

The Causal Factors of Wartime Rape As Portrayed Through Character Kawsar in Nadifa Mohamed's *The Orchard Of Lost Souls*

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Abstract

The title of the research is The Causal Factors of Wartime Rape as Portrayed Through Character Kawsar in Nadifa Mohamed's *The Orchard Of Lost Souls*. The objectives of the study is to find out the causal factors that contributed to Kawsar experience of wartime rape. The theory used for causal factors of wartime rape is by Susan Brownmiller within the realm of feminism. The results of the thesis is the main causal factors behind the wartime rape are militarization, the utilization of rape as a weapon of war within factional or organizational conflicts, and gender inequality.

Keywords: Wartime rape, causal factor

A. INTRODUCTION

Wartime rape occurs during conflicts in disputed regions like Bosnia and Somalia. In Somalia, such incidents took place in 1988 and were portrayed in Nadifa Mohamed's 2013 novel. Although the novel is fictional, it reflects the realities of social life in Somalia during the civil war. Scholar M.H. Abrams suggests that literature mirrors life, its experiences, and feelings (Abrams, 2012: 1). Novels, a popular type of literature, thoroughly explore characters and their experiences, offering insights into social and political matters. Novels can highlight how race, class, and gender intersect to shape wartime rape experiences. They also critique the patriarchal norms and militaristic ideas that perpetuate violence against women.

This research focuses on the causal factors of wartime rape as portrayed through character Kawsar. According to Susan Brownmiller, in her *book Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape*, these three main factors are militarization, rape as weapon war, and gender inequality (Bronwmiller, 1975: 48).

Militarization of factions or organizations can lead to a culture of violence and aggression, as well as the dehumanization of the enemy, which can make it easier for soldiers to justify committing acts of sexual violence. In times of war and conflict, when militarization is at its peak, these attitudes are exacerbated, leading to the objectification and dehumanization of women. Women are often perceived as the spoils of war or merely pawns in the larger power struggles, reducing them to objects to be used and abused at the whim of the soldiers.

The enemy, too, becomes dehumanized, viewed as a faceless, inferior other, making it easier for soldiers to commit acts of sexual violence against them. (Brownmiller, 1975: 48)

Rape is often used as a tool of psychological warfare in wartime situations. The goal of wartime rape is not only to physically dominate and subjugate the victim, but also to demoralize and destabilize the enemy. The use of rape as weapon of war it is used of one faction to another faction to humiliate and control another faction. (Brownmiller, 1975: 21)

Furthermore, Brownmiller argues that the root causes of wartime rape can be traced back to the social and political structures that perpetuate gender inequality and normalize violence against women. Brownmillers contends that in many societies, women are viewed as inferior to men and are seen as objects that can be used and abused at will. This mentality is then amplified in times of war, when men are given permission to act with impunity and are encouraged to use sexual violence as a means of asserting their dominance and control over the enemy. (Brownmiller, 1975: 310-313)

By applying these theories, we can gain insights into the causal factors driving wartime rape, particularly within the context of the character Kawsar's experiences. The convergence of militarization, weaponized rape, and gender inequality contributes to a broader understanding of the complexities surrounding this wartime rape issue.

The novel that is investigated is *The Orchard of Lost Souls* (2013) by Nadifa Muhamad. The novel is set against the backdrop of the Somali Civil War and revolves around the lives of three women—Deqo, Filsan, and Kawsar. Their paths intersect amidst the chaos of conflict and its aftermath. Nadifa Mohamed, a Somali-British author, brings her own cultural heritage into her writing, infusing her storytelling with lived experiences. The novel reflects not only a work of fiction but also a mirror of the socio-political landscape of Somalia during the civil war. Through her narrative, Mohamed delves into the intricate dynamics of conflict, power, and the human toll of war.

