at Lead City University Ibadan (10/12/24) revealed that:	*harassment, extortion of the civilian population, and appropriation of private properties of the civilian population for the personal use of the troops."*
Acting head of peace support operations in the Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African State) Commission. (17/12/24), alluded that:	*There were documented and multiple cases of not just only soldiers from Nigeria, soldiers from other countries who were involved in rape, who were involved in looting, among others. So, it's not popular in Nigeria, but it's just unfortunate that there are documented cases against Nigeria majorly because we had the most troops and Nigeria funded the whole operation. Nigerian soldiers did not keep within the ethics and etiquette of peacekeeping during this period".*
An interview with An Associate Consultant at Nextier and a Lecture at the Political Science Department at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Akwa, Nigeria (20/12/24), revealed that	*"In several instances, peacekeepers abused their authority and preyed on the weaknesses of children affected by war, targeting young females for sexual exploitation. Conditions were ideal for exploitation because residents relied on peacekeepers for survival, protection, and sustenance. Many civilians, especially women and children, were left highly vulnerable by the socioeconomic destruction caused by the hostilities.* *"There were reported cases of sex for protection by the troops. There were also reported cases of rape and other forms of sexual harassment by the troops who used their power position and possession of harm to sexually exploit women and girls in the civilian population".*
An Associate Professor in peace and conflict at Lead City University Ibadan (10/12/24) revealed that:	*"The integrity and efficacy of Nigerian peacekeeping forces' missions were severely harmed by the unethical acts they did in Sierra Leone and Liberia during this time.*
An Associate Consultant at Nextier and a Lecture at the Political Science Department at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Akwa, Nigeria (10/12/24), revealed that:	

Source: Interview conducted by the Authors (2025)

Discussion of Findings

Findings revealed that ethical transgressions were present and multiple in the peacekeeping intervention by Nigerian peacekeeping troops in Liberia and Sierra Leone, as they comprised arbitrary killings of alleged rebels and fighters, occasionally without adequate justification or due process, terrible circumstances of torture, and degrading treatment of captives, undue advantage of and raping of civilians in both Sierra Leone and Liberia, sexual exploitation and looting of homes, businesses, and public infrastructure in crisis areas. The abbreviation ECOMOG evolved to mean "every car or moving object gone" because the peacekeepers were so well-known for plundering the nation's resources. Dismantling and selling the Buchanan iron ore plant while it was under ECOMOG troops' control was one of the most obvious thefts committed by the ECOMOG forces. Civilians were occasionally violently attacked by ECOMOG personnel. "They were just as bad as anyone else," one victim stated. Perhaps even more. There is nothing you or anybody else can do to stop them from beating you when they see you (Africa Research Bulletin 1999).

As with any peacekeeping operation, it is evident that no peacekeeping mission can be successful if the intervention force has a stake in the conflict (Bellamy 2005). The distinction is that a peacekeeping mission must preserve "impartiality," and there must be a sincere desire by the majority of parties for peace to be "kept," whereas peace enforcement missions invariably take sides (as do most military operations). There cannot be a peacekeeping mission without these components; only a peace enforcement operation is possible. In addition to killing at least 15,000 people and creating 1.5 million refugees—one-fourth of the nation's population—the conflict in Sierra Leone also resulted in multiple coups and countercoups (Ademola 1995). These findings are consistent with the findings of the UN (2005) and Askin (2015), who affirmed that peacekeeping missions have often been characterized by high levels of unethical practices, which consequently undermine the impact of such missions. There have been numerous reports of ECOMOG's involvement in looting and sporadic harassment or detention of civilians, even though ECOMOG has not been held accountable for systematic human rights abuses in the territory it controls. Nevertheless, there is grave concern regarding the civilian toll and violations of medical neutrality by ECOMOG's air strikes in NPFL territory, and there is no indication that ECOMOG has looked into these incidents (Anderson 1992). An interview by African Watch Liberia revealed that ECOMOG has not sufficiently attempted to control the abusive behaviour of the forces with which it is ostensibly allied to investigate cases of human rights abuses committed by these forces, including killings, beatings, systematic looting, and harassment of civilians(African watch, 1993). This, therefore, implies that civilians and crisis-laden communities have suffered from the unethical conduct of peacekeeping troops, and such activities have often gone unchecked.

