Palestinian Youth

A study of gendered insecurities and agency

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Abstract

Youth present either a risk or a great opportunity for change. Traditionally youth have been perceived in binary terms of either as victim of wars or as threats to peace and security. The UNSCR 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security presents a shift in the perception of young people, now regarding them as agents of peace and security. This thesis will shed light on young Palestinians through a case study and pursue to investigate how one can understand the experience of insecurities that they face in their everyday life and how it may affect their agency. In order to do so, the thesis uses a feminist security approach, in order to unravel some of the underlying and interrelated factors of different forms of violence harming young Palestinians. Only by adding a gender lens and a broadened concept of security can gendered insecurities be unpacked. Reaching through the spheres of external and internal, domestic and public, I have identified interrelated structures, showing how the Israeli occupation work as an enforcement of a gendered hierarchy deeply rooted in patriarchal structures, thus affecting and harming youth's ability to engage agency.

Keywords: Palestinian, Youth, Agency, Security, Gender
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1. Introduction

Palestine, among other societies in the 'Global South' has experienced demographic changes, described as youth bulges, which encapsulate large youth cohorts within weak states, whereas the socio-political situation is stagnated. These youth bulges are said to create risks of armed conflict that increases with social, economic and political exclusion (Alfy, 2016:100), (Urdal, 2006:609). In order to cope with this demographic threat, the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted a ground-breaking resolution in 2015 on Youth, Peace and Security (2250). This resolution recognizes that "Young people play an important and positive role in the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security" (UNSCR 2250, 2015). The resolution symbolizes a shift in the perception of youth as only seen in binary terms of either victim/perpetrator, to instead be regarded as active agents for the maintenance of peace and security.

In light of this paradigm shift of youth are perceived, the resolution has contributed to an international awareness on youth and their agency. Nevertheless, it is yet too soon to conclude anything about local implementation of the resolution in theory and practice. Though, it is not too soon to put youth and agency under the loop. Hence, this research paper will aim to investigate the Palestinian youth and agency through the method of a single case study. I will apply a feminist security approach, in order to obtain deeper knowledge about the insecurities connected to the Palestinian youth and their engaging in agency. By using a feminist approach and gender lenses I will pursue an inquiry which is context-bound and aims to unpack some of the underlying and related factors that may affect the youth's agency as well as create a wider understanding of the insecurities that affect agency. In order to do so, this research paper will make use of Galtung's (1990) 'Triangulation of Violence'; direct, structural and cultural violence.

2. Purpose and Research Question

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate how the Palestinian youth experience gendered insecurities in their everyday life and how these insecurities may affect their agency. In order to do so, this thesis will be applying a framework of feminist security theory, whereas gender lenses will be the main approach in order to create an understanding of the insecurities the Palestinian youth experience. Hence, the research question:

- How can the gendered insecurities experienced by the Palestinian youth be understood in terms of a feminist security perspective? And how may these insecurities affect their agency?

In order to grasp and aiming to answer the research question in the most achievable way, I have chosen an analytical strategy where the empirical data will be presented throughout the analysis. The analysis will thus be structured in 6 paragraphs, whereas they each represent areas of Palestinian youth; *Occupation, Economic (Dis)Empowerment, Political (Dis)Empowerment, Health, Refugee Youth, Gender*. The analytical tool will thus be the application of gender-lenses in accordance with feminist security theory.

In order to analyze and investigate how the gendered insecurities are experienced by the Palestinian youth, insecurity will be operationalized into three indicators; *direct, structural and cultural violence*. The three indicators will support the analysis in order to answer the research question.

3. Theory and previous research

The problem area of this thesis deals with youth and their role as agents for peace. Despite the fact that we have a lot of knowledge of the situation of youth in conflict shattered societies, there is still a large knowledge gap regarding the role of youth in peacebuilding and their role in peace processes. Young people have traditionally been regarded as obstacles to peace, and there is not enough research in the positive direction regarding the role of the youth in peacebuilding (Cardozo et al., 2015:4-5). The insufficient knowledge in the field of youth participation in peacebuilding also includes a gender-gap. Though, there have been many feminist IR scholars who have written about women's agency in peacebuilding processes in an effort to develop a more complex understanding of gendered agency (Björkdahl and Selimovic, 2015: 168), (Sehabtu, 2017:3) there exists a gap in research regarding gendered youth agency, which now more than ever, is relevant due to the recent UNSCR 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security. However, does the term "youth" not connote gender difference and there exist a gender-blindness in matters of insecurities that young women and men suffers from in war torn societies. A gender-blindness which serves as a gap in order to cope and grasp challenges in terms of gender, that can affect a road to a gender-just peace (Sehabtu, 2017:3).

3.1 Feminist theory

Feminist theory emerged largely from the 1980's onwards and stands in stark contrast to realism, as the dominant approach in International Relations. (Peoples & Vaughan-Williams, 2010:39-40). According to feminist theory, the dichotomies of masculine/feminine, public/private, strong/vulnerable can all be understood as gendered dynamics constructed and reinforced by the patriarchal hierarchy (Sheehan, 2005:120). In times of conflict is the dichotomy visible in terms of gendered roles of the protector and the protected. Whereas the masculine attributes are described as autonomous, heroic protector and the feminine attributes are described as the dependent and vulnerable object in need of protection (Sheehan, 2005:126). A feminist approach thus problematizes the gendered binary structures and break down the separation of various spheres. Hence, the dichotomies must be challenged, by analyzing how they operate in various contextual settings in order to displace their hierarchical construction (Tickner, 1992:8).

