An Assessment of the Impact of Mediating Variables on Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices of Ethics of War by the Officers and Soldiers of the Zambia Army

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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to establish levels of knowledge, attitudes and practices of ethics of war by officers and soldiers of the Zambia Army. A mixed method study using explanatory sequential approach was undertaken of a survey sample of 420 participants drawn from officers and soldiers serving in the Zambia Army. The general objective of this study was to establish the knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) of the ethics of war among Zambia Army personnel and examine how they related to age, rank, gender, level of education and years of service. Questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data. Focus group discussions and interviews were also undertaken to collect qualitative data. The findings from focus group discussions and interviews provided greater depth and understanding as to how the officers and soldiers felt about ethics of war. The findings of focus group discussions and interviews also helped to explain the findings from quantitative data. In addition, it was hypothesized that mediating variables namely; operational environment, organisational factors and administrative factors are critical in the Zambia Army in facilitating the existence of aforementioned relationships.

It was concluded that, knowledge, attitudes and practice of ethics of war among Zambia Army officers and soldiers is influenced by gender, their level of education, type of service and length of service. Consequently, a model was developed. This article focuses on the impact of mediating variables and the degree to which they play a significant role in influencing the Knowledge, Attitudes and Practice of ethics of war. The study confirms that mediating variables play a significant role in that knowledge of ethics of war is acquired locally from the few available military schools, and training they undergo before being deployed for operations (pre-deployment training). As such, acquisition of this knowledge is heavily reliant on operational environment, organisational and administrative factors. Furthermore, the degree to which this knowledge shapes the attitudes of service personnel and how well they can be put in practice is equally dependent on how these and other mediating variables facilitate this process.

Key Words: Mediating Variables, Operational Environment, Organisational Factors, Administrative Factors, Just War Theory, Ethics of War

1.   Introduction

The study looked at knowledge, attitudes and practices of ethics of war in the Zambia Army using a mixed methods approach. Therefore, the study aimed at establishing the knowledge levels of ethics of war by the officers and soldiers of the Zambia Army, their attitudes towards ethics of war and how they practice these ethics of war during operations of war or indeed operations other than war. The study further examined whether or not knowledge, attitudes and practices of ethics of war are related to variables such as gender, level of education, type of service and length of service. It further sought to establish the impact of mediating variables on Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices of ethics of war by the Officers and Soldiers of the Zambia Army.

2.   Background

Since the end of the world wars, the demise of the cold war and the end of liberation wars in Africa, the changing character of warfare has given birth to uncertainties as to how states will respond to acts of aggression in the face of ethics of war, or the moral rules of war. The argument on morality of war or ethics of war cannot come out of a vacuum. What is war? Clausewitz (2007) posits that *"war is an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will".* Walzer (1997) sums up in his writing that: "War kills; that is all it does; even its economic causes are not reflected in its outcomes; and the soldiers who die, in the contemporary phrase, wasted (Babic, 2009; Neu, 2019).

Despite all these negative expectations of war, Walzer (1997) brings out the moral aspect of war and the need for those guilty of violations of the war ground rules to be held accountable. It is the suffering of the people, breakdown of rules of law, collapse of economies and loss of life that brought the need to pay attention to the ethics of war or morality of fighting war (Simonovic, 2004). The foundation of ethics of war and Just War Theory draws its strength from International Relations theory of Realism and Christianity belief of Pacifism. War being a political tool of resolving matters in international relations, it cannot be denied therefore that war is part of international relations. Kinsella and Carr (2007) posit that "Just war theory' is the theoretical foundation for the morality of war. According to Kinsella and Carr (2007), the "origins of just war theory can be traced back to St. Ambrose and St Augustine". Augustine "argued that war was morally justified if it was declared by the appropriate secular authority, if it had a just cause, and if it was fought with rightful intentions" (Kinsella and Carr, 2007).