The research question and objectives align with the central issue introduced in the opening. This research seeks to uncover the causal factors underpinning wartime rape in the novel *The Orchard of Lost Souls*. The study endeavors to illuminate how the narrative delves into the origins and driving forces behind wartime rape within the context of the story. By employing three causal factors mentioned earlier, the intention is to bring to light the intricate interplay of militarization, weaponized rape, and gender inequality that contribute to the occurrences depicted in the novel. Through the lens of causal analysis, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors that lead to wartime rape in *The*

Orchard of Lost Souls.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

The researchers conduct qualitative research in which the research does not give priority to number and tables. The source of data is the novel *The Orchard of Lost Souls* written by Nadifa Muhamad.

C. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

These quotes are extracted from *The Orchard of Lost Souls* by Nadifa Mohamed, shedding light on the causal factors that contribute to wartime rape experienced by Kawsar. These factors encompass militarization, the use of rape as a weapon of war, and gender inequality. The quotes selected offer insight into how these interwoven elements shape Kawsar's experiences within the context of the novel.

The military had purged all of those who challenged the government's edicts and now no outrage was inconceivable. Some brought to the prisoner camp, some ended up in a truck of corpses. (Mohamed, 2013: 95)

The above quotation vividly portrays the far-reaching implications of a militarized environment. The above quote vividly illustrates the extensive impacts of a militarized environment on governance and societal norms. The phrase "The military is purging all those who challenge the government's decrees" emphasizes how dissenting voices are suppressed in a militarized setting. This underscores the dominance and authority of the military, often leading to unchecked actions.

The statement "No outrage is inconceivable" poignantly captures the perilous effects of militarization. This suggests an atmosphere where the military's power has expanded, eroding moral and ethical restraints. Such unchecked power can result in severe abuses, including wartime rape. The lack of accountability can embolden military personnel to commit sexual violence, confident in the impunity granted by the militarized environment.

The reference to individuals being "brought to the prisoner camp" raises concerns about the potential for wartime rape within such settings. The prisoner camp, under military control, may foster various forms of abuse, including sexual violence. Power dynamics and minimal oversight in these environments create vulnerability for survivors and limited consequences for perpetrators.

Furthermore, mentioning some individuals ending up "in a truck of corpses" underscores the disregard for human life intensified by militarization. This heartless treatment

can extend to sexual violence, as victim dehumanization is common in wartime rape situations. The militarized context, with its hierarchical structures, facilitates these atrocities without accountability.

Another portrayal of militarization is when Kawsar was arrested just because listening to the radio and the below quotation is the interrogation scene.

‘Is this your first conflict with public officials?’
‘I was once fined.’
‘Why?’
‘I was wrongly accused.’
‘What of?’ snaps Filsan.
‘Listening to NFM radio,’ murmurs Kawsar.
‘Are any of your family mixed up with the rebels?’
‘I don’t have family. I am alone.’
‘So why is a woman of your age tuning into childish propaganda?’
‘I wasn’t, but even if I did, aren’t these my own ears? Given by God to do with as I please?’ Kawsar’s hand flicks her right ear lobe. (Mohamed, 2013, 36)

The above quotation showcases a tense exchange between Kawsar and public officials, revealing the prevailing atmosphere of surveillance and control during wartime. Kawsar’s acknowledgment of once being fined for tuning in to NFM radio underscores the mood of restriction. NFM radio holds significant symbolism as a beacon of rebellion and resistance against the oppressive regime. The radio serves as a platform for dissent, offering counter narratives and information that challenge government propaganda.

The derogatory language used by officials towards NFM radio exposes the regime’s attempt to manipulate the narrative and undermine dissenting information. Furthermore, the questioning surrounding NFM radio unveils the regime’s apprehension toward opposing voices and their determination to silence dissent. In a militarized setting, where control hinges on violence and oppression, any perceived link to rebel groups, even through media consumption, can lead to dire consequences for civilians.

The portrayal of NFM radio as the rebels’ voice enriches the novel’s exploration of resistance and the struggle for liberation. It underscores media’s potency in shaping public perception and conveying alternative viewpoints, even amid repressive regimes. The radio station evolves into a symbol of hope and defiance, representing those seeking transformation and justice amidst a backdrop of violence and despotism.

