

Women with Disabilities, Peace and Security in Liberia

Liberian disabled women's experiences of peace and security
processes through the lens of the United Nations Security
Council Resolution 1325

Abstract

This study has examined Liberian disabled women's participation in peace and security processes through the lens of the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325. The aim was to gain new insights into Liberian disabled women's experience in peace and security processes, since the overarching research problem is the lack of insight into the disabled women's experiences as participants within the Women Peace and Security agenda. This has been done through the conduction of a field research in Montserrado County in Liberia, whereas interviews and observations has been executed on site.

The disabled women's voices are the most important part of this thesis and will be presented in the result. The analytical framework, the Power Cube, combined with the Concept of Agency and Intersectionality has been used to analyze the results. The findings show that the disabled women in Liberia have participated in several different ways in the peace and security process. Although, many obstacles still exist for their full participation. Supportive measures for their participation have also been present but limited at best, and future support are needed to ensure increased participation for disabled women in peace and security processes in Liberia.

Key words: Women with Disabilities, Peace and security, UNSCR 1325, Participation, Liberia

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1. Introduction

In post-conflict countries there is a need to recognize the diversity of women and include several spectrums of females in peace and security processes, one of which being women with disabilities. Sustainable peace requires the inclusion of all people affected by the conflict. To include disabled women in peace processes means to strengthen post-conflict societies in their peace process (Ortoleva 2010: 84). Hence, including disabled women as participants in general is not the kind thing to do, but the smart thing to do.

The United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 is the most comprehensive international resolution for addressing women's participation in conflict as well as post-conflict areas. Successful implementations have been made through UNSCR 1325, but there are still major implementation gaps, which accounts for the absence of women in peace and security processes (Davis & True 2019; Coomaraswamy 2015). One of these implementation gaps regards the failure to include disabled women as participants in peace and security processes (Stienstra 2019: 1)

One reason for this implementation gap appears to be the general lack of knowledge about disabled women's inclusion in peace and security processes. Hence, the overarching research problem is the lack of insight into the disabled women's experiences as participants within the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda. As such it is important to gain a deeper understanding about disabled women's participation in peace and security processes. In this thesis I do so by zooming in on the experiences of disabled women themselves through interviews and observations. (Stienstra 2019: 1; Ortoleva 2010: 126; Aaron et al 2014: 7-8)

This thesis seeks to contribute to previous research, in regard to disabled women's participation in peace and security processes, and to add rigor to existing research on the implementation of the UNSCR 1325. The specific research problem will be addressed through the lens of disabled women's experiences of peace and security processes in the context of Liberia.

Liberia was selected because it is a productive analytical site for addressing the research problem and gain new insights into a country located within a post-conflict context. Liberia has had a National Action Plan (NAP) for implementing the UNSCR 1325, from 2009 until 2012 (Ministry of Gender and Development 1 2009). It is a country where female participation has been central for the peace process (Luppino & Webbe 2011: 106) and more importantly, disabled women have participated in the 1325 agenda, and as such they are not excluded from the Liberian peace and security processes. So, investigating the Liberian disabled women's experiences has been productive in seeking to address the underlying research problem since they have been able to provide insightful information and knowledge into my selected research area (UNICEF 2012; Ortoleva 2012).

1.1 Purpose and Research Question

The lack of research about disabled women's experiences as participants within the WPS agenda in Liberia obscures the importance of investigating disabled women's participation in peace and security processes. Thus, the purpose of this study is to gain new insights into Liberian disabled women's experience in peace and security processes through the conduct of interviews and observations. This in turn will add to existing research on the 1325 agenda more broadly (Davies & True et al 2019; Ortoleva 2010; Siniestra 2019) and, more specifically, research on the WPS agenda and the implementation of the UNSCR 1325, in post-conflict Liberia (Ortoleva 2012; Nyquist Brandt 2012; Fynn Bruey 2018). To fulfil this research ambitions the following research questions will be examined in line with the recommendations of 1325 in Liberia, and be posed as following:

- (I) How do disabled women perceive their roles as participants in the peace and security processes, in Liberia? In what ways do they experience obstacles to participate? In what ways do they experience participatory supportive measures?