Just War Theory was further developed by a catholic theologian, Francisco De Vitoria in the 16th century (Draper, 1976). Christopher (2004) further writes that "another great contributor to the theory was a Roman philosopher called Marcus Tullius Cicero whose ideas directly influenced the development of the present tradition of just war. He provided the precursor to the modern concept of jus ad bellum. In the recent years, the face of war has taken a complete shift and the operational environment has changed face from the traditional conventional warfare that the world has known for centuries (Oberg, 2019). The contemporary world is now facing asymmetric warfare called terrorism. Hence the need to reconsider ethics of war as applied to contemporary security environment.

More generally on this subject Bellaby (2021) argues that "it is impossible to think of one 'just war doctrine', with a single point of lineal development from a single idea. Rather, 'just war' is better thought of as a set of recurrent issues and themes in the discussion of warfare . . . reflecting a general philosophical orientation towards the subject"– "a collection of underlying ethical arguments that have evolved over time in response to security challenges". "As a broad body of thought the just war tradition remains one of the most popular frameworks for evaluating the morality of war and warfare". Bellaby (2021) says "indeed, many theorists have adapted the just war tradition to tackle emerging ethical-security problems of the day, from acts of terrorism and counter-terrorism policy, drone warfare, biosecurity, private military companies and civil wars".

More contemporary, Batool (2022) writing on 'Ethics of War in Islamic Perspective', equally brings out the relationship between law and the practice of ethics of war and its evolution over time. According to Batool, by mediaeval law, Muslims were required to promulgate this divine law, preferably quietly, but if necessary, forcibly. Today, most Muslims disclaim the duty to promote Islam by force, and jihad is no longer considered a viable option. Finally, like just war, jihad places stringent constraints on lawful objectives during conflict and requires belligerents to use the least amount of force possible to end hostilities quickly. Like war conceptions, they are fluid, evolving and adjusting to changing global situations. As Muslims interpret the Islamic spirit of war and peace, their jihad arguments will become more similar to those of the Western Just War Debates. Muslims and non-Muslims are likely to continue discussing a just international order that began lately. Batool (2022) assumes that "new laws on the ethics of war and peace will be enacted when there is some degree of agreement on the ethics of war and peace".

In 2022, the War between Russia and Ukraine has also shifted scholarly attention on matters of Self-Defence in the face of military aggression. DeCosse (2022) posits that, "self-defence is the traditional ethical justification for going to war: If attacked, you may respond by using violence

for the sake of political justice. It is also an ethical requirement of going to war that there should be a reasonable chance of success. If going to war has a probability that you will suffer losses and many people will be killed, then even if you have a right to self-defence, it would be a good decision and morally just not to fight back and thus avoid a needless loss of life. The war in Ukraine has challenged how we interpret the requirement for success. Little did anyone think the Ukrainians would have chance against the Russians". DeCosse (2022) further claims that "weeks into the war, the Ukrainians are holding out and inflicting damage on the Russian army". He asks "does success mean having to defeat another army or does it mean inflicting damage to get better terms in the negotiations?". "Is there an intangible but powerful success achieved by the self-respect and courage that comes with fighting for great values, no matter the odds?". These are the questions that require critical consideration in the contemporary world if we are to avoid world extinction.

Zambia, like the rest of the world has since independence been involved in conventional warfare through liberation wars in Southern Africa (Sibamba, 2010). At the end of the liberation wars, Zambia shifted focus to peace support operations under the auspices of the United Nations and the African Union. As a sovereign state, Zambia is by law party to the Customary International Humanitarian Law and morally subject to the ethics of war (International Committee of the Red Cross, 2005). Therefore, Zambia finds itself in the web of how to fulfil these legal and moral obligations in the changing character of warfare (Chongo, 2016).

