



THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE MAINTENANCE OF INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY IN THE UNITED NATIONS

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the crucial importance of women in upholding global peace and security as part of the United Nations framework. It delves into the development of women's involvement in peacekeeping and security initiatives, reviews historical contexts, evaluates the impact of women's participation, discusses barriers, and highlights policies and initiatives aimed at enhancing gender equality in peacekeeping and security. Through the case studies and theoretical insights, the article underscores the necessity of women's involvement in sustainable peace and security, underscoring the importance of gender equality in international relations and providing recommendations for enhancing women's roles in global peace and security, such as increasing the representation of woman in leadership positions within peacekeeping missions to improve the inclusivity and effectiveness of peace processes.

Keywords; Conflict, Equality, Gender, Human Security, International Peace, Peacebuilding, United Nations, Women.

INTRODUCTION

Historical Context and Evolution

The United Nations [UN] has progressively recognized the importance of women's participation in maintaining international peace and security. The historic approval of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security in 2000 represented a major milestone in recognizing and advancing the participation of women in peacekeeping and security (UN Women, 2019).

Historically, international diplomacy and peacekeeping have been male-dominated fields, with women often relegated to supporting roles (Enloe, 2000). However, women's roles in these areas have expanded significantly over the past few decades. The United Nations (UN) has progressively recognized the importance of women's participation in maintaining international peace and security. The landmark adoption of UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on women, peace, and security in 2000 marked a significant step towards acknowledging and

promoting the role of women in peacekeeping and security (UN Women, 2019). This resolution urged member states to increase the participation of women in peace and security efforts and to incorporate gender perspectives in all aspects of conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

Though the inclusion of women in peace and security had been an ongoing issue, the adoption of UNSCR 1325 marked a pivotal shift in recognizing the critical contributions of women to sustainable peace. Before UNSCR 1325, women's role in peace and security was often marginalized, with limited representation in informal peace negotiations and peacekeeping missions (Thakur, 2017). This article, therefore, seeks to examine the role of women in UN peacekeeping and security, the impact of their participation, and the challenges they face. It also explores UN policies and initiatives designed to promote gender inclusivity in peace and security efforts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The role of women in international peace and security has garnered significant scholarly attention, particularly in the context of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and the broader women, peace, and security (WPS) agenda. This literature review synthesizes key contributions from various empirical studies, theoretical frameworks, and critiques regarding the integration of women into peacekeeping and conflict resolution efforts.

Conflict

The concept of conflict encompasses a spectrum of disputes, ranging from interpersonal disagreements to large-scale wars. In the context of international relations, conflicts often arise from deep-rooted political, social, or economic grievances. Women are frequently disproportionately affected by conflict; they may face gender-based violence, loss of livelihoods, and displacement. Moreover, the unique experiences of women during conflicts can lead to the emergence of grassroots movements advocating for peace and justice, as evidenced in Liberia's Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace movement (Gbowee, 2011). Research has demonstrated that the inclusion of women in peace negotiations significantly enhances the likelihood of durable peace. Paffenholz et al. (2016) highlight that peace agreements are more likely to endure when women are part of the negotiation process, as they bring attention to issues such as human rights, social justice, and reconciliation, which are often overlooked in male-dominated discussions.

Equality

Gender equality in peace and security is fundamental to ensuring that all individuals have equal rights and opportunities, particularly in post-conflict reconstruction and governance. The importance of gender equality is underscored in UNSCR 1325, which calls for women's equal participation in peace processes as a crucial component of sustainable peace. However, achieving gender equality in practice remains fraught with challenges. Despite the adoption of various international resolutions and frameworks, systemic barriers persist, such as cultural norms that undervalue women's contributions and institutional biases that limit their access to leadership roles

(True, 2018). Addressing these barriers is not only a matter of social justice but also a strategic necessity; research shows that when women's voices are included in peacebuilding efforts, the resulting policies are more likely to address the diverse needs of affected populations, fostering long-term stability (Karim & Beardsley, 2017).

