Gender and Human Security: A Theoretical Discourse on Feminist Perspectives

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Abstract

A feminist perspective emphasizes the consequences of masked disparities muddled under the umbrella of "human" in relation to an extended human security paradigm. The politics of numerous overlapping identities are, therefore, a focus of a critical feminist approach to the discourse of human security. Under the lens of feminism, security discourse may become more self-aware of its own normative presumptions. This paper reviews diverse feminist perspectives over the years on the subject of gender as it intersects with race, class, nationality and security. It discovers that the tension between universalism and cultural relativism on the subject is resolved by tying different individual experiences in a specific area to larger regional and global structures and processes. Gender is connected with other identities, such as race, class and nationality. Hence, the degree of universalizing tendencies and gender silences within security discourses may be seen by taking a look at several feminist and security studies perspectives. The conceptual and political correlation between gender and security is frequently disregarded. The contradiction of human security as both a political mission of emancipation and an analytical framework may thus be clarified through a focus on identity politics. Hence, a case is presented through a meta-analysis of existing literature for gender interpretations in human security that is more flexible and dependent on the situation. In this sense, it is suggested that alternative feminist perspectives, such as those anchored in the African and black context, can make it easier to communicate across and among groups of people who hold seemingly discordant viewpoints.

Keywords: *Gender, Human Security, Feminist, Intersectional Feminism, Violence*

Introduction

Building peace requires visioning what constitutes peace and security across cultures, nationalities, ethnicities, and between genders (McKay, 2004). A rethinking of security that is pertinent to the needs and lives of women, as well as people with non-normative gender identities, has been promoted in recent decades by academic feminism and feminist movements. Whilst in hegemonic terms the idea of security has been intimately associated with state security, there has been a trend towards a greater emphasis on human security (Arestizabal, Arino, & Arino, 2020).

According to the feminist understanding of security, links between fears in public and private areas are supported by gender norms and inequities (Swaine, 2019). To Ann Tickner, women define security as the absence of all forms of violence, including sexual, economic, and military violence. This multi-levelled and multi-dimensional definition is viewed and recognised in feminism (Arestizabal, Arino, & Arino, 2020). Although feminist approaches to security have parallels and overlap with other critical views of security studies, such as the human security approach, they also draw attention to the limitations of the concept of human security if it does not take into account the gender dynamics that occur in every society and are presumed to be universal and therefore masculine (Swaine, 2019). In light of this, Sjoberg (2017) laid out some principles adhered to by people engaged in feminist security studies:

1. A thorough grasp of what constitutes a security concern and to whom the term "security" should be used for. According to feminism, there are several threats to the safety of women, including domestic and international violence. Hence, a thorough examination of what defines a security threat enables wider approaches to deal with such risks to be developed.

2. An awareness and comprehension of the gendered character of values prized in the area of security.

3. The acknowledgement of the significant and varied role that gender plays in the theorization and application of international security.

4. The absence of gender from security-related work does not render it gender-neutral or unproblematic, and its inclusion is not predicted on gender serving as a factor in analysis or methodology, but rather on the evolution of security studies.

Feminist researchers have emphasized that women and girls see and feel (in) security differently from men and boys since the early 1990s, criticizing the mainstream security discourse for being dominated by male viewpoints. Whilst the feminist approach's main goal is to make women's viewpoints apparent, it also helps to detect local, regional, and national inequalities in security for people who belong to other groups (Rosenow-Williams & Behmer, 2015).

In the actual world, where security and insecurity are frequently a result of context, "top-down" (state) security policies are said by feminist scholars to fall short of addressing the problem. The gendered human security perspective is founded on an individual-centred security paradigm, which is itself a testament to the growing significance of the individual perspective, just as the human security concept does the same (Hoogensen & Stuvoy, 2006). Gender approaches to security have emphasized the necessity of empowering the individual.

An emphasis on the intersectionality of factors creating vulnerability and insecurity is also implied by an individual viewpoint. For instance, a growing number of academics have criticized gender mainstreaming for placing too much emphasis on women, claiming that this has contributed to the perception that gender issues are largely women's issues and that male vulnerabilities have been neglected (Rosenow-Williams & Behmer, 2015). This calls for reaching out to men and boys in novel and unconventional ways that haven't been tried before. A narrow viewpoint of women's demands conceals the reality that gender is a relational power construct and overlaps with other factors, such as class, religion, and ethnicity, that lead to vulnerabilities.