However, despite Zambia Army's involvement in these operations, it was still unclear whether Zambia Army personnel were familiar with the existence of ethics of war or morality of warfare as evidenced during the conduct of almost all operations undertaken by the Zambia Army during liberation wars, counter insurgency operations and internal security operations (Chongo, 2016). With a mandatory requirement for all United Nations Peace Support Operations to be conducted within the confines of the principles of the ethics of war or morality of war rules, it has become apparent for Zambia Army personnel to have the requisite knowledge on the existence and application of the rules of war because non-adherence to these rules will make the Zambia Army culpable of committing war crimes or crimes against humanity (Watkins, 2020). Hence this justified a study to be undertaken to establish the knowledge levels of ethics of war by the officers and soldiers of the Zambia Army, their attitudes towards ethics of war and how they practice these ethics of war during operations.
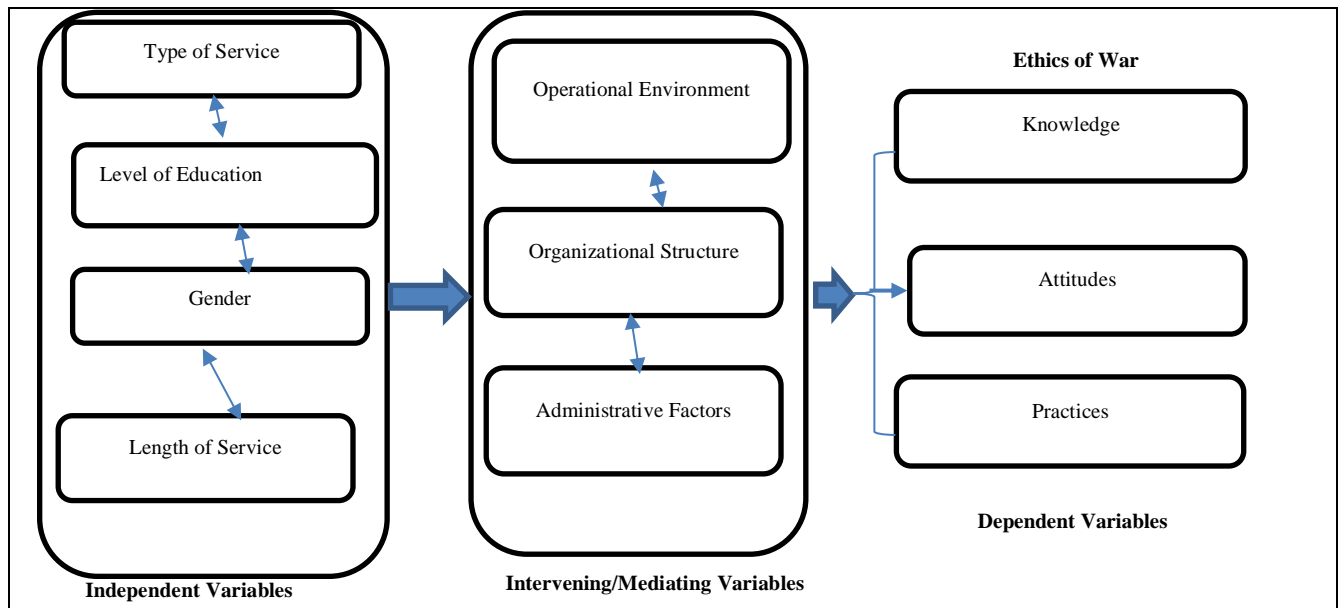
3.   Research Questions

The study was designed to answer the following research questions:

(i)   What is the knowledge of ethics of war by officers and soldiers of the Zambia Army?

(ii)   What attitudes do officers and soldiers of the Zambia Army display towards ethics of war?

(iii)   How do officers and soldiers of the Zambia Army practice ethics of war in their operations?

4.   Conceptual Framework

As a mixed method study, research questions were used to address the qualitative dimension of the study, while hypotheses addressed the quantitative dimension. Unlike the "theoretical framework", a "conceptual framework" vividly "shows how the main variables in the study were related" (Strauss, 1990). The "conceptual framework" therefore completed the linkage with research objectives, research questions and hypotheses. While it is common in other researches to use either research questions or hypotheses, the study used both research questions and hypotheses due to the research method used.

Conceptual Framework

Source: Developed by Authors (2022)

Figure 4. 1: Conceptual Framework

5.   Methodology

The explanatory sequential mixed methods design was used in the study. The explanatory sequential mixed methods approach is a design in mixed methods that involves a two-phase project in which the researcher collects quantitative data in the first phase, analyses the results, and then uses the results to plan or build on to the second phase of qualitative data collection and analysis. The quantitative results informed the types of participants that were to be purposefully selected to participate in the qualitative phase and this also had a great influence on the questions asked to the respondents. Qualitative data actually helped to explain in more detail the quantitative results. The procedure for this design involved collecting survey data in the first phase, analysing the data, and subsequently moving on to qualitative interviews and focus group discussions. Each phase was triangulated into a third phase where quantitative data provide general patterns and width, while qualitative data provided experience and depth to the study. The findings from qualitative phase helped to contextualize and enrich the findings, increase validity and generate new knowledge.