1.2 Definitions

Disability in this study is defined as a condition that limits a person's movements or senses, with the understanding that some disabilities will not be accounted for. This definition of disability has been constructed due to the ethical principle of doing no harm.

The *Disabled community* in Liberia is a definition for all the local and national and international disabled organizations and institutions in Liberia, which work with and for disabled people in the country.

Peace and security processes: I define these here in accordance with UNSCR 1325, which incorporates different aspects as; prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peace-building, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and post-conflict reconstruction (UNSCR 1325 2000).

In a *Post-conflict country* there is an absence of war, but not necessarily real peace (Brahimi 2007: 3). It is defined here as a "country that has achieved a peaceful resolution to a protracted civil war and where governmental, non-governmental, and international institutions attempt to assist in stabilizing the political, economic, military, and social structures through a host of reconstruction projects" (IGI Global 2019). In so, Liberia falls under this definition even though it has made remarkable steps forward in rebuilding its country from war to peace.

1.3 Limitations

Exclusion of disabilities. The study will not include mental disabilities, in so the research findings will not be able to provide results in regards to mental disabled women's experiences of peace and security processes. These limitations have been made due to ethical considerations in regards to the mentally disabled women's well-being. Since bringing up sensitive questions about the aftermath of the war might unintentionally harm the women in question, since mentally disabled women might interpret questions and discussions in a different way.

The timeline of the study will also be limited. The UNSCR 1325 was implemented in Liberia in 2009. Therefore, the timeframe of the study will have the range from 2009 until now, since the purpose of the study is to document the disabled women experiences in line with the recommendations of UNSCR 1325.

The geographical area of the study will be localized to Montserrado County, which include the capital Monrovia and areas around the capital in Liberia. Therefore, the empirical research findings are restricted in regards to generalization.

1.4 Research Ethical Considerations

Ethical dilemmas are important to consider in doing field research where informants are directly involved (Höglund & Öberg 2011: 9, 11). Cultural differences are to be expected between the researcher and the informants in a cross-cultural study. My own location within a western country might be seen as a privileged one in a transition country like Liberia. To be aware and respect the local customs and their culture is therefore of important to minimize possible experienced power relations. Also, it is of outmost importance to show respect for the different disabilities the women have. In conducting the field study, I was aware of these ethical challenges, and in being aware, I was able to work around them in a constructive way. Do no harm was the general rule followed and always acted upon.

2. Previous Research

Previous research presented below shows that the field of disabled women's participation in peace and security processes in Liberia is under-researched (Ortoleva 2010; Aaron et al. 2014). Previous research has been done about Liberian disabled people within different areas (Malakpa & Spann 2012, Jolley et al 2016 and Kett et al 2017). Even so, the specific field of disabled women's participation in peace and security processes remains under-researched in the country. Research has also been done in regards to women and the UNSCR 1325 in Liberia, although with non or very limited attention to disabled women's inclusion (Basini 2016; Basini 2013; Hudson 2017). As such, this thesis has taken inspiration from previous relating research in the field, about women's participation in general in peace and security processes in Liberia (Nyqvist Brandt 2012), which will further be presented in section 4.1 Other relating previous research will be presented bellow and some will be further discussed under the section Theory and Key Concepts.

Ortoleva (2010) has done one of the most current comprehensive research on women with disabilities in peace and security. She discusses the situation of disabled women in general in conflict environment, disabled women in the United Nations (UN) legal peace and security frameworks and current practices to integrate disabled women in peace-building. Although, she emphasizes the need to collect more data to effectively address the issue.

Anita Aaron et al (2014) argue in their article that people, both male and female, with disabilities are excluded form peace processes and that they should be included for numerous reasons. The author highlights that it is very clear that limited research has been written to addresses persons with disabilities in peacebuilding and conclude that it is imperative that people with disabilities are included in designed peace processes. But before being able to do so, the first requirement is to learn about existing experiences of people with disabilities in peace processes (Aaron et al 2014: 2, 7-8).