This paper thus embarks on a desk review of a number of feminist perspectives on gender and human security that argue for a gender-responsive human security approach to bridging the gaps in the development, protection and dignity of all persons regardless of gender, race, class or ethnicity. It analyses various voices in feminist security studies on intersectional feminism in security discourse, feminist criticisms of national security and feminist adoption of human security, as well as feminist criticism of human security.

This position paper makes use of the meta-analysis method that combines and compares thoughts from already published studies on feminist perspectives on gender and human security. It derives most of its findings from secondary sources such as journal articles, books, articles, doctoral thesis dissertations, and reviews. More so, it adopts intersectional feminism as its theoretical framework.

Statement of Purpose and Objectives

This paper seeks to provide an objective, thorough summary and critical analysis of feminist perspectives in security discourse, emphasising the intersectional feminist politics of gender and human security. By doing this, it will be discussing viewpoints on the theoretical and practical aspects of gendering human security in a discursive way, addressing various aspects of the conversation from the feminist criticism of national security, feminist perspectives of human security, feminist criticism of human security, and the intersectional feminist political discourse of human security. This will provide justifications for future research on the topic.

The study, therefore, aims to:

1. Understand the arguments of the intersectional feminist theory

2. Present a discursive approach to the feminist perspectives on the intersectional theme of gender and human security

3. Spot the differences in the perspectives of feminist and non-feminist scholars on gender and human security

4. Know the criticisms by feminist scholars on the phenomenon of human security

Research Questions

To guide this review in providing answers that are relevant to the topic, this paper will be asking the following questions:

1. What are the arguments of the intersectional feminist theory?

2. What are the feminist perspectives on the intersectional theme of gender, violence and human security?

3. How have their perspectives differed from non-feminist arguments?

4. In what ways have feminists criticised human security from the gendered lens?

Methodology

This paper makes use of the meta-analysis method to analyse and discuss its findings in existing literature. Through this method, this paper synthesises, summarizes and compares different feminist perspectives on the intersectional phenomenon of gender and human security. Relevant sources were carefully chosen from empirical studies, secondary sources, and conceptual and theoretical sources which were analysed and synthesised to group and separate perspectives on the basis of their concluding findings. The analysis of findings was conducted in a discursive way to cover various aspects of the overarching theme of this paper.

Discussion of Findings

Intersectional Feminist Politics on Gender and Human Security Discourse

In response to the lack of exposure to the specificities of women's discriminatory experiences, third-world feminists and black feminists have challenged white feminist movements. They have found the idea of "sisterhood" to be problematic and the feminist supposition that all women share a set of interests. Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, a black feminist legal scholar and one of the pioneers of Critical Race Theory in the US Legal Academy, used the term "intersectionality" in feminist theory in 1989 as a metaphor and as a concept in 1991. Though black feminism has a long history, intersectionality has as well.

According to Tripp, Ferree, and Ewig (2013), separating the concepts of security and justice in the discourse surrounding human security is particularly problematic, and not just for women. The very notion of peace without justice implies a politics of marginalizing and disenfranchising groups whose needs are routinely disregarded and excluded. The interests of specific women and men are connected and divided by such exclusions in ways that cut across all groups. This is what has come to be known as intersectionality (Ferree, 2013). The current discourse on human security contains contradictory elements, as Tripp's (2013) first chapter of the book, "Gender, Violence, and Human Security: Critical Feminist Perspectives" amply documented. It has not been consolidated into a single hegemonic form, despite

efforts by various actors (including the UN and defence intellectuals) to do so.

The critical development of intersectionality as a particular approach, one that is particularly critical of binary views of men and women and committed to a broadly inclusive understanding of social justice, has been a crucial intervention into the framing of gender for the feminist view of gender advanced in the book, "Gender, Violence, and Human Security: Critical Feminist Perspectives" (2013). Theories of gender that emphasize intersectionality emphasize how power dynamics within the macrosocial underpin gender. Patricia Hill Collins (1986) stands out among other theorists, originally mostly American women of colour, for emphasizing the interconnected relationships of injustice produced by gender, racial, and economic oppressions and stressing how oppressors in one relationship can still be oppressors in another.