The framework of feminist theory provides an analysis across the power dynamics of gendered hierachy and the binary distinctions of both public/private and political/personal which allows a deeper understanding of the insecurities among gendered youth. Feminist theorizing utilize gender as the lens to point out gender inequalities and thus pays attention to the effects of gendered power relations as they manifest between young men and women during and after conflict (Hudson, 2010:256-7). ¨

        "To look at the world through gendered lenses is to focus on gender as a particular kind of power relation, or to trace out the ways in which gender is central to understanding international processes" (Amanda Gouves cited in Sjoberg, 2010:3).

By applying a feminist approach and using gender lenses I will be able to ask what assumptions about gender are necessary to make particular statements, policies and actions meaningful. Hence, asking as such it allows this thesis to uncover new knowledge and theoretical insights that goes beyond traditional assumptions about the dichotomy of male/female (Sjoberg, 2010:4).

Within the framework of feminist theory there exists a variety of feminist approaches. Nevertheless, the perspective in this thesis will draw on a post-modern and post-positivist understanding of feminism, as I consider gender and gendered hierarchies as social constructions. Additionally, when studying gender, I find it necessary not only to apply a bottom-up approach in order to analyze the youth on a grassroot level, but also use a cultural contextual gender analysis as a key to avoid treating the gendered youth as if they had essential qualities, as if it were universal (Hudson, 2010:257). Hence, the feminist approach will be able to serve as a tool to unpack the (often) invisible patriarchal structures within the Palestinian society.

3.2 Feminist Security Studies

In order to analyze the insecurities connected to youth agency, I find it necessary to apply a feminist security aspect. Whereas, the concept of security has often been interpreted as a question of "national security" within the IR. This realist approach has regarded security as a matter concerning primarily military power used to protect the sovereign national state from other nations states (Sheehan, 2005:6). Feminist security theory has challenged this perspective by expanding the concept and addressing the inadequacy of the state-centered understanding of security (Tickner, 2014:8-10). Sjoberg argues that real-world events are not adequately addressed by rendering gender relations invisible because international phenomena show the significance and relevance of gender

as a factor in understanding and addressing security matters (Sjoberg, 2010:2) Thus, feminist security studies argue for the importance of illuminating security matters from a bottom-up approach, in contrast to traditional IR theory usually taking a top-down approach. A bottom-up approach allows me to analyze the impact of violence at a microlevel in order to see the whole picture (Kaufman & Williams, 2010:16-7). By drawing on Galtung (1969,1990) who was the first to assert the need to acknowledge both the individual and the social elements of security. He argued that peace cannot be simplified to the absence of war, thus peace means an establishment of social justice. Hence, peace means the absence of direct, indirect structural and cultural violence (Ní Aolaín, 2013:42). Feminist security studies thus broadens the concept of security in order to encompass physical, social, economic and sexual security. By combining these sectors of security and affirming the experiences and relevance of gender, is the process of "gendering" security achieved (Ní Aolaín, 2013:45)

3.3 Conceptualization of the central notions

In order to fully grasp the purpose of this thesis, I find it logical with a conceptualization of the central notions connected to the theoretical framework because their function is to specify the scope of the theory. Though, not all notions can be conceptualized unambiguously and final I aim to define the notions as precise as it is feasible (Andersen et al., 2012:28-31).

3.3.1 Youth

In traditional international context, youth are frequently defined as a group based on age. However, there is no international consensus regarding an age-based definition on youth. Youth is defined in the Resolution 2250 as 18-29 years old, whereas UN defines youth as 15-24 year old (Youth4Peace, 2018:9) and UNFPA utilizes the definition on youth to be ages between 15-29 years (UNFPA, 2016:6).

Regarding youth as a social group, they are generally defined by a non-definition. A discourse that reflects the overall exclusion of the youth in societal matters, due to the perspective that they are in a transition process; not fully child, not fully adult (Youth4Peace, 2018:9). Furthermore, the youth are usually seen as a segment with a common youth identity in an a-historical category which does not change over time (ibid). I will argue, that neither of these definitions are comprehensible to fully grasp the concept of youth. Instead I will approach youth as heterogenous group consistent with diversity which can be seen as a social process, linked to complex social and political process

(Wyn, 2011:35). In order to do so, I will reconceptualize the matter of age, which tends to have an essentialist perspective when only focusing on the length of times in the biological, social, and cognitive development which is measured, without the influence of socioeconomic, political, physical or psychological factors (Habashi, 2017:28-29). Instead, will the conceptualization of age, in accordance with Hopkins & Pain (2007), consists of three premises that can provide an alternative view on age manifested in social identity; 1) *Intergenerationality*, which extends the concept of age and expression of youth's identity within the interactions between generations, community and family members. Because the youth's collective memories are constructed through interactions. 2) *intersectionality*, which emphasizes various social markers of the young people's identity, such as class, location, gender etc. 3) *life course notion,* which focuses on unpredictable events in the youth's lives, such as loss of parents, pregnancy, homelessness etc. The latter premise can affect the two first and therefore have an impact of the meaning of age. Hence, an individual might have passed the adulthood stage, but still remain a child in other aspects (Habashi, 2017:29-31). So as for the purpose of this thesis, terms youth and young people will be a relative term that is contextually bound.