Pearl Gottschalk (2007) investigated the experience of persons disabled, male and female, by the war in Sierra Leone. The main focus is on the inclusion and participation of disabled people in different peace processes. Gottschalk mention a gender issue in regards to her study. Most of her participant where men and only a few of them where women, since there were several obstacles to get in touch with disabled women in Sierra Leone. Even so, the author tries to highlight the female participants contributions to her study and notes that, female participants included issues that men did not speak of. The women spoke of their increased vulnerability and the risk for physical and sexual abuse in peacetimes, especially the danger of leaving their villages to travel to sites where it was possible for them to participate in the peace process. They also highlighted the need for permanent social support to be able to take care of their children. Finally, reintegration and sensitization in

their villages was noted, since many of them had been forcefully driven out from their homes by their parents (Gottschalk 2007, p. 12, 59-60). This field research highlights important aspects in regards to disabled women's participation in peace processes, what obstacle's they have and what kind of support is needed. The above authors (Ortoleva 2010; Aaron et al. 2014) have referred to only this field study (Gottschalk 2007) when discussing disabled people's participation in peace processes. In carefully mapping the field of interest, I have not been able to find any other field study made about disabled women's participation in peace and security processes. As such this highlight the importance of conducting further field research in the regards to the subject.

In the Oxford handbook on WPS, edited by Davis and True, multiple scholars analyses the evolving WPS agenda and the major implementation gaps found in the UNSCR 1325. One of the scholars, Stienstra (2019) highlights one of the key gaps in the implementation of resolution 1325. She argues that "ONE of the key gaps, and thus an important opportunity, in implementing UNSCR 1325 on WPS is found at the intersections of women and disability" (Stienstra 2019: 1). Other scholars in the handbook Ní Aoláin & Valji (2019) & Björkdahl & Mannegren Selimovic (2019), will be discussed under section 4.2.

Ortoleva (2012) has reviewed disabled women's inclusion in the UNSCR 1325 and different countries NAPS for implementing the UNSCR 1325. She argues that "Women with disabilities are excluded both in practice and formally, through the various UN resolutions and policy documents, including the UNSCR 1325". She concludes that with the drastic increase of disabled people in the world there is an urgent need to include women and girls with disabilities. That existing programs at all levels must strive to include disabled women in peace programs such as the implementation of the UNSCR 1325. She also highlights that disability is a factor which increases the discrimination against women and as such hampers their participation in peace and security processes. The discrimination against disabled women is also highlighted amongst other scholars (Ortoleva & Lewis 2012; Fynn Bruey) and will further be elaborated under section 4.3.

Furthermore, in an article from 2017, Ortoleva gives recommendations on how to ensure the participation of disabled women in conflict resolution programs. The recommendations she gives is the following: establish an internal disability rights expert involved in the planning and designs of program implementations, creating a specific fund to support disabled women's organizations, establish a space on-the-ground collaboration between humanitarian assistance organizations and disabled women's organizations, ensuring that spaces where conflict resolution takes place are physically and informally accessible for disabled women, promote access to the justice system for disabled women and facilitate the involvement of local disabled women in the design of humanitarian relief programs (Ortoleva 2017: 12-13).

3. Background

This section will give an overview into the chosen field site of the study; Liberia. I will also provide a background of disabled women in Liberia and give a briefing of the Liberia National Action Plan (LNAP) for the implementation of UNSCR 1325.

3.1 The Case of Liberia

The state of Liberia became an independent republic in 1847. Since the founding of the country and the return of the former American slaves to Liberia, the country population has been socially divided between the American-Liberian elite and the indigenous-Liberian people. The former American's became a part of the social elite in Liberia due to their Christian faith and colonial style. The indigenous Liberian people got discriminated and disfavored. This was the foundation of the hostilities which eventually drove the country towards years of civil wars and several regime coups (Globalis 2013; UI 2019). The last civil war lasted for 14 years and resulted in 270.000 casualties, and countless more displaced and traumatized by the war. The hostilities officially ended in 2003 and from that year onwards Liberia has been in a post-conflict context with the main focus on the peace building process (Luppino & Webbe 2011: 105-106).

In 2003, with the signing of the Accra Comprehensive Peace Agreement, Liberia began the peace process. The peace building process began under a transitional government, until 2006 when the first African female President, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and her government took office. Throughout the peace process, Liberia has achieved great accomplishments towards a more peaceful society.

