

Committee: GA3; Social, Humanitarian & Cultural Committee

Agenda Item: Addressing the rising trend of adultification in juvenile justice systems; to improve ingrained procedures.

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Introduction

The question of adultification in judicial systems for minors makes a reference to the act of consistency to treat minors as adults in judicial processes. This practice has gained attention in recent years due to its impact out of proportion on vulnerable groups such as; girls, children from marginalized populations and youth of colored people. Nevertheless, the recognized principles of the **Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)** which supports the protection of children during the conflict with the law, adultification still continues in many national legal systems.

This situation is mostly observed in the United States, where juveniles under 16 years of age are brought in adult courts, as well as other nations who follow similar standards. The implementation of adultification threatens not only the fundamental rights but also the well being of the minors. As The Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee (SOCHUM) we are commissioned to address this critical issue, finding solutions that protect the rights of children while establishing appropriate enforcements within the juvenile justice system.

Definition of Key Terms

Adultification: Adultification is the legal process where minors are being treated as they are adults. Adultification often neglects the developmental differences between children and adults in various ways This practice affects young generations from marginalized communities, especially youth of color and girls, causing harsher legal outcomes.

Juvenile Justice Systems: The juvenile justice system is the legal system specifically created to handle minors who are accused of committing crimes. Rehabilitates, educates and tries to reintegrate the child to the community rather than punishing them violently. The system recognizes the developmental differences between children and adults, and makes sure that the delinquents are treated appropriately.

Convention on the Rights of Children: The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is an international organisation created by the United Nations in 1989, which covers the civil, political, economic, social, health, and cultural rights of children. It supports the juvenile justice system to consider the differences of minors and adults and provide them with the necessary protections against adultification.

Recidivism: Recidivism is when a previously convicted individual relapses a crime. In juvenile justice, this act is particularly concerning when minors, who are subjected to adult trials and sentences, relapse after their release from detention or prison.

Major Actors Involved

United Nations (UN): The United Nations (UN) is an international organization founded in 1945, with 193 member states. This organisation is created to preserve international peace and security, adopt social and economic development, and solve global issues .

United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF): UNICEF tries to ensure that every child has access to fundamental rights, like education, healthcare, and protection. In juvenile justice, UNICEF works to ensure that minors are treated fairly with international human rights standards.

United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC): The UNHRC promotes human rights globally. It provides management on the implementation of international human rights treaties.

International Criminal Court (ICC): The International Criminal Court (ICC) is a global tribunal who is responsible for penalizing individuals for crimes against humanity. While its primary focus is on adult criminals, the ICC indirectly affects the treatment of children in conflict zones.

General Overview of the Issue:

Adultification is the phenomenon where children, mostly from marginalized communities, are treated as more mature than they are. This concept has deep historical roots and is often linked to issues of race, gender and socioeconomic status. In essence, the historical perspective that led to the development of adultification acts as a lens through which we can test society's view and treatment of certain groups of children.

For instance, in the United States, black children have been perceived as older and less innocent than their white peers. This perception can be traced back to the legacy of slavery and systemic racism, wherein black people were not afforded the innocence of a child, but viewed instead through a lens of suspicion and criminality.

To begin with, race has always been a prejudice towards black children, they were perceived to be older and less innocent compared to their white peers. This has born from the stereotypes of Black people being more threatening at an early age. This adultification can result in more severe punishments at school and perpetuate cycles of criminalization in broader society. In the end this is a painful discrimination towards black people and is a devastating injustice.

On the other hand, gender is also an important role that connects with how children are adultified. Especially girls, and girls of color, are expected to act older in ways that are pretty complex and varied: girls are sexualized from a very young age and, thus, seen as older, and expected to take on adult-like responsibility. This expectation can make them lose their childhood and put them under pressure to behave like adults.

Because of these discriminations as a whole there are severe results that could be observed in juvenile justice. The results may contain the transfer of the juveniles to adult courts, serving longer sentences, and receiving less rehabilitative support, which contributes to poorer long-term outcomes such as higher recidivism rates, mental health problems, and limited life opportunities.

Adultification of juveniles deprives them of their emotional and psychological growth, leaving them to be dealt with by a punishing system rather than one focused on rehabilitation; it only continues to exacerbate inequalities and stigmatize the most vulnerable. Such adultification requires comprehensive policy, training, and practice reforms to pave the way toward a more just, developmentally appropriate approach to juvenile justice.