3.3.2 Gender

In order to understand feminist theory with a gender lens, it is necessary to note that gender and biological sex are not equivalent. Gender is a system of symbolic meaning that creates social hierarchies based on perceived associations with masculine and feminine characteristics. In Western thought, gender symbolism describes the way in which masculine/feminine are assigned in organized dichotomies, where masculinity tends to be associated with a higher value (Sjoberg, 2010:3-5). Though, it needs to be emphasized that not all people experience gender in the same way, each person lives gender in a different culture, body, language, and identity (ibid). Nevertheless, gender in this thesis is defined as a set of discourses that represent, construct, change and enforce social meaning due to the structural feature of social and political life. Gender is therefore not a variable divided in male/female but as a more complicated symbolic and cultural construction (Ibid).

3.2.3 Agency

Youth agency has been perceived in multiple ways, such as security threats and perpetrators, victims in need of protection, as resilient young people in their own right and as heroic agents who

contribute to peace and security. These perceptions have been constructed within international discourse without much attention to the youth and their perceptions (Cardozo et al., 2015:4-5). Hence, the context-bound situation they find themselves in has not been given much attention. Agency in this thesis will therefore be applied as a term that involves a myriad of other underlying factors such as socio-economic, gender insecurities and other cultural context-bound insecurities. Henceforth, only by looking at the concept in a broader sense, beyond binary structures such as perpetrator/victim, it will it offer a comprehensive understanding of youth agency and how their agency in peacebuilding can be coped with (ibid).

3.2.4 (In)security

The notion of security has traditionally been connected to the national security, which according to feminist theory, is a masculine structure which emphasizes the sovereign man and sovereign states (Sheehan, 2005:123) By taking a feminist approach, I wish to conceptualize the notion of insecurity in a broad sense, whereas the referent object is no longer bound by the state, but instead moved towards human security. Because a simplistic notion of security is inadequate in addressing and recognizing the systematic social relations of domination that makes youth vulnerable to security threats locally and globally (Sheehan, 2005:130-1). Violence and insecurity exist in continuum, and only by moving the understanding of security from being an object to a "process", in which takes different forms in a variety of sectors, will it broaden and enrichen the concept of security (Sheehan, 2005:128-30). Hence, I will in this thesis broaden the concept of insecurity and thus make use of Galtung's (1990) 'Triangle of Violence', whereas insecurities among young people are connected to three concepts of violence; *direct violence, structural violence and cultural violence.*
Direct violence is concerned with physical violence and is usually visible, though it can also take form as threats and psychological traumas.
Structural violence is generally a result of social stratification processes and is concerned with basic human needs; survival, identity, freedom. Thus, it may not be very visible and is therefore hard to break down.
Cultural violence can be understood as symbolic violence which can be expressed in religion, ideology, language etc. and is used as a legitimization of both direct and structural violence. It thus offers justification for accepting violence in all forms, whenever it can be justified in the name of religion, nation-state, ideology, medias etc.

4. Method

This research paper aims to elucidate the case of Palestinian youth, and in accordance with the research question, I will identify and analyze how the gendered insecurities Palestinian youth face and understand how they may affect their agency. I will apply the framework of feminist theory with a set of gender lenses in order to obtain a deeper understanding of contextual-bound insecurities and seek to create an understanding of how these insecurities might affect Palestinian youth and their agency. By applying the framework of feminist theory and feminist security studies, drawing on Galtung (1969, 1990), this research paper strives to illuminate and investigate insecurities of direct violence and indirect structural and cultural violence harming agency of freedom and independence.

The methodology applied in this case study will be of an abductive character, hence the analysis will take form within the interaction between theoretical examination and empirical exploration. In order to do so, I have chosen a single case study of the Palestinian youth in the Gaza strip, East Jerusalem and the West Bank. By choosing case study as a method, it allows the case to be studied and examined intensively, while also being situated in a comparative context, whereas arguments, theories and findings may be relevant to other similar cases and thus be used to illuminate something about general political phenomena. Lastly, I aim to create a wider academic relevance and thus not only foster meaning for the specific case chosen in this thesis (Halperin & Heath, 2012:205).

A case is defined as an "instance of class of events", which can be studied with the purpose of generic knowledge which regards the causes or differences and similarities among other instances within the same class of event. (George & Bennet, 2005:17-8). The case of Palestinian youth can thus be considered as an instance of youth in a conflict-shattered society facing insecurities, which this research paper strives to provide a deeper understanding of and thus can produce generic knowledge. Henceforth, this study will be able to contribute to other cases of youth living in conflict-shattered societies. Lastly, I will argue that by choosing a single case study it will allow this research to gain a deeper understanding of factors related to the current issue and to proceed an inquiry with a stronger conceptual intern and extern validity (Heath & Halperin, 2012:205)

4.1 Delimitation

This research paper will include certain limitations, such as limits related to time and geography. When studying Palestinian youth, it will be limited to those Palestinians living within the occupied Palestinian territories such as the Gaza strip and the West Bank; Area a, b and c Additionally, East Jerusalem will also be included within the geographical limitation. Hence, the young Palestinians living within Israel are not included due to the challenges in collecting precise data and the limited space of this thesis.

By using the notion of Palestine and Palestinians it will thus imply the occupied Palestinian territories and East Jerusalem as well as Palestinians living within these geographical areas. Moreover, the timeframe will be limited to the years 2001-2019. Though I aim to investigate the Palestinian youth and their current situation, I will argue that older data will be considered valuable as well. Lastly, am I aware of references that dates back before 2001, yet I acknowledge them for being useful in the analysis to describe the situation within the chosen timeframe.

