



In the Eye of the Storm: Investigating the Relationship Between the Climate-Conflict Nexus and Child Soldier Recruitment

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Introduction



The Climate-Conflict Nexus

Climate change will exacerbate existing conflicts and increase the likelihood of their occurrence^{1,2}. Two notable mechanisms that act as a conflict multiplier: resource scarcity and the increased displacement of peoples.



The Present Child Soldier Dilemma

The UN estimates that more than 46 states recruit youth under the age of 18 for the armed forces and since 2016, there have been 18 known conflicts involving children³. Child soldiering is one of the most dire and extensive conflict threats today⁴.

Problem Statement

At the crossroads of these crises, it is necessary to take an interdisciplinary approach to consider how climate impacts will influence conflict patterns and vulnerabilities associated with the recruitment of child soldiers.

Research Question

How will the impacts of climate change, specifically drought, affect the recruitment of child soldiers?

- What mechanisms for recruitment are likely to be influenced by climate-related risks?

Methodology

Multivariate regression analysis method with the dependent variable being use of child soldiers in global conflicts between 1987 and 2007 and the key independent variable being drought score.

Data Collection

- Conflict duration, conflict intensity, GDP per capita, education, child population, and child soldier use obtained from Tynes and Early's 2015 dataset with 198 observations¹³.
- Climate change data was represented by drought scores¹⁴. This data is from the Global Drought Observatory database¹⁵.

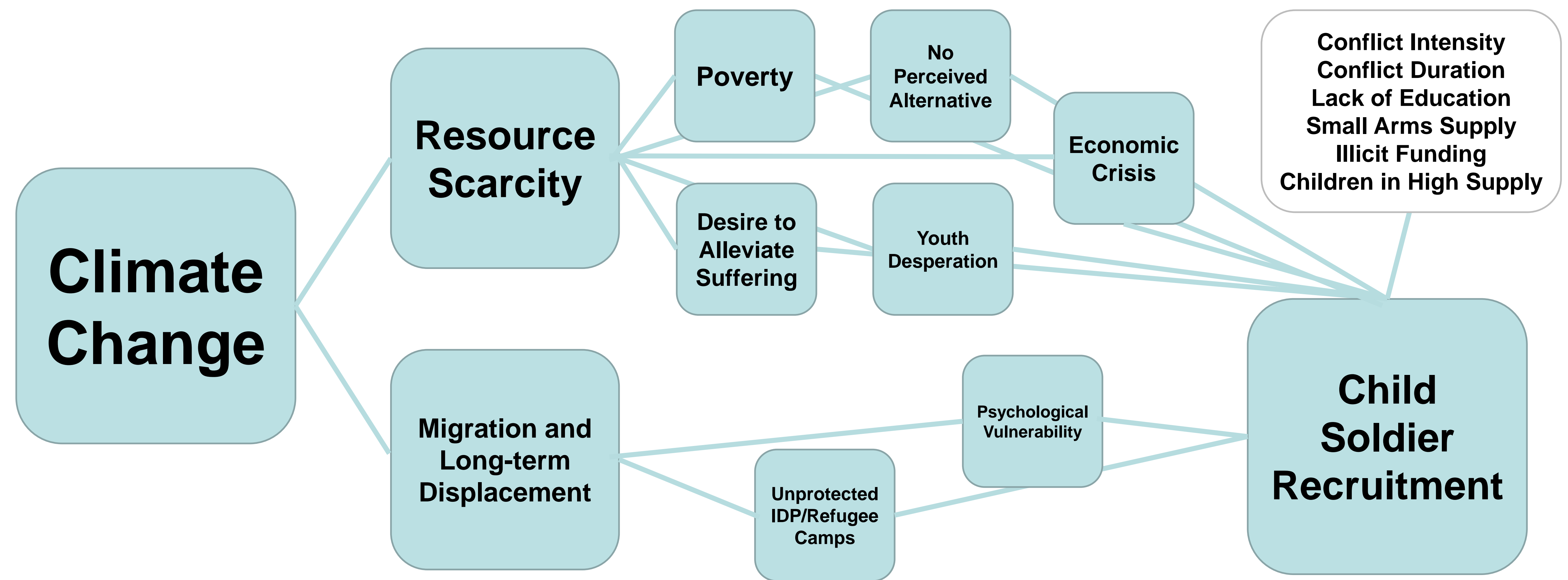
Multivariate Regression Formula

$$\text{Child Soldier Use} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{ Drought Score} + \beta_2 \text{ Duration} + \beta_3 \text{ Intensity} + \beta_4 \text{ Poverty} + \beta_5 \text{ Child Population} + \beta_6 \text{ Education}$$