During the quantitative phase, the researcher applied a cross-sectional descriptive survey design as data collected from a cross-section of officers and soldiers represented by all rank structures for the study was sufficiently representative. The study was descriptive and specifically focused on the Zambia Army. "Descriptive research attempts to describe, explain and interpret conditions of the present. The main purpose of a descriptive research is to examine a phenomenon that is occurring at a specific place and time. It is concerned with conditions, practices, structures, differences or relationships that exist, opinions held and processes that are going on or trends that are evident". Hence, in this study, this was the most appropriate research design to investigate knowledge, attitudes and practices of officers and soldiers of Zambia Army. The study examined the phenomenology of ethics of war, conditions under which it is practiced, the experiences and opinions of personnel of the Zambia Army regarding this phenomenon.

5.1 Participants in the Research. The population comprised commissioned officers and non-commissioned officers serving in the Zambia Army. The target population comprised officers and soldiers from ten fighting units of the Zambia Army. The Cochran formula was used to determine sample size. A total number of 420 respondents participated in the study during the quantitative stage. During the qualitative stage, the number was small as 15 participants from each of the three provinces selected for the purpose based on convenience were involved in focus group discussions, while 3 former Army Commanders participated in the interview.

5.2 Sample Size Determination. Phenomenological studies normally target smaller population of not more than 50. Therefore, in this study, phenomenological approach targeted qualitative dimension of not more than 50 respondents who participated in focus group discussions and personal interviews. Sample size for the quantitative dimension was determined by using Cochran (1963) formula in (1).

$$n = Z^2\frac{pq}{e^2}$$ …………………………………………………………………………………(1)

where:

n = Sample size required.

Z = 1.96 for a 95 % confidence interval using a Z-Table.

E = the specified margin of error ($\pm 5\%$).

p = an estimate of the proportion of the population that has a characteristic of interest.

q = an estimate of the proportion of the population that does NOT have a characteristic of interest.

q = 1-p since p + q = 1.

At 95% confidence level, 0.05 sampling error and assuming p = 0.5 which gives maximum variability.

Therefore:

$$n = 1.96^2\frac{0.5x0.5}{0.05^2}$$

$$= \frac{3.8416x0.25}{0.0025}$$

$$= \mathbf{384}$$

Assuming 8.5% non-response rate,

$$n = \frac{384}{0.915}$$

n = 419.67

Therefore, n = **420**

5.3 Sample Size. Both probability and non-probability sampling techniques were used in the study. From the frame of officers and soldiers, 420 participants were randomly selected from the ten fighting units, forty-two from each unit, and were subjected to the questionnaire. The officers and soldiers who were selected to respond to the questionnaire were drawn from across all the ranks in the Zambia Army from the lowest rank of Private to Colonel. The two ranks of Major General and Lieutenant General were exempted from answering the questionnaires during quantitative data collection. as the two ranks were only held by the two most senior officers of the Army. Additionally, it was difficult to get the ranks of Brigadier General due to their national duty commitments. However, during collection of qualitative data, two four-star generals and one three-star General participated in personal interviews.

5.4 Data Collection. Field research was the main source of data collection. Basically, structured questionnaires were designed and given to selected participants. Focus group discussions were arranged in selected provinces and participants interacted to share experiences and opinions. Additionally, an interview guide was used and personal interviews were conducted with key participants in order to maintain focus and relevance of the study.

5.5 Data Analysis. Quantitative data was analysed at two levels. The first level of analysis was descriptive statistics in the form of frequency distribution tables, means and percentages. The second level involved inferential statistics by applying the Chi-square test in order to determine the relationship, if any, between the independent variables and the dependent variables using the latest version of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 16.0). Data was further subjected to Spearman's rank correlation analysis to measure the strength and direction of the relationship among the independent and dependent variables.