The country has been praised for its great work in gender inclusion in peace and security processes (Luppino & Webbe 2011: 105-106). Women has served many roles in the Liberian conflict. Apart from being victims of the conflict, Liberian women have been active combatants and also, if not most importantly, been active peacemakers (Luppino & Webbe 2011: 106).

3.2 Women with Disabilities in Liberia

Statistics on how many women there are with a disability in Liberia is lacking, though the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) has estimated that around a fifth of Liberia's population has some form of disability

(SIDA 2014) Out of those, exactly how many disabled women there are is still unclear, and further research is needed to gain a better statistical picture.

Liberia has taken several measures to include disabled women into the society. Liberia has ratified, although not signed, the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (UNTC 3 1979). Ratified and signed the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNTC 2 2006). Also, signed but not ratified the UN Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNTC 1 2006). Furthermore, Liberia has also developed a National Gender Policy which refers to disabled women (Ministry of Gender and Development 2, 2009). In December 2018, Liberia launched a NAP on disabilities (UNDP Liberia 2018). This along with several other international human rights instruments which Liberia has ratified or joined (Government of Liberia 2013: iv). Finally, Liberia has implemented a NAP for the implementation of UNSCR 1325. These are all great achievements even so, available reports suggest that disabled women are mostly excluded from the peace and security processes in Liberia (UNDP 2012, p. 123; SIDA 2014; UNICEF 2012: 2, 28).

3.3 Liberian National Action Plan for implementing UNSCR 1325

During the peace process, the UNSCR 1325 was implemented in Liberia (Luppino & Webbe 2011: 106). The LNAP for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 was adopted 2009 with a four-year long timeframe. Until today, no other LNAP for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 in Liberia has been adopted, which still makes this NAP the most comprehensive government policy where including women specifically in peace and security processes in the country (Operation1325 2019). The UNSCR 1325 is foremost gender-based and restricted in recognizing different groups of women. Even so, Liberia is actually one of nine, out of 34 countries, which have a reference to disabled women in their NAP for implementing UNSCR 1325 (Ministry of Gender and Development 1 2009; UNICEF 2012; Ortoleva 2012). However, the references focus mainly on preventing gender-based violence and including statements concerning outcomes. Also, according to previous researcher it is not clear to what extent or if disabled women were involved in the development of the LNAP for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 (Ortoleva 2012: 409). Moreover, since the field is under-researched it is also unclear if the reference to women with disabilities in UNSCR 1325 have had any impact in practice.

4. Theory and Key Concepts

This thesis is based on the theoretical framework, *the Power Cube* (Powercube 2019; Carlman et al 2012; Gaventa 2005). The study also employs, *the Concept of Agency* (Björkdahl & Mannergren Selimovic 2015) as well as insights emerges from *Intersectionality* (Stienstra 2019). By using the Power Cube as a foundation and combining the Concept of Agency and Intersectionality as analytical tools, I hope to provide an in-depth understanding of disabled women’s participation in peace and security processes in Liberia. In what follows I account for each of the aforementioned concepts and their relevance to my study.

4.1 The Power Cube

The Power Cube is a theoretical framework which will be used to guide the fieldwork and analyze participation of disabled women in peace and security processes in Liberia. The Power Cube is a framework for analyzing spaces, forms and levels of power and the relationship between them (Figure 1). It was developed by John Gaventa, Jethro Pettit and Laura Cornish of the Participation, Power and Social Change team at IDS, Sussex University, U.K (Powercube 2019). Gaventa present the Power Cube as a tool to foremost use when analyzing participation, agency and the interaction of different power dynamics (Gaventa 2005). This thesis analysis of participation will follow the different dimensions and the underlining sub themes of the Power Cube, which will be illustrate in section 7.