Gender

Gender as a concept refers to the social roles, behaviors, and expectations associated with being male or female. In the realm of international peace and security, gender analysis is crucial for understanding how conflicts uniquely impact different groups. Gendered dynamics often influence both the causes and consequences of conflict, as well as the responses to it. Feminist theories critique traditional security paradigms for their failure to account for the roles that women play in both conflict and peace (Tickner, 1992). Gender mainstreaming, as promoted by UNSCR 1325, advocates for the integration of gender perspectives into all peacekeeping and conflict resolution efforts. This shift is essential for recognizing and valuing women's contributions as peacebuilders, ensuring that their experiences and needs are considered in peace agreements and post-conflict policies (True, 2010).

Human Security

Human security represents a paradigm shift from traditional notions of security, which prioritize state sovereignty and military might, to a focus on the safety and well-being of individuals. This concept encompasses various dimensions, including economic, food, health, environmental, and personal security (Luna, 2020). Women often experience multifaceted threats to their human security in conflict situations, including gender-based violence and economic insecurity. Their involvement in peace processes is vital to promoting human security, as they tend to advocate for comprehensive solutions that address the underlying causes of conflict. Their participation ensures that peacebuilding efforts prioritize the protection of vulnerable populations, ultimately leading to more resilient communities (Karim & Beardsley, 2017).

International Peace

International peace refers to the absence of conflict and the presence of stability on a global scale. It is a central goal of the United Nations, which seeks to mediate disputes and facilitate negotiations among conflicting parties. The inclusion of women in peace processes is critical to achieving international peace, as women's perspectives often lead to more holistic and inclusive peace agreements. The UN's commitment to integrating gender perspectives into its peacekeeping efforts, particularly through UNSCR 1325, underscores the importance of women's participation in fostering sustainable peace (Bellamy & Williams, 2013). Furthermore, women's involvement in international diplomacy and peacebuilding can enhance the legitimacy of peace initiatives, as they bring diverse experiences and viewpoints that resonate with a broader range of stakeholders (UN Women, 2019).

Peacebuilding

Peacebuilding encompasses a range of actions undertaken to establish a lasting peace after a conflict, including reconciliation, reconstruction, and the establishment of governance structures. Women play a pivotal role in peacebuilding, often taking on leadership positions in grassroots movements that advocate for justice and equality. Their involvement is critical to ensuring that peace agreements address not only the cessation of hostilities but also the social, economic, and political inequalities that contributed to the conflict (Gbowee, 2011). Moreover, women's participation in peacebuilding processes has been linked to the incorporation of gender-sensitive policies, which can lead to more equitable post-conflict recovery and reconstruction efforts (Paffenholz et al., 2016). However, despite the recognized importance of women's contributions, barriers such as societal norms and institutional biases continue to hinder their full participation in formal peace processes (Howard, 2019).

United Nations

The United Nations serves as a key player in promoting peace and security on a global scale. Through various resolutions, including UNSCR 1325, the UN has recognized the essential role of women in peacekeeping and conflict resolution. The UN's initiatives aim to increase women's participation in peace processes, reflecting a growing understanding that their involvement leads to more effective and lasting peace solutions (Bellamy & Williams, 2013). Despite the progress made, challenges remain in fully implementing these commitments, as many peacekeeping missions continue to struggle with gender parity. Ongoing advocacy and policy reform are necessary to ensure that gender considerations are prioritized in all aspects of UN operations and that women's voices are heard and valued in peace negotiations (True, 2018).

Women

The participation of women in peacekeeping and security has evolved significantly, particularly in the context of global initiatives like UNSCR 1325. Historically, women's contributions to peace processes were often marginalized, but recent scholarship highlights their vital role as agents of change (Paffenholz et al., 2016). Women's involvement in peace negotiations has been linked to more comprehensive agreements that address a wide range of issues, including social justice and human rights. Additionally, female peacekeepers play a crucial role in building trust with local communities, especially in conflict zones where women and children may feel more comfortable approaching female officers (Karim & Beardsley, 2017). Despite these advancements, women continue to face significant barriers to participation, including cultural biases and institutional constraints that limit their access to leadership positions in peacekeeping missions (Howard, 2019). Future research should focus on enhancing the effectiveness of UN peace operations and addressing emerging global security threats in a rapidly changing world. The literature review synthesizes key insights and perspectives from scholarly works on the UN's role in maintaining international peace and security. It underscores the complexities and ongoing debates surrounding UN peacekeeping operations while highlighting areas for future research and improvement.