Kawsar's experience of facing sexual violence exemplifies how rape becomes a tool to assert dominance and punish her and those associated with the opposition, as evident in the quotes below.

The government is going to shut down the schools, or is going to put chemicals in the water supply to make the population more docile, and the army has already ravaged, pillaged, raped women in the north-west where NFM is dominant. (Mohamed, 2013: 95)

The quotation provided shed light on a troubling trend where the government's actions, as well as the military's behavior, align with the employment of different tactics as instruments of warfare. These strategies have the potential to contribute to the underlying causes of wartime rape.

The idea of closing schools or introducing chemicals into the water supply suggests a possible intent to manipulate and regulate the population's behavior and mindset. These actions appear to be tactics aimed at fostering a compliant and submissive populace. This aligns with the concept of using psychological and social manipulation as tools of war. Such efforts to diminish people's agency might create an environment conducive to various forms of abuse, including sexual violence.

Furthermore, instances of ravaging, pillaging, and sexually assaulting women in the north-west region, under the influence of the NFM, reveal a disturbing militarized approach. NFM stands for the National Front for the Salvation of Somalia, a fictional opposition group fighting against the dictatorial rule. The targeted focus on women for sexual violence seems to serve as a tactic to establish dominance, instill fear, and demoralize both the affected community and enemy forces. The purposeful use of rape as a weapon of war aims to leave enduring psychological and emotional wounds, exacerbating community instability and perpetuating a culture of control and violence.

The quotation below is another example of rape as a weapon of war when Kawsar was arrested in jail for allegedly linked with rebels.

The jail is where people's stories end, thinks Kawsar. Whoever you are, whatever ambitions you nurse, however many twists and turns it has taken to arrive there, it is like the heart of a spider's web that you eventually wind your way to. More women and girls who are allegedly linked with rebels have entered the cell and there are about fifty prisoners now. (Mohamed, 2013: 32)

The provided quotation offers a poignant glimpse into the experience of imprisonment as Kawsar reflects on the grim reality embodied by the jail—a place where narratives come to an abrupt halt. It serves as a symbolic representation of the devastating aftermath of wartime rape as a weapon, which not only inflicts physical harm but also ensnares victims in a cycle of trauma and agony.

Drawing a parallel between the jail and a spider's web accentuates the feelings of entrapment and helplessness experienced by those affected by wartime rape. The intention behind using rape as a weapon in conflict is to instill control and fear within communities. The jail mirrors this power dynamic, becoming a space where individuals, particularly women and girls linked with rebel groups, find themselves detained and subjected to further victimization.

The presence of numerous women and girls allegedly connected to rebels within the cell underscores the systematic approach of wartime rape. It is a strategy aimed at targeting specific groups. Frequently, rape is used to punish, demoralize, and instill terror within perceived adversary populations. The inclusion of women and girls within this context highlights how sexual violence is employed as a tool to assert dominance and strip the enemy of humanity.

Additionally, the passage hints at the jail not only confining the physical bodies of prisoners but also encapsulating their stories and ambitions. Wartime rape leaves enduring scars, both physical and emotional, on its victims. The trauma and anguish endured during and after the act can silence survivors, hindering their ability to share their experiences and seek justice.

Gender inequality can have repercussions on resource availability and safety in times of armed conflict. Displacement, restricted access to humanitarian assistance, and the disruption of social support networks elevate the vulnerability of women to increased risks of sexual violence. The disintegration of societal frameworks and protective measures might result in inadequate shielding and assistance for women and girls. This situation renders them more prone to exploitation and mistreatment, as evident in the quotes provided below.

The morgue is a more recent extension, built to cope with the influx of targeted women and unwanted babies who can't make it to the callous world. (Mohamed, 2013: 86)

The above quotation refers to the morgue being expanded to accommodate victims, specifically women targeted by rebels, emphasizing the gender-specific nature of violence during armed conflicts. The intentional focus on women underscores a deeply embedded gender bias that devalues and dehumanizes them, treating them as objects or tools of conflict. This targeted violence perpetuates existing gender inequalities, reinforcing the perception that women are more vulnerable and expendable during conflicts.