4.2 Material

The data used in this research paper has primarily been collected from official reports made by a variety of organizations. I have been using official reports made by United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), who have formed comprehensible material based on target groups consisting of a variety of young Palestinians. Additionally, my data has been collected through reports made by "Sharek Youth Forum" which is a local organization focusing on Palestinian youth. Secondarily, I have used academic material; dissertations, books and articles. In addition, data has been collected from official databases such as Freedom House, Palestinian Authority and International Labor Force. Hence, empirical data has been collected from a mix of qualitative and quantitative material. By using different types of data, so called triangulation of information, it can provide multiple aspects of the same phenomenon and hence ensure a stronger validity in this research paper (Höglund & Öberg, 2011, p. 7).

4.3 Case selection

I have selected the case of Palestinian Youth on the basis of two factors. First, due to the relatively new UNSCR 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security, that recognizes that today's generation of youth is the largest the world has ever known, and that young people often form the majority of the population of countries affected by armed conflict (UNSC, 2015). The resolution serves as a

landmark, since it changes the shift in perceiving youth, from being either victims/perpetrators to become active agents for peace and security (Williams, 2016:107). Thus, the resolution aims to give youth greater voice in decision-making at the local, national, regional and international levels (UNSC, 2015).

Secondly, have I chosen the geographically case Palestine due to the large demographical changes, hence almost 50% of the Palestinian population is under the age 29 (UNFPA, 2017a:2).

As the issue of youth and gender-based violence and insecurities are interlinked and documented to be a general problem in many conflict shattered societies, notably in the MENA region (Chatty, 2010:337). Hence, I will argue that my choice of case is less sensitive to selection bias and lack of representativeness (George & Bennet, 2005:22-24).

4.4 Operationalization

In order to grasp the theoretical framework and define insecurities in order to gain a better intersubjectivity, I find it necessary with an operationalization to transform the abstract and theoretical notions, in order to achieve the analysis in accordance with the research question (Andersen, 2012:32) This thesis will be utilizing a structured and systematic operationalization known from the method of comparative case studies (Guy Peters, 2013:87-9). Whether carrying out a single-case study or a multiple case study, applying a comparative operationalization of general questions to the case, requires a standardizing of data in order to compare data with other similar cases (George & Bennet 2005:86). By applying the method, it allows me to provide a systematic and structured approach to the research and thus provide a higher validity and intersubjectivity which can generate a simple and transparent framework that "should be applicable to all cases within the class or subclass of events with which the study is concerned" (ibid).

4.5 Indicators of insecurity

In order to structure the inquiry, the indicators of insecurity will draw on Galtung's (1990) triangle of violence defined as:

1) *Direct violence to young people's agency*
- This indicator is concerned with the physical and psychological harm that young people experience

2) Structural violence against young people's agency

- This indicator is a form of indirect violence concerned with social stratification processes with is structured in a society that harm young people

3) Cultural violence against young people's agency

- This indicator is concerned with those aspects of culture, religion, ideology that can be used to justify or legitimize *direct* or *structural violence* that harm young people.

The aim is to utilize these indicators in order to investigate the case of Palestinian Youth, as I aim to obtain a deeper understanding of the underlying factors that can be used to explain and understand how youth experience insecurities and how they affect their agency.

5. Analysis of the case study

In order to carry out the analysis in the most achievable way I will present and include the empirical collected data within the analysis. I will argue that by presenting the data throughout the analysis, it will thus enhance the in-dept analysis I aim to accomplish. The analysis will consist of six empirical parts that each reflects the different indicators of insecurities the Palestinian youth face in their daily life. Lastly, will I critically assess how the various paragraphs show interrelated and underlying factors and thus, amass the analysis and how it can answer the research question.

5.1 The Occupation

In order to understand the insecurities that the Palestinian youth experience in their daily life and how it affects their agency, I find it necessary to shed light on the ongoing Israeli occupation in which they live.

Palestine has been under protracted Israeli occupation since the Arab-Israeli war in 1967. While being under occupation, the territory has been split into the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza strip, whereas each has its own governing body and legal system (UNFPA, 2017a:2). Furthermore, the West Bank has been split into three distinct areas in the followings of the Oslo Accords of 1993. The distinct areas of the West Bank where given different administrative statuses; Area A is under complete Palestinian civil and military control, Area B is under Palestinian civil and Israeli military control and lastly is Area C under complete Israeli civil and military control, whereas the latter comprises approximately 60% of the West Bank (ibid). In the aftermath of the second *Intifada*, Israel has established a network of restrictions on Palestinians, especially their movement. These policies are identified as Israel's "matrix of control" (Gokani, Bogossian and Akesson, 2015:204), which are documented to have not only led to a fragmentation of the Palestinian society geographically, but as well politically, economically, socially and psychologically (UNFPA, 2017a:2).

In a Sharek report from 2009, is it argued that the Israeli occupation is the prime cause of insecurity among Palestinian youth. According to a young Palestinian from the West Bank:

"[T]here is no security in our daily life, and it is proven by the arrests, vandalism, checkpoints, delays for hours and hours every day" (Sharek, 2009:106).

The physical presence of approximately 630 roadblocks, manned and unmanned checkpoints and the 40-60 mobile checkpoints set up by the occupational power, has significantly harmed the youth's freedom of movement, while it disconnects them from friends, relatives, education etc. According to a young Palestinian, from the West Bank:

"The occupation limits our transportation; I'm not talking about travelling outside the country, but even between the villages and cities as well" (Sharek, 2009:107).