Evolution of UN Peace and Security Efforts

The evolution of UN peacekeeping efforts reflects a growing recognition of the importance of gender inclusivity in achieving sustainable peace. Historically, UN peacekeeping missions focused primarily on military and security aspects, often neglecting the roles of women and the specific needs of affected populations. However, the adoption of UNSCR 1325 in 2000 marked a pivotal shift in this narrative, calling for increased participation of women in peace negotiations and the integration of gender perspectives in peace processes (Thakur, 2017).

Thakur (2017) highlights that prior to UNSCR 1325, women's roles in peacekeeping were largely informal and marginalized. The resolution catalyzed a change, encouraging member states to commit to gender-sensitive practices in peacekeeping. Despite the positive intentions behind UNSCR 1325, its implementation has faced challenges. Many peacekeeping missions still struggle to achieve meaningful participation of women, often falling short of the targets set forth in the resolution. This discrepancy underscores the ongoing need for reforms and dedicated efforts to address the barriers that hinder women's involvement in peacekeeping (Doyle & Sambanis, 2006).

Effectiveness of UN peacekeeping operations

The effectiveness of UN peacekeeping operations has been a topic of extensive scholarly debate. According to Bellamy & Williams (2013), peacekeeping missions can significantly reduce the recurrence of conflict, particularly when deployed early and equipped with robust mandates. Their research indicates that when women are included in peacekeeping efforts, missions often become more effective. This is because women tend to foster trust and cooperation within local communities, essential for successful peacebuilding (Karim & Beardsley, 2017).

However, the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations is not uniform. Factors such as resource constraints, unclear mandates, and political challenges can undermine mission success (Bellamy & Williams, 2013). Moreover, the underrepresentation of women within peacekeeping forces leads to a lack of attention to gender-specific issues, which can result in inadequate responses to gender-based violence in conflict zones (Howard, 2019).

The UN security council and peacekeeping mandates

The UN Security Council (UNSC) holds primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. It authorizes peacekeeping missions and mandates that shape their scope and operations (True, 2018). The UNSC's ability to integrate gender perspectives into its resolutions has been a critical aspect of promoting women's participation in peace processes.

True (2018) emphasizes that resolutions like UNSCR 1325 and its successors explicitly call for the inclusion of women in peacekeeping and conflict resolution, yet the application of these mandates often varies by context. While some peacekeeping missions have successfully included women, others have not achieved the gender parity envisioned in these resolutions. This inconsistency highlights the need for ongoing advocacy and policy reform within the UNSC to ensure that gender considerations are prioritized in all peacekeeping mandates.

United Nations Policies and Initiatives

The UN has implemented various policies and initiatives to enhance women's role in peace and security which include the following:

UNSCR 1325 and subsequent resolutions: These resolutions mandate increased participation of women in peace processes and the integration of gender perspectives in peacekeeping.

UN Women: Established in 2010, UN Women promotes gender equality and empowerment of women, including their roles in peace and security.

Gender Parity Strategy: Launched in 2017, this strategy aims to achieve gender parity at all levels of the UN by 2028, including in peacekeeping and diplomatic roles.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Examining the role of women in the maintenance of peace and security within the United Nations encompasses several interrelated theories and concepts. These include feminist theory, human security, inter-sectionality, and institutional theory. This review helps to contextualize and analyze the contributions of women in peacekeeping and diplomacy, the barriers they face, and the impact of gender-inclusive policies.

Feminist Theory

Feminist theory is crucial for understanding the gendered dimensions of peace and security. It critiques traditional approaches that often overlook the contributions of women and the importance of gender equality in achieving lasting peace. Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990) is foundational in exploring the performative nature of gender, highlighting that gender identities are socially constructed rather than fixed. This perspective emphasizes the need for gender inclusivity in peace and security discussions.

1. **Gender Mainstreaming:** This approach emphasizes the integration of gender perspectives into all policies and practices. According to UNSCR 1325, gender mainstreaming is essential for ensuring that women's experiences and needs are considered in peacekeeping and conflict resolution (UN Women, 2019). By promoting gender equality in peace processes, mainstreaming efforts can lead to more inclusive and sustainable outcomes (True, 2010).
2. **Patriarchy and Power Dynamics:** Feminist theory highlights the influence of patriarchal structures on the peace and security agenda. Tickner (1992) argues that power dynamics rooted in patriarchy often marginalize women's voices in decision-making processes, resulting in peace agreements that fail to address the specific needs of women and children. Recognizing these power dynamics is essential for creating equitable peace processes that genuinely reflect the interests of all stakeholders.