The mention of "unwanted babies who can't survive in the harsh world" highlights a particularly heartrending facet of gender inequality. This phrase draws attention to the tragic aftermath faced by women victimized during wartime, potentially leading to forced pregnancies and births resulting from sexual violence. The inability of these babies to thrive in a "harsh world" points to a stark reality where societal norms and structures fail to shield and support the most vulnerable members, particularly women.

The following quotation is taken from dialogue between Dahabo and Kawsar in refugee hospital referring to the incident when she was breaking away from the jail, leaving behind the women behind in jail.

‘To hell with them, Kawsar, listen to me. You could not have done more for them. Most of them were captured, had you not run away you would have been caught too. They treat women like obsolete dolls. God knows what might happen to you if you were caught’ She gestures through the window to the hospital madhouse. ‘What else? What else could you have done to those women? Or I? Or anyone?’ (Mohamed, 2013: 86)

Dahabo's exclamation, "To hell with them, Kawsar, listen to me. You could not have done more for them," encapsulates the sense of resignation that women often grapple with in the face of pervasive gender inequality. This declaration suggests that Kawsar's actions, regardless of their nature, were bound by societal expectations and constraints imposed due to her gender. The phrase "could not have done more for them" underscores the predetermined role often assigned to women during conflicts—a role marked by helplessness and dependence.

The mention of the captured women and the caution that Kawsar might have faced the same fate had she not escaped highlights the systematic targeting of women as vulnerable victims during wartime. This targeting is rooted in deeply ingrained gender hierarchies, where women are perceived as easily subjugated and violated. The description of the captured women

as "obsolete dolls" further dehumanizes them, underscoring the diminished value placed on women's lives and autonomy in the midst of conflict.

Dahabo's rhetorical question, "What else? What else could you have done to those women? Or I? Or anyone?" emphasizes the collective and systemic powerlessness experienced by women in the face of gender-based violence. It mirrors the societal norms that severely restrict women's ability to effectively intervene or offer protection to fellow women. This shared sense of powerlessness underscores the pressing need to challenge and dismantle the gender norms that perpetuate such vulnerabilities.

D. CONCLUSION

Building upon the preceding research outlined in the preceding chapter, a conclusion emerges that Kawsar experienced wartime rape caused by three interrelated factors: militarization, the instrumental use of rape as a weapon in factional or organizational conflicts, and gender inequality.

Militarization emerges as a pivotal backdrop that fuels the rampant sexual violence inflicted upon women in regions ravaged by war. The dissolution of societal frameworks, the ascension of armed factions, and ensuing lawlessness create an environment fraught with violence and fear. In this turmoil, fundamental human values erode, paving the way for the brutalization and exploitation of civilian populations—particularly women—who often become prime targets of assailants. Within the militarized terrain, heinous acts, including sexual violence, find an alarming foothold, utilized as tools to assert authority, control, and dominion over communities.

Furthermore, rape's utilization as a weapon of war emerges as a profoundly disturbing phenomenon within factional or organizational conflicts. Perpetrators tactically deploy sexual violence as a means to attain political, social, and military objectives. By systematically subjecting women and communities to rape and sexual abuse, assailants seek to destabilize and demoralize entire populations. The calculated implementation of rape as a weapon strives to sow fear, dismantle social cohesion, and impose dominance, leaving behind a trail of trauma and devastation.

The deep-seated gender inequality prevalent in many conflict zones exacerbates women's vulnerability, rendering them glaring targets for sexual violence. Engrained societal norms and patriarchal power dynamics consign women to subordinate roles, resulting in

marginalization and limited influence in decision-making spheres. This lack of agency leaves women prone to victimization, with formidable obstacles obstructing their access to protection, justice, and support. Consequently, sexual violence stands as a distressing embodiment of gender-based bias, perpetuating the cycle of subordination and oppression

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