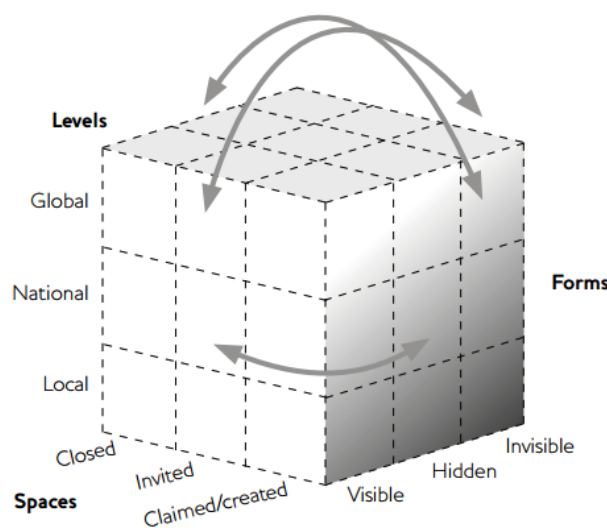


Figure 1: The Power Cube: the levels, spaces and forms of power (Gaventa 2006: 25)

Levels of power, outlines levels of authority. The Global level, includes institutions like UN, supra-national authority like regional bodies as the African Union, other international networks and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The National level, includes the national government, parliament, executive bodies, national political parties and national courts. The Local level, includes local government, local institutions and local level non-government organizations and bodies (Powercube 2019; Carlman et al 2012: 14-15; Gaventa 2005: 13-14).

Spaces of power, outlines various arenas for action and decision-making. The Closed space, refers to different decision-making arenas which is restricted to most actors, such as negotiations, institutions and political structures. Invited spaces, involves the participation that results from power-holders inviting other representatives to be consulted, participate or observe. Claimed spaces, includes spaces which are claimed by less powerful actors, where civil society or social movements can raise their issues, which otherwise would not be heard (Gaventa 2005: 9-16; Carlman et al 2012).

Forms of power, outlines power manifestation in different forms. The Visible form, is exercised in an open arena in organizations, institutions and social movements. The Hidden form, considers the ability of being able to frame what issues should put on the agenda, in implementations and documents. The Invisible form, consider the internationalization of norms and ideas which can limit agency and participation (Powercube 2019; Carlman et al 2012: 15; Gaventa 2005: 14-16).

This thesis will take inspiration from previous research done (Nyqvist Brandt 2012). Her research has shown important insights into Liberian women's participation in general by using the Power Cube as an analytical tool. She argues that there are still obstacles hindering women's participation in the peace process, such as sexual violence and traditional and stereotypical gender norms influenced by the patriarchal structures. The author notes that women are excluded from formal and visible power in most parts of Liberia, but she also concludes the claimed space of power had a real impact in negotiations taking place within the closed space of power (Nyqvist Brandt 2012: 69-83). This research has given some important insights into women's participation in peace and security processes in Liberia, although the research doesn't mention disabled women, so if they were included in the research is unclear. In using the Power cube and focus on the perspectives from Liberian disabled women in this thesis, I will be able to add to the knowledge from this previous research done. This will be illustrated in section 7.

4.2 Concept of Agency

The Concept of Agency involves, the human capacity to act in a social context which structure forms the opportunities and recourses to be able to do so (Björkdahl & Mannergren Selimovic 2015: 170; Hancock 2017). In regards to the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and WPS, analyzing agency is seen as a vital

aspect when it comes to understand women's participation. Agency is discussed in regards to understanding the problem of seeing women as primarily victims of a conflict and not as peacemakers and actors in the peace process, which hampers female participation in peace and security processes (Ní Aoláin & Valji 2019: 3, 9). Ortoleva (2012) notes that some programs are beginning to address women with disabilities although, she also emphasizes that most programs do not apply it in practice. She highlights that "disabled persons still tend to be lumped together under the heading of "vulnerable groups," rather than as a group capable of agency and participation in and of itself" (Ortoleva 2012: 118). Agency is also discussed in regards to the importance of civil society Organizations (CSOs) for enhancing women's agency, whereas Björkdahl & Mannegren notes that "locally and nationally, women's CSOs are key spaces for women's social and political engagement with the power to end wars and build peace" (Björkdahl & Mannegren Selimovic 2019). These two aspects about Agency will be discussed with both gender and disability as variables in section 7.2. In doing so, this thesis sets to explore disabled women's agency in peace and security processes, in line with the implementations of UNSCR 1325, and their different and unique way in participating as actors.