Human Security

The concept of human security shifts the focus from traditional state-centric security to the security of individuals, particularly vulnerable populations, including women. Human security encompasses various dimensions, including economic, food, health, environmental, and personal

security (Luna, 2020). This broad perspective is essential for understanding the multifaceted challenges that women face in conflict and post-conflict situations, allowing for more holistic and inclusive approaches to peacebuilding.

1. **Comprehensive Security:** Human security encompasses various dimensions, including economic, food, health, environmental, and personal security (Luna, 2020). This broad perspective is essential for understanding the multifaceted challenges that women face in conflict and post-conflict situations, allowing for more holistic and inclusive approaches to peacebuilding.
2. **Protective and Empowerment Roles:** Women play critical protective and empowerment roles in their communities, particularly during and after conflicts. Research shows that women are often first responders in crises, taking on leadership roles in mobilizing resources and advocating for the needs of affected populations (Karim & Beardsley, 2017). Their involvement in peace processes can lead to policies that not only protect vulnerable groups but also empower them to participate actively in rebuilding their societies.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality provides a framework for understanding how multiple identities shape individuals' experiences and access to resources and opportunities in peace processes. Women's experiences in conflict are not monolithic; they are shaped by various intersecting identities, including race, ethnicity, class, and sexual orientation (Crenshaw, 1991). Recognizing these multiple identities is essential for understanding the diverse challenges women face in conflict zones and the importance of tailoring interventions to meet their specific needs.

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2. **Inclusive Participation:** Intersectionality emphasizes the need for inclusive participation in peace processes, ensuring that the voices of all women, especially those from marginalized communities, are heard. This inclusivity is vital for creating peace agreements that address the varied experiences and needs of different population groups (Howard, 2019).

Institutional Theory

Institutional theory focuses on the structures and norms within organizations that influence behavior and decision-making processes. To effectively integrate gender perspectives into peace and security efforts, organizational changes are necessary within institutions like the United Nations. Berdal & Ucko (2016) argue that institutional reforms must prioritize gender equality and create environments that support women's participation in leadership roles.

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Nations. Berdal & Ucko (2016) argue that institutional reforms must prioritize gender equality and create environments that support women's participation in leadership roles.

2. **Policy Implementation:** Effective policy implementation is crucial for translating gender-sensitive commitments into practice. As True (2018) notes, while resolutions like UNSCR 1325 provide a framework for promoting women's roles in peacekeeping, the actual implementation of these policies often falls short. Institutional mechanisms must be strengthened to ensure accountability and adherence to gender-sensitive practices.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Combining these theoretical perspectives provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing the role of women in peace and security within the UN. This integrated approach helps to:

1. **Critique Existing Structures:** By critiquing existing patriarchal structures and norms, these frameworks highlight the need for significant reforms in how peace and security efforts are designed and implemented.
2. **Highlight Diverse Experiences:** The integration of feminist theory and intersectionality allows for an examination of the diverse experiences of women in conflict, emphasizing that their contributions cannot be viewed through a singular lens (Sjoberg, 2009).
3. **Promote Holistic Security:** Ultimately, these theoretical perspectives advocate for a more holistic approach to security that recognizes the interconnectedness of social, economic, and political factors. Promoting holistic security involves addressing the root causes of conflict and ensuring that peace processes are inclusive, equitable, and responsive to the needs of all affected populations (Luna, 2020).

Thus, the theoretical framework for studying the role of women in the maintenance of peace and security in the United Nations is multi-dimensional drawing from feminist, human security, intersectionality, and institutional theories. This comprehensive approach allows for a deeper understanding of the contributions, challenges, and potential of women in peacekeeping and diplomacy and provides a robust foundation for developing gender-inclusive policies and practices within the UN.

METHODOLOGY

This research utilizes a qualitative approach to investigate the involvement of women in upholding global peace and security as outlined by the United Nations. The methodology consists of several interconnected components designed to gather and analyze relevant data effectively.

Research Design

The research utilizes a case study methodology focusing on Liberia and Colombia, chosen for their significant examples of women's involvement in peace negotiations and post-conflict reconstruction efforts.