Furthermore, the occupation challenges the legal framework. The occupied Palestinian territories are divided and while the Palestinian Authority (PA) tries to implement legal frameworks, they are impossible to enforce in areas such as East Jerusalem, Area C and Gaza. Notably, the PA published in 2014 a new Palestinian National Development Plan (NDP) which was a major step toward implementing gender-equality, with strategic objectives such as:

"The government will work towards reducing development gaps and inequities within our society on grounds of gender, age or community" and "Palestinian youth, including males and females, are more capable of participation in the labor market and social, political, cultural and sport events, and contribute more effectively to national development" (NPD, 2014:60-2).

Nevertheless, this effort was curtailed by the occupation due to the fact that if a law is put in place by the Palestinian Authority to protect Palestinian women, and cannot be enforced in the Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem nor Areas C, it has already lost much of its meaning for the Palestinian people as whole (Sharek, 2016:3-4). The impact of the occupation, through physical violence and threats of violence as well as restricted movement can be felt on a daily basis, but it also targets the human dignity by the humiliating routine checkpoint as well as the psychological and physical insecurities among the youth (Sharek, 2009:107).

These insecurities can through the concept of feminist security be understood as expressions of both direct and structural violence, endangering bodily safety and autonomy. More importantly, the occupation especially targets young female Palestinians, who by their families are restricted in their mobility, due to their family's fear of the Israeli forces. While the Israeli forces are known to deliberately target women and girls (Sharek, 2016:3). Consequently, the occupation has been enforcing the underlying patriarchal hierarchy within the Palestinian society (ibid).

From a feminist perspective, this can be seen as a reproduction of patriarch stereotypes, whereas men are the protectors and women are those in need of protection. The occupation is used as an argument to keep young females in the domestic sphere in order to protect them. In terms of a feminist approach, this is regarded as cultural violence, while the occupation is used as a justification to maintain patriarchal hierarchies and restrict the young women's free movement and right to autonomy. The dominating conservatism and the ingrained social customs within the Palestinian society has thus been reinforced by the Israeli occupation, whilst the stereo types of young men and women is a mechanism that works as a hindering gender equality and progress toward a gender-just peace.

5.2 Economic (dis)empowerment

The Palestinian economy has been integrated into the Israeli economy with the absence of 'economic borders' due to the 1994 Paris Protocol (UNFPA, 2017a:4), which combined with the ongoing occupation and its restrictions on construction in Area C, land sieges by settlements, as well as the siege on Gaza, has led to the fact that the economic growth is severely challenged. In addition, Palestine has been characterized by a 'youth bulge' since 50% of the Palestinian population is under the age of 29 years. A recent UNFPA study has demonstrated that Palestinian youth in the future can present a demographic threat, or a great opportunity– depending on a radical change in the investment on young people in the future (UNFPA, 2017a:1).

The large number of young people has resulted in remarkably high rates of unemployment (UNFPA, 2017a:4). By 2019 the youth unemployment had reached 49,30% (Trading economics) within Palestine; 39% in the West Bank and close to 60% in the Gaza strip (UNFPA, 2017a:04). The high numbers of unemployment reflect the very precarious situation that the young people are faced with. Surprisingly, access to education in Palestine is extremely high, with 96% overall literacy and almost 100% youth literacy, and almost 95% of children and 41% of youth aged 15-29 are enrolled in some form of education. Though, 55% of young graduated are unemployed. Noticeably, the Palestinian women are more highly educated than the men, with 13% higher academic education in comparison to the 9% of the men. However, is it not reflected in the labour force, where women only make up 19% of the labour market (UNFPA, 2017a:06).
The numbers reflect the heteronormative gender roles bound in patriarchal structures within the Palestinian society, where men are perceived as the providers and women as care-givers (UNFPA

:2017a:4). These patriarchal hierarchies can be expressed in terms of structural violence harming both young men and women's bodies and agency. Hence, men within the Palestinian society who most closely represent the cultural idea of the hegemonic male are rewarded and those who fail to live up to this ideal of performing 'subordinated masculinities' are not (Gokani, Bogossian and Akesson, 2015:205-7). Consequently, when the non-violent way of expressing masculinity within the Palestinian society; such as the breadwinner, provider and model for their family, has been obstructed, the disempowerment of their hegemonic masculinity has resulted in men oppressing the subordinated in the gendered hierarchy, which generally is young people and women. (Sharek, 2016:3). The women are thus often stranded in precarious longitudes, being marital or domestically abused and or with limited personal autonomy. Areas of the law that are not yet criminalized (UNFPA, 2018:9), hence underlines the patriarchal structures in Palestine. Additionally, the young women are unable to ask for help due to the societal stigma around violence, since blaming the victim rather than the abuser is a tendency noted within the Palestinian society (UNFPA, 2017a:5). This demonstrates how the societies ideals of hegemonic masculinities are harming both men and women, especially due to the fiscal crisis which obstructs the ideals and thus resulting in young men and women unable to perfume those ideals. This is an expression of direct violence and structural violence targeting the Palestinian youth's ability to perform autonomy whilst they find themselves in precarious situations which consequently affect their agency.

5.3 Political (dis)empowerment

In Palestinian Basic Law from 2003 is human rights enshrined under Title two, article 10 (PBL, 2003). However, a report from Freedom House 2019 concludes that both the West Bank and Gaza should be regarded as "Not Free" (Freedom House, 2019). The rating made by Freedom House reflects the extremely poor political rights which are directly informed by the Fatah-led Palestinian Authority (PA), whereas the current president Mahmoud Abbas' term was indefinitely extended in 2009. Years of infighting between political factions has meant that the youth are only seen as a voting body, rather than critically engaged political actors. In combination with decades without change, young people have withdrawn from political participation (UNFPA, 2017a:8). In a Sharek report from 2013 39% of young people answered that they "do not trust political parties" (Sharek, 2013:53-4) and many young people no longer feel that it is worthwhile engaging in the formal political sphere. The youth feel marginalized within the factional political sphere, especially young women, who lack many female role models in the political arena. Even though, the establishment of

a Youth Local Councils (YLCs) in the West Bank where meant to play an important role in the engaging of young people into politics, reality is that it serves to provide a means for governmental officials to appear engaged with youth, while political neglecting their voices and agencies (UNFPA, 2017a:9).