Timeline of Important Events

Date:	Event:
1899	Chicago Juvenile Court Act
1920's - 40's	Early Juvenile Justice Reforms
1950's - 60's	The rise of Juvenile Delinquency Concerns
1970's	Introduction of "Get tough" Policies
1980's	The "Tough on Crime" Era

1990's	Surge in Juveniles Tried as Adults
2005	Roper v. Simmons - U.S. Supreme Court Decision
2007	The Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP) Reauthorization
2012	Miller v. Alabama - U.S Supreme Court Decision
2016	U.S. Supreme Court's Extension Rulings on Juvenile Sentences
2019	International Calls for Juvenile Justice Reform

Related Documents

[UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice \("Beijing Rules"\) \(1985\):](#)

The Beijing Rules provide guidelines on how juveniles should be treated in front of the criminal legal system. They claim that children should not be treated like adults and try to discipline them appropriately for their age.

[UN Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency \("Riyadh Guidelines"\) \(1990\)](#)

These guidelines affirms the importance of the reduction of the juvenile delinquency and its important role in the reduction of crimes, the necessity of child-centered implementations, and the communal responsibility for a child's well being.

[UN Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders \("Bangkok Rules"\) \(2010\):](#)

Bangkok Rules is a total of 70 rules in order to prevent inequality towards women. These rules specifically focus on the treatment of imprisoned women. These rules provide guidance to policy makers, legislators, sentencing authorities and prison workers to reduce the imprisonment of women, and to manage the particular needs of women in case of imprisonment.

[UNICEF State of the World's Children Report \(2021\):](#)

UNICEF's publication, "State of the World's Children," includes implementations on child protection, including the treatment of children in conflict with the law. The 2021 edition specifically discusses the impact of adultification on vulnerable children, including those involved in the juvenile justice system.

Past Solution Attempts

[United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child \(CRC\):](#)

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is an international legal organisation to protect children's rights. It applies to all children, regardless of their race, gender etc. Sweden and Germany, have made efforts to integrate immigrant children into their education systems and provide access to health services with CRC principles.

[Global Compact for Migration \(GCM\)](#)

The Global Compact for Migration (GCM) is a UN initiative that includes commitments to protect vulnerable groups, during migration processes. Canada has worked with the GCM to ensure migrant children's inclusion in education and public services.

[European Union \(EU\) Legal Framework:](#)

The EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, created in 2001, protects the rights of children, particularly ensuring non-discrimination and access to education.

EU Directive on Reception Conditions, designed in 2013, ensures that asylum-seeking children are treated with dignity and have access to appropriate housing, health care, and education.

The EU Asylum Procedures Directive, generated in 2013, raises awareness to asylum-seeking children's cases be handled in a child-sensitive manner, for protection and fair treatment.

Temporary Protected Status (TPS):

TPS supplies temporary protection from deportation for individuals from countries with ongoing conflict or environmental disaster, allowing them to access work permits and stay in the U.S. legally.

UNHCR's Efforts to Protect Refugee Children:

The UNHCR has set up child protection units in refugee camps to monitor issues like child labor, trafficking, etc. In Lebanon, UNHCR has supported the integration of Syrian refugee children into public schools.

Possible Solutions

1. **Reforming the policies:** Create modifications in legislation that calls upon the differences between child and adult offenders. This may include the rise of the age of criminal responsibility and proceeding juveniles in their own specific juvenile courts rather than adult courts.
2. **Training for the law enforcements:** Providing training for the law enforcement officers on child, adolescent development and different needs of the youth. This can help the understanding of treating the young offenders as adults and encouraging more appropriate responses.

3. **Creation of the diversion programs:** Implementation of diversion programs that redirect juveniles from the formal justice system used for adults. These programs focus on rehabilitation rather than punishment and providing support services to solve the issues that may appear in mental health.
4. **Community awareness:** Increasing the awareness of the community about the consequences of adultification and the importance of fair treatment based on age and maturity. This solution will not only foster support but also encourage more compassionate approaches to the issue.

Useful Links

[Understanding Obstacles to Foreign Qualification Recognition for Key U.S. Early Childhood Education and Care Positions](#)

[Migration data portal](#)

[The Adultification of black girls](#)

[The Erasure of Black Girls' Childhood](#)

[Relevant resolutions](#)

Bibliography

The United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders:

<https://www.penalreform.org/issues/women/bangkok-rules/#::-:text=The%2070%20Rules%20give%20guidance,women%20in%20case%20of%20 imprisonment>

United Nations Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency:

<https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/document/united-nations-guidelines-prevention-juvenile-delinquency-riyadh-guidelines-ares45112/>

United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (“The Beijing Rules”):

<https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/document/united-nations-standard-minimum-rules-administration-juvenile-justice-beijing-rules/>

The State of the World's Children 2021:

<https://www.unicef.org/reports/state-worlds-children-2021>

The adultification based on gender and race:

<https://researchworld.com/articles/the-adultification-of-black-girls>

Trends and Issues in the Adultification of Juvenile Justice (From Research to Results: Effective Community Corrections, P 233-271,1999, Patricia M. Harris, ed. -- See NCJ-180266):

<https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/trends-and-issues-adultification-juvenile-justice-research-results>