Hancock (2007) notes that although the word "intersectionality" has subsequently grown in scope to encompass a number of distinct analytic approaches, it also presents some generally significant issues for gender politics, which are relevant to the discourse on human security. First off, gender is not the only connection that counts from an intersectional feminist perspective, but it does. In order to achieve justice, it is necessary to acknowledge gender as a process that affects the personal and societal security of both men and women, as argued by Ferree (2013). It is also necessary to address the unique interests of women in challenging patriarchal power and eradicating gendered inequalities while understanding how these are influenced by and embedded within other power relations (Choo & Ferree, 2010). Second, the intersectional perspective shows how both structure and agency contribute to oppression, bridging the gap between the macro and micro levels. Lastly, intersectional feminist perspectives challenge any essentialist conception of men and women as opposing, binary groupings that must always be at odds with one another (Ferree, 2013). Tripp, Ferree and Ewig (2013) sought to stress the importance of social justice for all people by relying on the intersectional form of gendering human security to highlight the views and perspectives of both men and women.

This is not always what is meant when discussing gendering human security. For example, Ferree (2013) noted that some non-intersectional feminist human security discourse may focus exclusively on women, while some may ignore other power dynamics in which women are involved, portraying women from more powerful groups as rescuers and women from the global south as victims. Some may

also hold that all women are not responsible for oppression and still others may assume that all women are not affected by oppression. To begin with, certain understandings of gendered security politics are to bear in mind. Some of which are more intersectional than others, feminists battle internationally among themselves and with other social justice groups (Lakkimsetti, 2013).

It is crucial to also note that gendering human security in patriarchal ways is equally widespread. Such discourse portrays women as helpless victims, safety as the heart and family, peace as a weakness, and all people as being helped by reinforcing natural subordination connections (Ferree, 2013). As an illustration, Buss and Herman (2003) describe how a global alliance of fundamentalist religious groups uses patriarchal interpretations of gender found in particular Christian, Jewish, and Islamic traditions to defend traditional gender roles as "family values" and oppose feminism-related initiatives as endangering women and their families.

According to Brush (2013), various conservative and some feminist discourses in the US unite on the idea that women themselves are responsible for securing their own human security through the economic market. When it comes to human security discourses, the hegemonic framing of gender as fixed and unchangeable can serve as a symbolic anchor to essentialize men and women into two opposed groups and channel peace and stability desires into a reactionary politics of restoring "traditions" of gender and family relations, a discourse that was prevalent in Eastern Europe after the fall of communist state control.

Intersectional feminists have a stake in ensuring that this frame can detect and address injustice in more than binary terms in the current fight to give meaning to the idea of human security. As feminist opponents of the human security framework have noted, the paradigm initially simply viewed "people" as opposed to identifying the gendered distributions of hazards that women and men confront (Tripp, Ferree, & Ewig, 2013). Yet if society changes to perceive gender exclusively as "women", a single special interest or particularly vulnerable category, it will leave males as the "people" who will always be at the centre of any broad conception of what it is to be human. Such a binary approach to gendering human security also downplays the intersectionality of the material anxieties violence imposes and misses how gender meanings are deliberately mobilized to legitimize and intensify both individual and institutional violence (Ferree, 2013).

Since it considers the impact of fears on individuals rather than only the effects of conflict on the state, Tripp (2013) contends that "human security" is, in theory, an attractive normative frame for feminists. It emphasizes social activity as opposed to merely government action. It emphasizes the agency of individuals impacted by insecurity and focuses on constructive action to increase human potential rather than merely defending rights. But as she also points out (2013), if a gendered perspective on human security is advanced without consideration for the intersecting power relations of national interests that place some men and women in positions of global privilege, it runs the risk of portraying less privileged women as victims who must be saved.

The concept of human security is thus expanded by intersectional feminist gender theories that emphasize the need to include all at-risk groups in political decision-making as well as connecting political voices and protection against victimization. With this strategy, the traditional binary distinction between negative (freedom from) and positive (freedom to) liberty is undermined as well as the dichotomy between freedom from fear and freedom from want (Tripp, Ferree, & Ewig, 2013). The freedom to expand one's human potential includes the ability to acquire goals for the future and express current interests; doing so necessitates such freedom from historical oppression that dismantling the system of dominance is both possible and safe to undertake.