This finding is consistent with the research by Aoi (2007), Allais (2011), and Uddin (2014), whose research vehemently condemned all forms of human rights abuse in any peacekeeping operation and further established that Sexual misconduct by humanitarian and peacekeeping workers has a lengthy history, typically manifesting as human trafficking, sexual exploitation, and sexual abuse. This, therefore, implies that such acts have often gone unpunished, which has given rise to more misconduct. Hence, there is a need for more punitive measures to be taken to address these issues. In furtherance, the findings revealed that Nigerian troops took advantage of the dire circumstances faced by women and girls in conflict areas by participating in transactional

sex, as sexual favors were traded for food, cash, or security, especially in camps for displaced people when supplies were few and residents relied on peacekeepers to survive, thereby leading to high numbers of unintended pregnancies leading to ECOMOG babies and sexually transmitted diseases. This finding is consistent with the opinion of Kathleen (2008), Sarah (2005), Roxanne (2003), and Amnesty International (2000), who affirmed that sexual contact is an act of serious misconduct and is, therefore, grounds for disciplinary measures, including summary dismissal. This, therefore, implies that all forms of sexual contact between peacekeeping troops and civilians should not go unpunished.

Conclusion

In tandem with the research objectives and the finding of the study, it is therefore concluded that the effect of sexual exploitation and human rights abuse by the Nigerian peacekeeping troops were sever, leading to creation of ECOMOG babies, the proliferation of gruntles from the civilian population and total distrust in the Nigerian Peacekeeping troops. Furthermore, financial corruption was rife amongst the peacekeepers, ranging from diversion of finances, mis-appropriation of funds, embezzlement of funds, diversion of troops allowance, consequently enabling theft and other financial misconduct, ultimately leading to the further breakdown of law and order in the crisis torn regions. Lastly, the findings further revealed that the involvement of the Nigerian peacekeeping officials in the exploitation of natural resources in Liberia and Sierra Leone were severe and further worsened the conflict. Nigerian troops were involved in timber logging, and diamond trading, which further plunged the country into deeper poverty, increased the breakdown of law and order, and enabled rebel groups to operate and cause the crisis to linger. Consequently the activities of Nigerian peacekeeping troops were necessitated by the corruption in the peacekeeping operation system, coupled with unchecked and unsanctioned behaviours by the peacekeepers and the systems, coupled with the enabling environment that was provided by the conflict. Therefore the ethical dimension of the Nigerian peacekeeping troops in

Liberia and Sierra Leone significantly impacted on the peacekeeping operation and negatively impacted on the integrity of the mission and the trust reposed in the Nigerian peacekeeping troops.

Recommendations

This study sought to assess the ethical dimension of Nigeria's peacekeeping operation in West Africa with specific emphasis on Liberia and Sierra Leone, whilst examining the issues and challenges. In conjunction with the research findings, the following recommendations are made; First of all The Federal Government of Nigeria should place more focus on reforming Nigerian peacekeeping processes by embracing openness, respect for human rights, and the rule of law in all their peacekeeping operations.

The Ministry of Defense and Foreign Affairs should make provision for stronger monitoring procedures, improved resource management, and accountability measures to address these problems and guarantee the integrity of upcoming peacekeeping missions. There is also a need for provision of stronger accountability procedures, openness in financial management, and extensive reforms by the Nigerian Government so as to restore the integrity of peacekeeping operations are all necessary to address these issues.

Lastly the Nigerian government should embrace technologies like body cameras to reduce all forms of unethical behaviours through monitoring.

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