In the study, analysis of qualitative data began during the data collection exercise by arranging the field notes according to salient themes in relation to the objectives. This was followed by pinpointing, examining and recording patterns within the data collected. This type of thematic content analysis was used in the study because of its relevance to the description of a phenomenon and its association to a specific research question. This method of analysis was also tied to the specific theory on which the ethics of war are grounded. Thematic content analysis allowed for a rich, detailed and comprehensive description of data that was collected during the study and led to a fuller understanding of research findings. Qualitative stage findings explained the results of the quantitative strand of the study.

6. Study Findings

All three study mediating variables namely: operational environment, organisational study factors and administrative factors were analysed as presented in the following presentations:

6.1 Assessment of Operational Environment of the Zambia Army Officers and Soldiers

An assessment was carried out on the operational environment of the Zambia Army in order to ascertain its influence on the knowledge, attitudes and practices of ethics of war by the officers and soldiers. Table 6.1 presents the findings:

Table 6.1: Assessment of Operational Environment of the Zambia Army Officers and Soldiers

Study Variables on Operational Environment		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean
		1	2	3	4	5	
Officers and Soldiers are provided with the right equipment for operations.	f	38	65	35	170	105	**3.58**
	%	9	16	9	41	25	
Officers and Soldiers are provided with required logistics for operations.	f	38	50	43	180	102	**3.62**
	%	9	12	10	44	25	
Officers and Soldiers are given the right technical orders/guidance.	f	34	39	19	177	144	**3.87**
	%	8	9	5	43	35	
Officers and Soldiers are provided with sound leadership.	f	35	46	25	174	133	**3.78**
	%	9	11	6	42	32	
Officers and Soldiers are effective in planning.	f	34	44	29	148	158	**3.85**
	%	8	11	7	36	38	
Average (%)		**8.7**	**11.8**	**7.3**	**41.1**	**31.1**	
Summary							**3.74**
		(Disagreement 20.5%)		(Neutral 7.30%)		(Agreement 72.2%)	

Source: Authors (2022)

An investigation of the operational environment as a moderating variable revealed that 72.2% of the respondents agreed that the operational environment provided by the Zambia Army supported their operations compared to 20.5% who disagreed and 7.3% who were unsure or neutral. This was augmented by the derived grand mean value of 3.7, which was way above the Likert scale of 3.0 (a threshold for neutrality on a scale of 1-5 where 1= strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 agree, 5 = strongly agree). Thus generally, officers and soldiers confirmed that the operational environment provided for them by the Zambia Army offered an opportunity to acquire knowledge and influence attitudes of ethics of war and later practice them. The officers and soldiers particularly agreed to the operational environment being appropriate in terms of them being given the right technical orders/guidance (mean = 3.87); their planning being done effectively (mean = 3.85) and leadership being sound (mean = 3.78).

6.2 Assessment of Organisational Factors of the Zambia Army

Further, an assessment of the organisational factors of the Zambia Army was carried out in order to ascertain their influence on knowledge, attitudes and practices of ethics of war by officers and soldiers. Table 6.2 presents the findings:

Table 6.2: Analysis of Organisational Study Factors of the Zambia Army

Study Variables on Operational Environment		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean
		1	2	3	4	5	
Ethics of war are clearly defined in Zambia Army	f	33	44	20	174	142	**3.84**
	%	8.0	10.7	4.8	42.1	34.4	
Ethics of war are highly appreciated in Zambia Army	f	32	46	23	187	125	**3.79**
	%	7.7	11.1	5.6	45.3	30.3	
Ethics of war training is provided in Zambia Army	f	34	47	15	175	142	**3.83**
	%	8.2	11.4	3.6	42.4	34.4	
Ethical conduct is rewarded in Zambia Army	f	32	56	44	177	104	**3.64**
	%	8	14	11	43	25	
Ethics of war are communicated in Zambia Army	f	35	46	20	185	127	**3.78**
	%	8.5	11.1	4.8	44.8	30.8	
Average (%)		8.0	11.6	5.9	43.5	31.0	**3.78**
Summary		Disagreement (19.6%)		5.9%	Agreement (74.5%)		