4.3 Intersectionality

Intersectionality is used as a concept to understand and explain power relations and discrimination against those who are most marginalized in our society. It considers several aspects of social differentiations as gender, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, religion and age. The theory sees these social stratifications as interlinked and overlapping (Atewologun 2018; Jämställ 2013; Molina 2016; Stienstra 2019). Ortoleva and Lewis notes in their research that intersectionality is important in examining discrimination against disabled women, but that additional data is needed (Ortoleva & Lewis 2012: 28-37). Ortoleva highlights that disabled women face double discrimination due to their gender and their disability. In so they are at a greater risk of abuse, gender-based and other forms of violence, extreme poverty, lack of health care, poor education, and other factors because of this double discrimination (Ortoleva 2012: 118). Furthermore, Veronica Fynn Bruey notes that patriarchal structures imbedded with cultural beliefs and attitudes, creates discrimination against women, especially disabled women, and in such and hampers the implementation 1325 in Liberia (Fynn Bruey 2018: 34). This will be illustrated in the findings, section 6.2 and in the analysis, in section 7.3. In using intersectional insights in this study, the thesis will set to explore different types of discriminations and their impacts experienced by disabled women, which in turn contain disabled women's participation in peace and security processes. In doing so, I set to give a deeper understanding of disabled women's obstacles to participate in peace and security processes.

5. Research Design

This section presents how the research has been conducted and how the data has been collected. In what follows I will account for, firstly, the operationalization of my study and, secondly, the methods used to gather the findings.

5.1 Operationalization

This study does not aim to measure but rather to examine a phenomenon. Therefore, the operationalization in this research will be guided by the interview guide (Appendix 3). In this study peace and security processes have been examined through two of the four pillars in the LNAP for implementing UNSCR 1325 (Ministry of Gender and Development 1 2009). The LNAP adopts the four pillars: protection, prevention, participation/empowerment and promotion. The pillars prevention and participation/empowerment are the chosen areas this study will focus on.

The *pillar prevention* incorporates: The prevention of all types of violence against women and girls including against rape and systematic rape, trafficking and other human rights abuses, incorporating the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence.

The *pillar participation and empowerment* incorporate: The promotion of women's full participation in all conflict prevention, peace-building and post-conflict recovery processes at community, county, national and sub-regional levels. Empower women through increased access to housing and natural resources and strengthen their participation in the management of the environment.

The pillar prevention has been chosen since it is the only pillar which actually has references to disabled women in the LNAP (Ministry of Gender and Development 1 2009: 26-27). The pillar participation/empowerment was chosen since it is a relevant area in regards to the research questions. Participation has been categorized and looked through the analytical framework, the Power Cube.

To sum up, Figure 2 shows the different steps of my thesis and how they correlate with each other. The operationalization in this field research has been guided by the interview guide, which in its turn incorporate aspect from the LNAP and the Power Cube.