Data Collection Methods

The data collection for this study involved multiple methods to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the research topic:

- **Document Analysis:** A thorough analysis of relevant documents was conducted, including United Nations Security Council resolutions, reports from UN Women, and peace agreements from Liberia and Colombia. This analysis focused on how these documents address women's roles in peacekeeping and security, particularly in the context of UNSCR 1325 and subsequent resolutions (True, 2018).
- **Literature Review:** The study included an extensive literature review of existing scholarly works on gender, peace, and security. This literature review synthesized findings from various empirical studies, feminist theories, and critiques regarding women's roles in peace processes (Paffenholz, T., Ross, N., Dixon, W., & McKeon, M., 2016; Bellamy & Williams, 2013).

Data Analysis

The analysis involved coding the collected data to identify key themes related to women's roles in peace and security, barriers to their participation, and the outcomes of their involvement in peace processes. Thematic analysis was employed to categorize and interpret the findings, allowing for a nuanced understanding of how women's participation contributes to sustainable peace.

Case Studies

Several case studies illustrate and provide empirical support for the assertion that women's participation in peace processes is not only beneficial but essential for achieving durable peace and addressing the diverse needs of communities affected by conflict.

Liberia: The role of women in the Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace movement not only contributed to ending the civil war but also ensured that the resulting peace agreement included provisions for women's rights and protections against gender-based violence. Leymah Gbowee's leadership in advocating for peace underscores the power of women in influencing political outcomes and promoting inclusive peace (Gbowee, 2011; Paffenholz et al., 2016).

Colombia: The active involvement of women in the peace negotiations with FARC has led to groundbreaking provisions that recognize the unique experiences and needs of women affected by the conflict. The peace agreement's emphasis on gender issues, including reparations for sexual violence survivors and land rights for women, reflects the critical contributions of women in shaping a more equitable and just post-conflict society (Bellamy & Williams, 2013; True, 2018). The literature consistently highlights the positive impact of women's participation in peace and security efforts within the United Nations framework. Despite the strides made since the implementation of UNSCR 1325, ongoing work is essential to surmount obstacles and fully unleash the capabilities of women in promoting peace and security. The commitment of the United Nations and its member states to advancing gender equality and facilitating women's meaningful participation in all stages of peace efforts should be unwavering

DISCUSSION

Impact of Women's Participation on Peace Agreements

Women's participation in peace and security has a profound impact on the success and sustainability of peace efforts. Research has shown that the involvement of women in peace processes leads to more comprehensive, inclusive, and long-lasting peace agreements.

Paffenholz et al. (2016) highlight that peace agreements are 35% more likely to last at least 15 years when women are involved in the negotiation process. Women tend to focus on a broader range of issues, including human rights, social justice, and reconciliation, which are essential for building sustainable peace. By addressing the root causes of conflict—such as social inequality and the marginalization of vulnerable groups—women bring a more holistic approach to peace negotiations (Luna, 2020).

For instance, women in Liberia and Colombia were instrumental in ensuring that peace agreements not only ended the conflict but also included provisions for gender equality, economic empowerment, and justice for victims of sexual violence (True, 2010). In Liberia, the involvement of women in the Accra Peace Agreement was crucial in bringing about a more durable peace that addressed the needs of affected women and children (Gbowee, 2011). Similarly, in Colombia, women's participation in the FARC peace talks ensured that gender issues were addressed, resulting in a more inclusive and effective peace agreement (Bellamy & Williams, 2013).

Enhanced Legitimacy of Peacekeeping Operations

Women peacekeepers also enhance the legitimacy of UN missions. Studies show that female peacekeepers are often more successful in building trust with local populations, particularly with women and children, who may feel more comfortable interacting with female officers. This trust is crucial in gaining the cooperation of local communities, which is essential for the success of peacekeeping operations (Karim & Beardsley, 2017). In many conflict zones, women peacekeepers have been able to engage more effectively with local communities, addressing the specific needs of women and children in conflict settings.

Reduction of Gender-Based Violence

The presence of female peacekeepers has also been linked to a reduction in gender-based violence (GBV) in conflict zones. Female peacekeepers are better positioned to respond to incidents of sexual violence and exploitation, offering support to survivors and providing a sense of safety to women in conflict areas (Karim & Beardsley, 2017). Furthermore, the inclusion of women in peace processes ensures that GBV is adequately addressed in peace agreements, leading to stronger protections for women and girls.