Despite its substantial contribution, feminist philosophy has criticized the idea of intersectionality (Donoso, 2016). One of the earliest groups of women to reject intersectionality was Marxist feminists. Marxist theories contend that class is more important than race and gender. So, intersectionality theorists' assertion that oppression is caused by the interplay of many, mutually constitutive axes is rejected by Marxist feminists (Davis, 2008). In a similar spirit, intersectionality has come under fire for being nothing more than a sophisticated identity politics that only weakens the class struggle.

Yet, the so-called oppressed working class includes a variety of social groups, including Black, and female employees. When Black feminists initially developed intersectionality theory, it did so as a critique and replacement for identity politics (Donoso, 2016). Firstly, intersectionality challenges the idea that some facets of identity are set in stone and cohesive. For instance, liberal feminism's essentialist interpretations of identity neglected to address how the experience of a Black woman is influenced by a racialized form of sexism and a particularly gendered form of racism. Second, rather than focusing on a person's

identity, intersectionality theory emphasizes how systems of oppression are structurally bound together in an impenetrable manner (Feminist Fightback, 2015). Although identity politics generally neglect intragroup disparities, they do acknowledge differences (Crenshaw, 1991). There is debate about whether intersectionality should be confined to the analysis of individual experiences, identity theory, or societal structures and discourses as a whole.

The vagueness and open-endedness of the intersectionality idea are another stated flaw. The more illogical a theory is, the more it is argued that it has to be elaborated, merging disparate concepts into a clear, unambiguous totality (Donoso, 2016). Ironically, it is a successful feminist theory because of its vagueness and open-endedness. For feminist analysis, intersectionality is a wonderful conceptual tool since it is wide, inclusive, and open-ended.

It encourages creativity in the search for fresh approaches to doing feminist analysis, stimulating a process of discovery. Because of this, each study topic enables us to apply intersectionality to many settings and points of discrimination, such as those based on gender, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, etc. Intersectionality must be seen as a discursive site where many feminist viewpoints are in critical dialogue with one another. This is how intersectionality should be understood – not as a set definition. As a result, a nodal point enables a common framework for conceptualisation negotiation, becoming a useful term (Donoso, 2016).

In this sense, a conceptual nodal point offers sufficient analytical nuance to encourage political action and cooperation. While the use of the intersectionality notion should be praised, it should also be critically analysed. A misunderstanding of how equality is achieved through an intersecting viewpoint may conceal and, as a result, repeat the problems that intersectionality tries to reveal and eliminate by resulting in segmented representation in unequal societies.

Feminist Perspectives on Gender, Violence and Human Security

A rethinking of security that is pertinent to the needs and lives of women, as well as people with non-normative gender identities, has been promoted in recent decades by academic feminism and the feminist movement (Arestizabal, Arino, & Arino, 2020). Whilst in hegemonic terms the idea of security has been intimately associated with state security, there has been a trend toward a greater emphasis on human security.

Particularly in the academic community, under the general heading of "feminist international relations", this feminist reinterpretation of security has emerged. The issue of security has been a key topic for discussion and research since the feminist perspective was incorporated into feminist international relations in the 1980s and 1990s, with the end of realist hegemony (Arestizabal, Arino, & Arino, 2020), and the challenging of the androcentric and patriarchal perspective of international politics. It is a relatively new field of study that is in the process of consolidation and continuous evolution. The phrase "feminist security studies" was not first used until the middle of the 2000s. Fundamentally, this feminist strategy aims to comprehend "how gender identity and gender politics impact experiences of security and insecurity".

The term "feminist security studies" is inherently ambiguous since it may be seen as either an adjective that seeks to mainstream feminism and its methodological and practical tools in security studies or as an examination of "feminist security", a notion about which there is no clear consensus (Cohn, 2011). Notwithstanding the challenges in defining feminist security, Cohn (2011) emphasizes that it is constantly and unavoidably social and founded in interdependence and cannot emerge from some sort of imagined isolated, entirely autonomous and self-sufficient, armed independence.