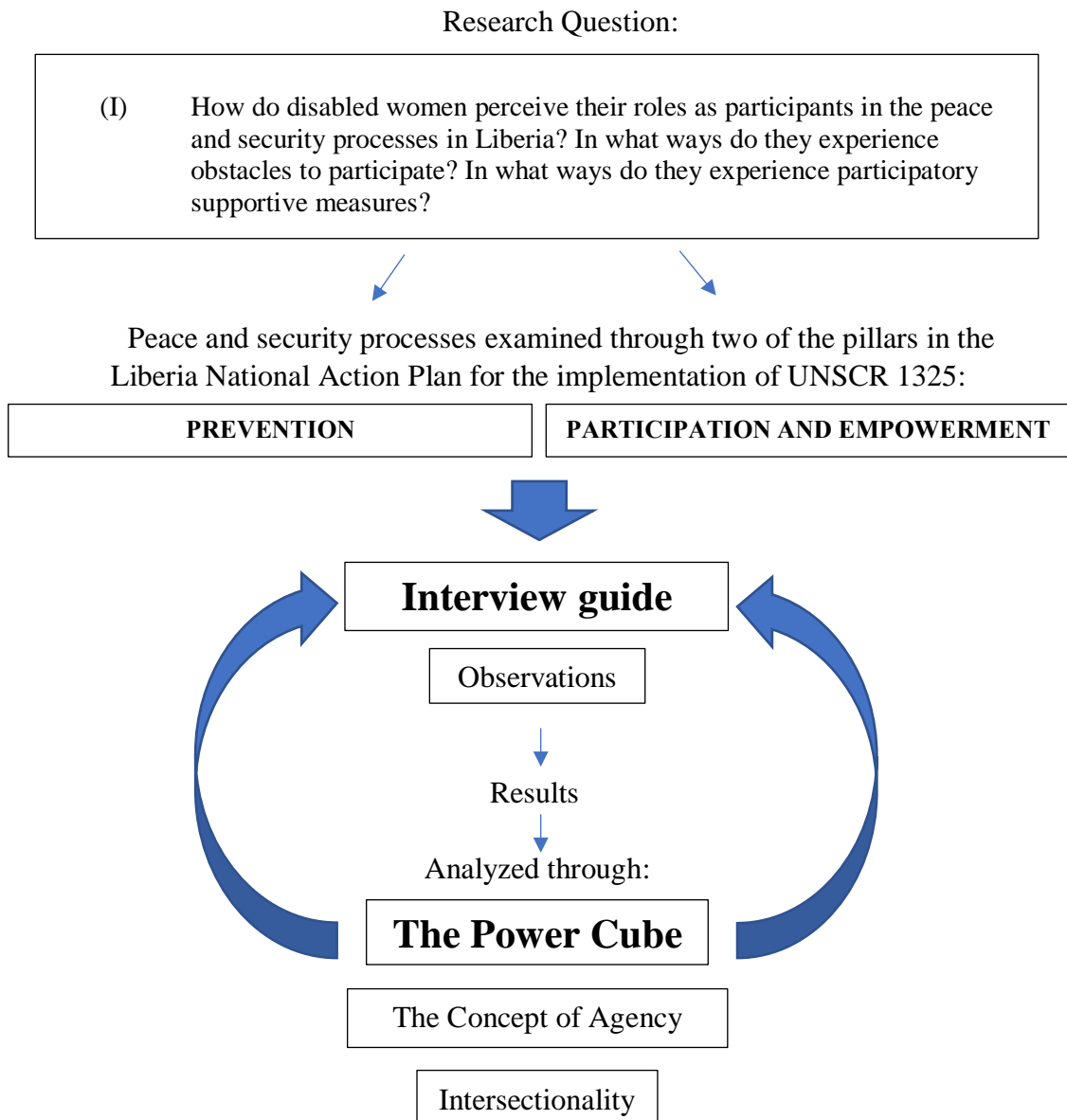


Figure 2: Flowchart

5.2 Methods

This research is qualitative in its expression (Halperin & Heath 2017: 6). Interviews and observations were conducted throughout a field research located in Montserrado County in Liberia, through a time period of eight weeks, between April – June 2019. In conducting the field study, I was assisted by two local organizations in Montserrado County. The first one, the National Union of Organizations of the Disabled (NUOD), which work for and with disabled people in Liberia to promote and advocate for the Liberian disabled people’s protection,

social inclusion and quality of life in the country. The second one, Youth Crime Watch of Liberia (YCWL), which is an accredited local youth organization that, through different volunteer projects, address the need for grassroots participants in nation building and peace processes (YCWL 2018; SIDA, 2014). The organizations assisted me with research related tasks, such as getting in contact with informants as well as provided interpreters if needed.

Individual interviews were conducted with 25 disabled women from different civil society disabled organizations. The informants were disabled adult women, with different financial and educational backgrounds. The informants were either; physically challenged, visually impaired, had impaired hearing or had impaired senses or movements as a cause of polio. Sign interpreters were used when interviewing the deaf women and on occasion language interpreters were used to overcome some dialectal differences between the researcher and the interviewed women. The interpreters were informed of the aim of the study as well as the importance of the confidentiality aspect. The interviews were conducted as individual face-to-face interviews and formed as semi-structured interviews (Halperin & Heath 2017: 286-289; Brounéus 2011: 130, 136). The respondents were, ahead of the interviews, informed of the interview procedures, such as the confidentiality and volunteer aspect, and received an information sheet (Appendix 1) about the study. A consent form (Appendix 2) was also secured ahead of the interviews, as well as permission to record the interview (Halperin & Heath 2017: 209, 308-309; Höglund & Öberg 2011: 196-197).