Barriers to Women's Participation in Peace and Security

Despite the significant progress made with the adoption of UNSCR 1325 and other gender-focused resolutions, several barriers still impede the full participation of women in peace and security efforts. These barriers are both institutional and cultural, with deep-rooted gender stereotypes and

social expectations playing a pivotal role in limiting women's involvement in high-level decision-making and peace operations.

Cultural Biases

One of the most persistent barriers to women's participation is the cultural bias against women in leadership roles, particularly in peacekeeping and conflict resolution. In many societies, patriarchal norms place women in subordinate roles, limiting their opportunities to participate in public life. This gender-based exclusion often manifests in the lack of women in military or diplomatic roles, which are traditionally viewed as male-dominated domains (Howard, 2019). Even within the United Nations, where resolutions have been passed to encourage the participation of women in peace processes, women's involvement is still limited, with female peacekeepers and negotiators often relegated to secondary roles (Thakur, 2017).

Institutional biases

Institutional biases within the UN and national governments also contribute to this exclusion. For example, women's participation in peacekeeping missions remains significantly lower than that of men. According to UN Women (2019), women constituted only 4.2% of military personnel and 10.8% of police personnel in UN peacekeeping missions as of 2019. These figures highlight the systemic barriers that prevent women from taking on leadership roles within the peacekeeping infrastructure (UN Women, 2019). Gender biases in recruitment processes, coupled with a lack of adequate training and support for women, exacerbate these disparities.

Security Risks and Lack of Support

Women in peacekeeping operations face unique security risks, including the threat of sexual violence, both from conflict parties and within their own ranks. Female peacekeepers often have to navigate hostile environments that may not be adequately prepared to accommodate the specific challenges faced by women, including access to proper sanitation facilities, rest periods, and adequate protection against gender-based violence (Karim & Beardsley, 2017). Furthermore, there are also risks associated with sexual exploitation and abuse, with reports indicating that some peacekeepers have been involved in incidents of misconduct (Howard, 2019).

Moreover, the lack of leadership positions in both military and diplomatic missions further hinders women's participation. The limited access to decision-making positions within the UN, coupled with the underrepresentation of women in senior peacekeeping and diplomatic roles, means that the voices of women are often left out of high-level peace talks. True (2018) emphasizes that without access to leadership positions, women remain marginalized, unable to influence key decisions that shape peace agreements and post-conflict reconstruction efforts.

Challenges and critiques

Despite the progress made in recognizing women's roles in peace and security, significant challenges and critiques remain. Howard (2019) points out that UN peacekeeping missions often

face operational and logistical hurdles, including inadequate troop contributions, unclear mandates, and difficulties in obtaining consent from conflicting parties. These challenges can lead to a diminished focus on gender issues, as missions may prioritize immediate security concerns over long-term gender equality goals.

Moreover, allegations of misconduct by peacekeepers, particularly concerning sexual exploitation and abuse, have tarnished the reputation of the UN and raised serious questions about accountability and oversight within peacekeeping operations (Howard, 2019). These incidents highlight the need for comprehensive reforms to ensure that female peacekeepers are protected and that missions uphold the highest standards of conduct.

Innovations and future directions

Recent scholarship highlights innovations in peacekeeping strategies such as integrating technology for early warning systems and leveraging partnerships with regional organizations [Berdal & Ucko, 2016]. Furthermore, there is increasing emphasis on conflict prevention and sustainable peacebuilding efforts to address the root causes of conflicts [Doyle & Sambanis, 2006]

CONCLUSION

The involvement of women in the maintenance of international peace and security is essential for building sustainable and inclusive peace. While significant progress has been made since the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, which recognized the critical role of women in peacekeeping and conflict resolution, there remain substantial barriers preventing women from fully participating in peace processes. These barriers, both cultural and institutional, continue to undermine the potential contributions of women in peace negotiations, military operations, and post-conflict reconstruction.

This paper has shown that women's participation in peace and security efforts is not only a matter of gender equality but also a strategic necessity. The evidence from case studies in Liberia and Colombia demonstrates that women's involvement leads to more comprehensive peace agreements that address a broader range of social, economic, and security issues. Women bring a unique perspective to peace processes, focusing on reconciliation, justice, and the long-term well-being of communities, particularly the most vulnerable—women, children, and marginalized groups. These contributions are crucial for ensuring that peace is not only achieved but sustained over time.