Nonetheless, half of the Palestinian youth believe that they have the ability to bring about changes, this is especially reflected in youth membership in civil and community organizations whereas 38% of youth is active in youth organizations. In addition, 59% of young people have stated that they already volunteered in their community (ibid).

The marginalization and exclusion of young people in the formal political sphere, can through a feminist perspective be seen as structural violence, whereas young people's voices and agencies are neglected. Hence, when young people's voices are not heard and only spoken on behalf of – they become marginalized (DeGraaf, 201:11-12)

The disengagement from party politics is related to a disillusionment, disbelief and mistrust of Palestinian factions, while they say they want change, the young people feel no change. Most young people also afraid of engaging in political parties. A young man, who reported being detained and tortured by the governmental security forces in Gaza, explained:

"We can't participate freely: the parties don't accept contradicting opinions; if you want to express yourself freely, you may be in danger, you might get hurt" (Sharek, 2009:21).

In accordance with feminist security approach, is it observable that the lack of political venues for voicing perceived grievances and dissatisfaction and the seeding of fear by the political parties illustrates both direct and structural violence against the youth's right to express concerns and insecurities about their entrenched marginalized situation.

Consequently, when taking political agency from young people, this might lead to a motivation for young people to take up arms in order to feel empowered, as a young Palestinian explains:

"I know young men who have gone the wrong way just to get 100 dollars so they can pay for their jawal [cell phone] cards and cigarettes […]" Sharek, 2009:21-2).

5.4 Health

The Palestinian youth suffer from a variety of health problems, which is caused by the ongoing occupation as well as negative gender norms such as stigma caused by the gender hierarchy within the Palestinian society. Furthermore, the healthcare system in the Palestinian territories extremely

dependent on the geographic context varying widely between the different areas (UNFPA, 2017a:10), above all in Gaza where there has been a decline in medical service (Sharek, 2013:11). The occupation and the restricted mobility within the occupied Palestinian territories cripples the healthcare system, by the inability to purchase medication as well as driving up the prices (UNFPA, 2017a:10) Additionally, the movement of ambulances and emergency healthcare is often restricted which recurrently results in patient mortality. Thus, the Palestinian healthcare system unable to provide necessary healthcare (ibid.).

Young people in Palestine are invariably faced with multiple psychological insecurities causing traumas due to the conjunction of external Israeli occupation and the internal patriarchal society. High rates of anxiety, depression and PTSD among youth are detected, particularly in Gaza. Among young women sexual harassment has been reported, notably higher in Gaza (25%) respective the West Bank (13.8%). Unfortunately, young people suffer from societal stigma which make them unlikely to seek help. Additionally, drug usage has been reported as frequent among young people in Palestine, notably in Gaza and East Jerusalem. The studies have emphasized that there is very limited accurate information on substance use in Palestine, due to the social stigma within the society. Stigmas also involves gender-based violence, especially marital violence and rape (UNFPA, 2017a:10-11). According to a 2011 Violence Survey 37% women have faced domestic violence in the West Bank, and a remarkably higher rate of 58,1% in Gaza. In addition, there is limited legal recourse to which women can turn to escape marital or familial violence (UNFPA, 2017a:11).

From a feminist perspective, is it observable that the youth suffer from a gendered social hierarchy where social stigmas are inflicting physical and psychological harm on their bodies. This can be interpreted as direct violence imbedded in cultural violence, whilst the religious-cultural context plays an important role in upholding gendered stigmas. Especially stigmas regarding sex, marital violence and substance use.

It is worth noting that the structural violence is inflicted by the occupation force because the restricted mobility and access to medication and equipment is crippling the Palestinian health care system. This structural violence causes direct violence such as health problems, towards the young Palestinians – justified by cultural violence in terms of the Israeli states policies (Brockhill, 2017:229). The conjuncture of social gendered hierarchy enforced by the underlying patriarchal structures within the Palestinian society and the 'power-matrix' of the occupation is a volatile

cocktail for the physical- as well as psychological health of the young Palestinians and is thus causing harm on the youth's ability to engender agency (UNFPA, 2017a:11-12).

5.5 Refugee youth

The West Bank is home to nearly 775,000 registered refugees, whereas a quarter of them live in 19 camps. In the Gaza strip the number of refugees is 1.4 million, which make up approximately 73% of the total population within the Gaza strip. Years of Israeli blockade have left 80% of the population dependent on external assistance. The Palestinian refugee youth live both within and outside of the UNWRA camps (UNWRA, 2019).

According to Chatty (2010) who has analyzed five reports about refugee youth, youth have expressed their dismay and dissatisfaction with the social exclusion and discrimination they experience by living in a poor physical environment where housing conditions are impoverished. The streets thus become their playing field and the social centers and religious groups become the place where political voices are expressed. Furthermore, Chatty has noted that young refugees express attributes of belonging to a certain identity group; Palestinians, refugees, camp residents, Muslims or Christians (Chatty, 2010:332).

Palestinian refugee youth feel excluded from the formal political sphere through structural violence inflicted by the Israeli occupation, though in some remarkably way the youth keep their agency through grassroot social initiatives, even though these initiatives might only reflect the young males, due to patriarchal structures which seems to be even stronger within the refugee communities.