In this context, Cohn highlights the significance of the concept of vulnerability in security discourses and practices and asks what kind of national security strategy would be accepted as rational if we acknowledged that vulnerability is inevitable, control has limits, and that ultimately decline is unavoidable (Cohn, 2014). Since the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and succeeding resolutions, the global growth of the women, peace, and security agenda has been occurring concurrently with this expanding field of inquiry.

However, according to authors like Swaine (2019), women's rights are still being used for political purposes and a comprehensive approach to security from a gender perspective has yet to be achieved. This is despite the fact that the framework provided by the women, peace, and security agenda failed to change the traditional approach to security. As a result, a portion of the agenda's revolutionary nature that it originally had thanks to civil society has been lost (Arestizabal, Arino, & Arino, 2020).

By highlighting the gender bias present in fundamental ideas such as war, violence, the military, peace, peacekeeping, and

peacebuilding, making women visible in security practices, and further questioning who is being secured by security practices, feminist scholarship challenges conventional notions of security (den Boer & Bode, 2018). Feminist research highlights the negative connections between militaries and masculinities in conflict and peacekeeping, examines and contests the relationship between women and peace, and contends that the threat of conflict and patriarchal norms and practices contribute to insecurity (Hudson, 2005).

By adopting a strategy that makes people the primary security reference point and gives voice to the common experiences of women (and men) dealing with violence and conflict, feminist security research contributes to the discipline of security studies. It is not enough to "add women and stir" or add additional risks to the list when considering security from a gender perspective. Therefore, a more basic shift in vision is needed so that we can see and comprehend the many other problems that contribute to insecurity in addition to military and government brutality (den Boer & Bode, 2018). The book Gender, Violence, and Human Security: Critical Feminist Perspectives (2013), significantly impact human security by fundamentally challenging gender inclusivity presumptions. Some people might be surprised by this result because gender inclusion has not often been a topic of discussion when it comes to human security. Instead, when the discipline first arose in the 1990s, topics like rape in combat made headlines, and its people-centred, all-encompassing, and context-specific goals look suitable to gender-sensitive applications.

Because "women" are merely added to a male-world experience used to predefine issues and approaches, this is human security in a man's world. They demonstrate how the human security field typically addresses gender through a traditional "add women and stir" approach, which fails to understand the causes of gendered insecurities, frequently fails at implementation, and still ignores critical issues. Instead, the writers attempt to understand human security in a gendered context, emphasizing feminist viewpoints (Tripp, Ferree, & Ewig, 2013)

The wider issue facing the human security community is akin to the contradiction of gender inclusion in a profession influenced by patriarchal frameworks. Despite a bold pledge to place individuals before states, human security is pursued through methods ingrained in self-interested governments. These inconsistencies – gender in human security in patriarchal, state-centred contexts – are interconnected and provide light on the underlying difficulty of power relations at the

conceptual and practical levels. Tripp, Ferree, and Ewig contend that power dynamics are crucial to "human security" in general, which Ferree defines as "a way of thinking about the world and its material social relations", as well as to feminist human security (Tripp, Ferree, & Ewig, 2013, p. 287). Gendering human security is, therefore, a technique of performing politics with rhetoric in this situation.

Furthermore, feminists in security discourse have discussed gendered discussions of human security and engaged in gender theory, feminist scholarship in related fields (international relations, development, and human rights), and gendered discussions of human security. They do this to show how feminist perspectives shed light on overlaps and advance the field. For instance, Tripp (2013) places a strong emphasis on the following points:

1. Connections between various manifestations and scales (micro and macro) of human insecurity,

2. Demonstrating how power and inequality serve as the foundation for all forms of violence; power and violence or insecurity as inherently political and gendered; inequalities as global; agency as complex rather than victim-perpetrator or gender-essentialist binaries; both individuals and groups as subjects of human security; preventative and structural goals; and the significance of "intersectionality".

Most human security literature examines "fear" concerns more than "desire" ones, places a heavy emphasis on developing nations, and ignores gender violence in non-conflict contexts. In-depth examination of intersectional human security issues, human rights overlaps, the drawbacks of "securitizing" efforts and the intricate roles played by NGOs in human security are also absent all of which have been highlighted by feminist studies of human security (den Boer & Bode, 2018).