Moreover, the paper has highlighted the importance of theoretical frameworks such as feminist theory, human security, and intersectionality in understanding the challenges women face in the peace and security domain. These perspectives underscore the need for a more inclusive approach to peace, one that recognizes the varied and intersectional experiences of women in conflict and post-conflict settings. The active involvement of women at all levels of decision-making is essential for achieving lasting and meaningful peace as the international community continues to deal with intricate security challenges.

The United Nations and its member states have made strides through policies such as UNSCR 1325 and the Gender Parity Strategy to promote gender equality in peacekeeping and conflict resolution. However, much more remains to be done. To overcome the existing barriers and ensure that women are fully integrated into peace processes, significant reforms must be made. These include eliminating institutional biases, increasing the representation of women in leadership positions, and ensuring that peace agreements reflect the needs and aspirations of all affected communities, including women and girls.

The role of women in peace and security is indispensable to achieving not only political stability but also social justice and human development. Therefore, promoting gender equality in peace efforts is not just a moral obligation but also a practical one. When women are included in peace processes, the outcomes are more inclusive, comprehensive, and sustainable. The international community must commit to these principles and take concrete steps to ensure that women are empowered to play a central role in shaping the future of global peace and security.

Recommendations For Enhancing Women's Roles in Peace and Security

To overcome the barriers that women face in peacekeeping and to fully harness the potential of their participation in peace processes, several steps need to be taken. These recommendations are critical for enhancing women's roles in maintaining international peace and security.

1. Increase Representation in Peacekeeping and Diplomatic Missions

One of the most pressing recommendations is the need for gender parity in peacekeeping and diplomatic missions. Member states and the UN must make a concerted effort to recruit, retain, and promote women into leadership positions in peacekeeping and security roles. This can be achieved through targeted recruitment campaigns, capacity-building programs, and gender-sensitive policies. Ensuring that women are represented at all levels of decision-making is crucial for creating more inclusive and effective peace processes.

2. Provide Comprehensive Training and Resources for Women in Peacekeeping

To prepare women for leadership roles in peace and security, there must be a focus on training and capacity-building. Women should be provided with specialized training in conflict resolution, peacebuilding, negotiation skills, and crisis management. These training programs should be designed to equip women with the necessary skills to take on high-level positions in peacekeeping and diplomatic missions. Additionally, resources such as mentorship programs and leadership development initiatives should be introduced to support women in advancing their careers in peace and security fields.

3. Eliminate Institutional Barriers and Support Gender-Sensitive Policies

Member states and international organizations must work to eliminate the institutional barriers that prevent women from participating in peace and security efforts. This includes addressing biases in recruitment processes, ensuring equal access to resources and opportunities, and fostering a culture of gender inclusivity within peacekeeping operations. Gender-sensitive policies should be implemented at all levels of decision-making, ensuring that the needs of women and girls are adequately addressed in peace agreements, post-conflict reconstruction, and humanitarian aid.

4. Ensure the Safety and Security of Women Peacekeepers

The safety of female peacekeepers must be prioritized. This includes addressing the risks of sexual exploitation and abuse and providing adequate protection against gender-based violence both within the mission and in the communities they serve. Policies should be implemented to ensure that peacekeepers are held accountable for their actions, and effective reporting mechanisms should be in place to protect women from abuse and exploitation.

5. Promote Inclusive Peace Agreements

Finally, ensuring that gender perspectives are integrated into all aspects of peace processes is crucial. This includes not only increasing women's participation in peace negotiations but also ensuring that their concerns are reflected in peace agreements. For example, provisions related to women's rights, land rights, and protections against sexual violence must be included in peace accords to ensure that the needs of women and children are addressed.

Ethical Considerations

Throughout the research process, ethical considerations were of utmost importance. To maintain academic integrity, all sources of data, such as reports and academic articles, were cited and credited appropriately in this study.

Limitations

The intention of this research is to offer valuable perspectives on the involvement of women in peace and security. However, it is important to recognize the constraints of this study. Due to the qualitative approach, the findings may not be applicable to all situations. Furthermore, using secondary data may introduce biases influenced by the existing literature and viewpoints presented in the chosen materials.

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