The experiences of female Palestinian refugee youth are remarkably different from the males in terms of opportunities, constraints and responsibilities within the family, household and community. In comparison to the male refugees, are the experiences of social freedom lacking when regarding marriage, education opportunities. Furthermore, early marriage for female refugees is an emerging mechanism, which is offers them an out from crowded family households, and/or provide them security, though preventing them for completing their education. Remarkably, reports show that girls receiving less support in schools and tend to drop out, are the same girls being restricted in physical movement. In some areas are girls subjected to dress rigidly under Islamic or traditional norms and their movement is restricted in comparison to the young males (Chatty, 2010:330). As a young female from the West Bank explains:

"There are differences between my thinking and that of my parents. When I am bored, I like to go out of the house, but my mum prefers me to be at home. I can see the discrimination between boys and girls. Boys can spend 24 hours outside the house, but we stay at home. It is true that it is better for girls to stay at home, but it is boring" (Chatty, 2010:330).

In light of feminist security studies, the latter quote shows how the gendered hierarchy is very visible in the Palestinian refugee families and within certain areas of the Palestinian refugee community. The overt patriarchal structures within the society are restraining young refugee female's autonomous choice of dressing and their right to free movement is expressed through structural violence, embedded in cultural and religious norms that serves as a justification.

5.6 Gender

Palestinians experience a repressive gender climate, as Palestinian men suffer from living up to the patriarchal society's expectations to the ideals of masculinity, due to the socio-economic empowerment caused by the Israeli occupation. Although men feel the negative impacts of the patriarchal structures in combination with economic precarity, the situation of women continues to lag far behind (Sharek, 2016:6). Whilst social conceptions of gender impact men and women differently, in a patriarchal society such as the Palestinian, the heteronormative binary understanding of masculinity/femininity as well as male/female roles, have traditionally been of profound importance (UNFPA, 2017a:13). Whereas men in Palestinian society are regarded as the breadwinners, the protectors and lastly as the masculine 'model' whose role lies in the 'public' sphere, are the Palestinian women relegated to a position of care-takers and those in need of protection, which role is to be found in the 'private' sphere (UNFPA, 2017a:13).

Furthermore, have more conservative voices gained ground, particularly in Gaza, where motherhood is perceived as a national obligation, which is enforced through religious texts (European Parliament, 2011:15).

This conception of a dichotomy of male/female, private/public that is contextually bound within the Palestinian society, can according to Pettman (1996) be dangerous, as the dichotomy easily can convert to an idea of owned and controlled women (Sheehan, 2005:126) and thus be conceived as structural violence against the young women's ability to self-determination.

The patriarchal dichotomy also creates insecurities among the Palestinian men, as society place them in roles they cannot live up to. Due to the ongoing Israeli policies of closure and mobility

restrictions related to the 'matrix of control', the livelihood of the breadwinners has been affected and impoverished (Gokani, Bogossian and Akesson, 2015:205).

Furthermore, Peteet (2011) has described how physical violence against Palestinian men during the first intifada was reconstructed; from being shameful to becoming a 'rite of passage into manhood' (Gokani, Bogossian and Akesson, 2015:206). This transition from being a young man to become an adult man is now played out in the brave deed with expressions of fearlessness and assertiveness. The physical violence of beatings and detentions has produced a masculine identity, constituted as a form of resistant subjectivity that signals heroism and manhood and associated with authority and physical domination within the family (Peteet, 2011:197-9). The reproduction of asymmetrical gender relations has resulted in men returning from interrogation and detention with a new authoritarianism expressed in attempts to gain control, often leading to some men returning and inflicting violence upon women (Peteet, 2011:217).

By looking at the above phenomenon with gender-lenses, it is first and foremost an expression of a gendered hierarchy evolved in the context-bound situation in which the young Palestinian men are part of. Secondly, it is observable how gender is a system of symbolic meaning that creates social hierarchies based on perceived associations with masculine characteristics (Sjoberg, 2010:3).

As mentioned in Peteet's studies (1991, 2011), the Palestinian women are often subjected to violence by men attempting to obtain authority due to despair and frustration in. A situation that can be coined in terms of both direct, structural and cultural violence, because women are victims of direct domestic violence which is inflicted by the structural violence the occupation force upon the Palestinians, whilst justified through the patriarchal hierarchy within the society (European Parliament, 2011:9). Women are therefore in a position of 'double oppression' (UNFPA, 2017a:14). In addition, are Palestinian women simultaneously exposed to greater constraints in all areas of life; economic, social and political (UNFPA, 2017a:13) which is in accordance with the post-positivistic feminist approach to security. Hence, the security agenda must be broadened in attempt to promote the idea of security taking forms in all kinds of sectors, because insecurity and violence exist in a continuum and insecurities. Domestic violence should thus not only be regarded as a domestic matter (Sheehan, 2005:130). Lastly, I will argue, that young Palestinians, notably Palestinian women, who are part of the two most vulnerable groups within Palestine; women and youth, suffer from high vulnerability due to the patriarchy and the occupation that in combination marginalize their agency through direct, structural and cultural violence.

4.7 Critically assessing the analysis

In order to understand the insecurities among Palestinian youth and how they affect their agency, the sections above illuminate a variety of aspects of how Palestinian youth are exposed to a triangulation of violence, through direct, structural and cultural violence.