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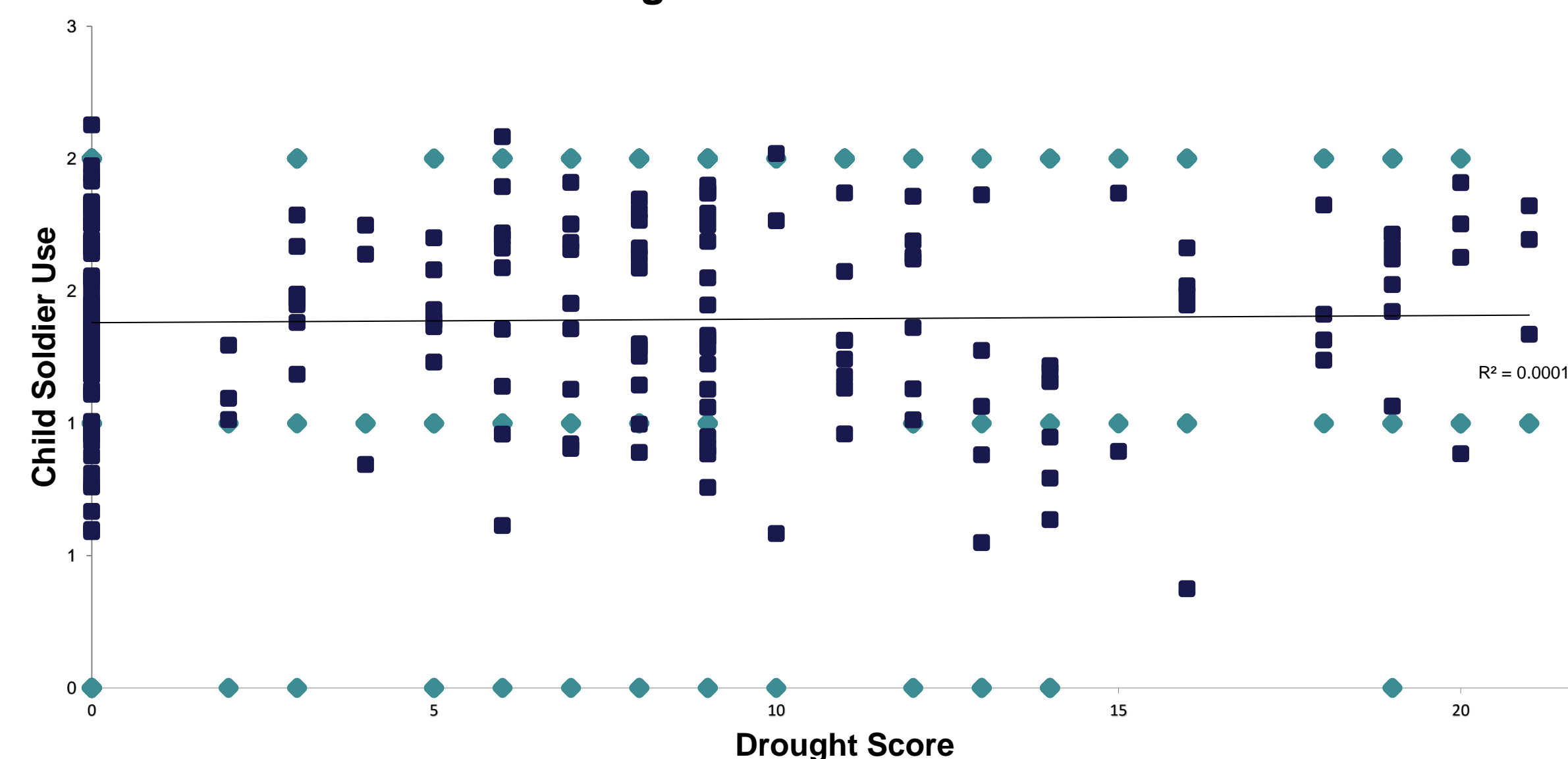
Literature Review

A summary of the leading drivers of child soldier recruitment that can be tied to the influence of climate on conflict:⁵⁻¹²



Results

Drought Score Line Fit Plot



Despite the high prevalence of both drought events and child soldier use within the conflict dataset, the regression analysis results demonstrate that the correlation is not statistically significant.

Discussion and Conclusion

The P-value of 0.95 and lack of pattern existent in the graph indicate that there is no relationship between drought and child soldier use.

Dataset Limitations – limited accuracy on CS use

Each observation is only coded as to whether or not child soldiers were recorded. A dataset that includes quantities of children involved in each armed group and/or at what stage of the conflict they were recruited would be more valid.

Confounding Variables – agricultural dependence and internally displaced peoples (IDPs)

Suggestions for Further Study

A primary need is for more comprehensive datasets on the use of child soldiers. Perhaps a more qualitative and process-tracing approach would better identify how willingness and opportunity are affected by climate change in the context of certain case studies.

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