Feminist Critiques of Human Security

While gender disparities in human security offer an important level of analysis, feminist analyses are primarily concerned with making women's perspectives visible. They collect and interpret data from the perspectives of girl's and women's diverse experiences, and influence policy development in relation to women's rights (McKay, 2004). Human security discourses and androcentric prejudices serve as the bigger referents for feminist analysts. They emphasize the need to eliminate gender-related fears, such as uneven social interactions, by

highlighting the experiences of girls and women (Tickner, 1992). Although they differ by colour, class, culture, and Euro-American, non-Western, and other views, feminist researchers recognize as accurate that patriarchal attitudes and practices favour males and are pervasive across the world.

Gunhild Hoogensen (2003) reaffirmed this viewpoint, emphasizing that security should be determined by those who lack it: "Feminisms, including western, non-western, and indigenous feminisms, offer powerful arguments articulating voices of the insecure, and deserve to be heard and responded to by mainstream sources". Whose security is prioritized and how is a central feminist query about human security? According to the feminist response, sexism – the discrimination against women and girls based on their gender – places boys' and men's security above that of girls and women (McKay, 2004).

But, although being acknowledged, this subject needs to be brought up again and again since human security discourses, which are often dominated by men, are prone to forget it. How do everyday women define human security relative to conventional definitions is another feminist query? What factors in a country or society contribute to, perpetuate, and produce gendered situations of human insecurity, and what are these factors? Feminist academics argue in their criticisms that rather than focusing on military security, human security must prioritize problems with physical, structural, and ecological violence. Moreover, their criticisms highlight the connections between sexual, economic, and military violence (Tickner, 1992).

Tickner (1999) highlighted how feminist criticisms depart from conventional masculinist views of human security by imagining global security that considers both state security and the security of persons and their natural environment:

> Instead of beginning with the state or the international system, feminist ideas on security begin with the person or the community. Feminists usually use local interpretation to explain women's relative deprivation and their uneasiness, rejecting universal explanations that, in their opinion, include concealed gender prejudices because they are frequently based on the experiences of males. Feminists research how race, class, and gender inequalities interact to increase women's fears (p. 42).

Another crucial element of enhancing gendered human security is gender justice, which is rarely included in feminist discourses on human security. Legal procedures that are fair, not privileged by or for males, and that differentiate gender-specific injustices that women encounter are referred to as gender-just. When girls and women seek justice in response to gender-specific violence, they are typically made invisible or marginalized inside legal proceedings, including war trials. Gender injustice, therefore, perpetuates inequality, violates fundamental human rights, impedes healing and psychological rehabilitation, and inhibits societies from reaching their full potential in the context of armed wars and their aftermath (McKay, 2004).

Conclusion

The gender perspective, according to proponents of the feminist perspective, is essential for understanding specific political processes, causes, and security challenges in general. Since that gender is a social construct, it shapes and affects not just the person but also the entire society. Due to its emphasis on studying at the personal level, both men and women, a feminist theory may be used to analyse a variety of security issues, including armed conflict, terrorism, human security, the intersectional nature of security issues, and other acts connected to political violence. It enables us to extend the analysis's focus and demonstrate that certain phenomena – including non-military threats – have significant cultural, social, and even biological determinants that affect how they develop, operate, and have an effect on outcomes.

Recommendations

This paper thus makes the following recommendation to stakeholders in the development of policies and programs that build the human security of individuals.

1. It is important to know that gender as a social classification is a vital one in understanding the economic, political, food, health, environmental, community and personal security of individuals and groups of individuals. Without this understanding, it will hard to create policies and programs that reflect and address the different lived experiences of people.

2. Gender mainstreaming in decision making positions is important to have a wholesome view of the different peculiarities of women and men that impacts their level of security. Without ample representation, one of the binary groups will be disadvantaged.

3. Like human rights discourse has shown to not be impacting all people's equally, human security cannot be addressed as a generic term. It is important to engender human security because what classifies as "human" as argued by the post-modern feminist, most times means white male individuals, with black female individuals being at the bottom feed of most social interventions.

4. More African feminist epistemologists and philosophers of science need to develop perspectives from the African context in order to take into account how gender intersects with human security.

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