The latter paragraphs clearly show a pattern in which Israel's 'matrix of control' have enforced the deeply embedded cultural-bound patriarchal structures within the Palestinian society. The Israeli occupation has led to a fragmentation of the Palestinian society both geographically, politically, economically, socially and psychologically. Notably, the gendered hierarchy can be seen in all sectors causing severe insecurities. They can be observed by the expressions of direct and structural violence which is justified by cultural violence. the triangulation of violence especially targets the youth with emphasize on young women, who are in the precarious position of "double oppression" - as they are lowest in the gendered hierarchy. Consequently, the expression of the triangulation of violence targets the youth and affect their agency by placing them in vulnerable situations.

6. Discussion

The following section will include a discussion of the results found in the analysis in regard to the choice of theoretical framework, critical reflections of the analysis' results and the choice of method.

I will argue that a feminist perspective to international peace and security theory is of high relevance when analyzing the Palestinian youth's agency in peacebuilding. The theoretical framework of feminist security studies can contribute to broaden and deepen the understanding of insecurities connected to the notion of youth, whilst it can shed light on underlying binary structures within context-bound realities that creates insecurities. Thus, they need to be addressed, though they can seem invisible with the naked eyes. Furthermore, will I argue that by applying a gender lens to the analysis of Palestinian youth's everyday life and insecurities connected to it, it can illuminate some of the gendered hierarchical structures that can hamper the young people's ability to engage in agency.

Considering traditional discourses on youth agency, they have varied through times, though with a common denominator in terms of binary perceptions about youth as either victims in need of protection or as perpetrators of violence and threat to security. Simultaneously, has the voices of the youth been neglected in international debate on youth, peace and security as well as in local processes (Cadozo et al., 2015:4-5).

Nevertheless, the debate on youth as agents in the maintenance of peace and security has never been more relevant than now. The United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted in 2015 a ground-breaking resolution on Youth, Peace and Security (2250) which recognizes that 'Young people play an important and positive role in the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security'. The resolution 2250 is built on the cornerstones of the landmark UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security which focuses on the participation of women in decision-making processes.

This shift in the international discourse marks a new paradigm, whereas youth is about to be regarded as active agents for peace and security. Hence, the feminist security approach has never been more relevant, in order to elucidate the obstacles and insecurities young people may have when living in conflict shattered societies.

In addition to the findings in the analysis, that by applying a gender lens we will be able to unravel some of the insecurities connected to the young Palestinians everyday life and their engendering in agency. The ability to become active agents for peace and security rest upon what challenges they are faced with. Hence, the three concepts of violence; direct, structural and cultural have in this thesis contributed to shed light on the underlying societal structures and experiences the youth experience and thus, be able to understand how they can hamper their agency. Whilst, emphasizing the importance of the incorporation of youth as a category within existing theoretical frameworks. This might help solve problems and challenges connected to youth violence. By opening a listening space for young people by means of tools in gaining a sustainable future for peace and thus underlining the importance of a gender-just peace that is more inclusive of young people. I will therefore argue, that in accordance with my research question, that the usage of a theoretical framework of feminism and the method of generic knowledge, this is the most comprehensible approach to the analysis.

Due to the limited extend of this research paper, the research has been of a visibly narrow character. In regards of possible future research, similar study might benefit from a small-N method, in order to broaden the comparative aspects of the analysis. By comparing with another case whilst applying the same theory, maybe other aspects would enfold, or one would be able to generalize and outline other precise relationships between insecurities and youth agency. However, there is a risk of missing contextual knowledge. Hence, I will argue that the applied method of a single case study in this thesis have been of most comprehensible character, thus it allows me to do an intensive study of the Palestinian youth, deeply rooted in contextual knowledge
Lastly, I am aware of selection bias though, I will argue that the chosen case and indicators are representable in a wider study of political comparative studies. Hence, the results of this thesis can be of relevance and significance within comparative politics and to the current debate regarding youth, peace and security.

7. Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis was to investigate how the Palestinian youth experience gendered insecurities and how they might affect the youth's agency. By applying a set of gender lenses, this research paper has been able to unpack some of the underlying and interrelated factors that might cause insecurities among the Palestinian youth. In order to investigate the insecurities, I have been focusing on six central areas that each represent the Palestinian youth; occupation, political, economic, health, refugee youth and gender. Each of the chosen areas has shown an expression of direct, structural and cultural violence. Hence, these expressions of violence create insecurities among Palestinian youth. The overall result by looking at the six different areas has furthermore created a pattern in which the Israeli occupation through its 'matrix of control' has inflicted direct and structural violence against the Palestinian society, notably the Palestinian youth as the lowest in the social hierarchy. Strikingly, the analysis has shown that the Israeli occupation has enforced a patriarchal hierarchy, through direct and structural violence against the Palestinians. The patriarchal hierarchy has generated a system of symbolic meaning that creates a social hierarchy based on perceived associations with masculine and feminine characteristics. Young Palestinian males are thus placed in hegemonic masculine roles they are unable to live up to. Due to the occupations impact of their life, young Palestinian females are often associated with the private sphere, which often coverts the idea of women as the protected and controlled. Additionally, is young women put in position of 'double oppression', whilst both youth and women are lowest in the social hierarchy. The conjuncture of the occupation's direct and structural violence against the Palestinians and the enforced patriarchal hierarchy is a volatile cocktail for the Palestinian youth. Whilst, the structures of the Palestinian society also inflict direct and structural violence on young Palestinians. Additionally, the occupation is used as a justification for the cultural violence.

To answer the research question, the six areas of the Palestinian youth has shown how they experience gendered insecurities through a triangulation of violence, which consequently causes great harm in their ability to engage agency.

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