Source: Author (2022)

In Table 6.2 shown, three quarters (74.5%) of the respondents were in agreement that organisational factors within the Zambia Army moderated their knowledge, attitudes and practices of the ethics of war compared with 19.6% who were in disagreement. Only 5.9% of officers and soldiers were ambivalent to the claim by being neutral. This was further supported by the computed grand mean value of 3.78, above the Likert scale threshold of 3.0. (a threshold for neutrality on a scale of 1-5 where 1= strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 agree, 5 = strongly agree).

It was therefore affirmed that organisational factors within the Zambia Army enabled officers and soldiers to acquire knowledge and influence attitudes of ethics of war and later practice them.

The officers and soldiers particularly agreed to the organisational factors being appropriate in terms of the ethics of war being clearly defined in Zambia Army (mean = 3.84); ethics of war training being provided in Zambia Army (mean = 3.83); ethics of war being highly appreciated in Zambia Army (mean = 3.79) and ethics of war being communicated in Zambia Army (mean = 3.78).

6.3 Assessment of Administrative Factors of the Zambia Army

Lastly, the study assessed how the administrative factors of the Zambia Army affected knowledge, attitudes and practices of ethics of war among the officers and soldiers. Table 6.3 presents the findings:

Table 6. 3: Analysis of Administrative Factors of the Zambia Army

Study Variables on Operational Environment		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean
		1	2	3	4	5	
Salaries and conditions of service for Officers and Soldiers are always fulfilled	f	49	56	135	84	89	3.26
	%	11.9	13.6	32.7	20.3	21.5	
Promotion and recognition of Officers and Soldiers are always made	f	33	44	105	126	105	3.55
	%	8.0	10.7	25.4	30.5	25.4	
Staff development programmes are always provided to Officers and Soldiers	f	47	68	101	119	78	3.27
	%	11.4	16.5	24.5	28.8	18.9	
Security of employment for Officers and Soldiers is guaranteed	f	35	40	42	145	151	3.82
	%	8.5	9.7	10.2	35.1	36.6	
Team work is always encouraged in Zambia Army	f	33	35	16	82	247	4.15
	%	8.0	8.5	3.9	19.9	59.8	
Average (%)		9.6	11.8	19.3	26.9	32.3	3.61
Summary		Disagreement (21.4%)		19.30%	Agreement (59.3%)		

Source: Author (2022)

The study results indicated that majority of respondents (59.3%) agreed that their knowledge, attitude and practice of ethics of war were influenced by administrative factors which prevailed within the Zambia Army compared to 21.4% who disagreed. It was shown that 19.3% of officers and soldiers of the Zambia Army were ambivalent about the existence of the relationship as indicated by their neutrality. What was further revealed by the study findings was that the computed grand mean value of 3.61, which was reasonably greater than the Likert scale
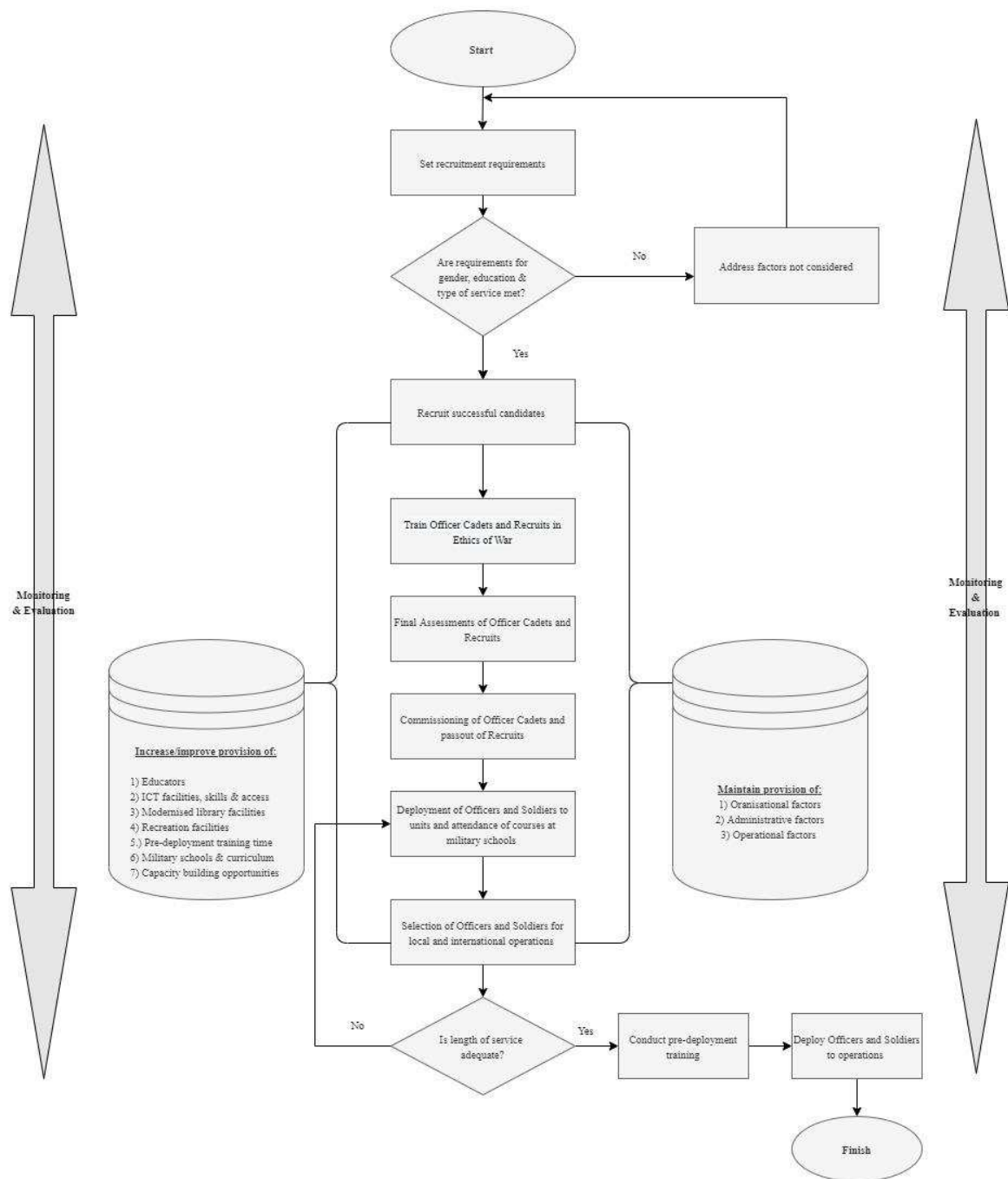
threshold of 3.0 signified that most of the respondents supported the proposition that administrative factors had a poignant effect on the acquisition of knowledge and practice as well as practice of ethics of war.

The study findings conspicuously pointed to the fact that knowledge, attitude and practice of ethics of war were regulated by the administrative factors which prevailed in the Zambia Army. The officers and soldiers particularly agreed to the administrative factors being appropriate in terms of the encouragement of team work (mean = 4.15); security of employment (mean = 3.82); as well as promotion and recognition (mean = 3.55). Fulfilment of Salaries and conditions of service together with provision of staff development programmes were fulfilled but had lower means of 3.26 and 3.27 respectively.

7.   Conclusion

Arising from the findings of the study, developed a model known as Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices of Ethics of War (KAPEW) in Zambia Army taking into consideration the highlighted mediating variables for improving knowledge, attitudes and practices of ethics of war. The model may be used starting from the recruitment stage of both officers and soldiers. Candidates are required to meet set requirements on recruitment and these start the ethics of war curriculum as officer cadets and recruit at their training academies and centres. The curriculum can be progressive as the officers and soldiers do their career progression. The model involves monitoring and evaluation at all stages of their career courses. A manual can also be written to explain how the model can be operationalised in relation to the variables of organisation, operation and administration factors.

Model for Improving Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices of Ethics of War (KAPEW) in the Zambia Defence Force

Source: William Maipambe Sikazwe, 2022

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