To conduct interviews in a post-conflict country with a marginalized group, timing, place and how the interview was conducted is of essence. Do no harm was the general rule which was considered at all times (Brounéus 2011: 141). The data collected has been protectively stored and carefully analyzed. The findings in section 6 is presented with no identifying information of the individual disabled women whom participated in the study (Brounéus 2011: 142).

The interview guide (Appendix 3) used to conduct the interviews, had to be modified during the time of the field research, this to better match the perception and understandings of the persons interviewed. Only minor aspects were modified with the interview guide and the general guide lines remained the same, this to maintain the same types of questions to all participants.

Empirical findings were also generated through observations. They were used as a complementary method to the interviews to get a fuller picture of the matter and to be able to provide a thicker description (Harpelin & Oliver 2017: 316). The observations also followed the guidelines from the interview guide. Observations were conducted on different sites in Montserrado County, at different local disabled organizations and around disabled women with different disabilities, this to reduce errors and bias which otherwise could compromise the internal validity of the study (Harpelin & Oliver 2017: 325). To overcome ethical issues arising from the observations, acceptance and trust were of importance. Transparency and openness about the study and my role as a researcher were a cornerstone throughout the whole observation process. Voluntary participation was highlighted and verbal consent was negotiated ahead of the observations (Halperin & Heath 2017: 324).

6. Results

This section presents the findings gathered throughout my field research in Montserrado County, Liberia. The results are based on the interviews and observations conducted and are presented anonymously.

6.1 Disabled Women's participation in Peace and Security Processes

The disabled women in Liberia have experienced participation in several ways in the peace and security process. They were present and did participate in the implementation of UNSCR 1325. They attended and organized workshops to educate disabled women in the country about WPS, about the prevention of violence and about disability rights. They have been advocating for disabled people's rights, women's rights and female empowerment. However, the disabled women are mainly enjoying this participation through the disabled organizations, but on an individual level most of the disabled women I spoke to was limited included in the peace and security process. However, they did experience that their voices and issues was represented through the disabled organizations and the disabled women which worked within them. As one disabled woman argues:

We, the disabled women, were not left out from the process, we were part of it because we were representing a civil society institution, we were speaking on the issue of the peace for women. [...] The peace process was a very good one because the women were in the front. We were all there, speaking and appealing and handling problems and saying that it's time that we all be one and bring about peace. [...] Right now, persons with disabilities are enjoying the peace, we speak about our rights, we move about with freedom, we do what we want to do, that's the peace we are enjoying today.

Through their organizations the disabled women have participated locally, nationally and also internationally in the peace and security process in Liberia. As one participant of the study notes, "In so many ways has disabled women participated to prevent violence against women living with disabilities. Many meetings have been conducted with the international community, the government and the local governments". However, disabled women's participation is most profound at the local level, although mostly in the sphere of the *disabled community*. The disabled community is constructed by several different local disabled organizations like; Association of Disabled Females International (ADFI),

School of the deaf, School of the blind and Disabled Children and Female Empowerment Network (DCFE), as well as international organizations like: Groupe of 77 and AIFO Liberia, whom are based and work on the local level in Liberia. The NUOD, is the national umbrella organization for the all the local disabled organizations in Liberia. The disabled women are also present in the Liberian government in different sectors, but most notably in the National Commission on Disability (NCD), which is a governmental institution that works with monitoring disabled people's rights in the country.

The disabled people in Liberia has claimed this space, the disabled community as their own. In the space of the disabled community they have the opportunity to influence and contribute to peace and security issues amongst others. This claimed space is where disabled women participation is most profound. The importance of the NUOD and the NCD can't be underestimated for the disabled women's participation into the society and in the peace and security dialogue. In this context one disabled women argues:

Since NUOD and NCD, which has done some awareness, we gradually now have women that are participating. [...] Our voices are something that we want to be heard, the women are equal right now, if you look at our structure right now, we have three women in the room right now (at NOUD), and there are other women that wants to do volunteering service and come [...] So, when you open your door people come even to volunteering service, but if you just close your door, people won't. So, it's the means of opening it up, the peace and security dialogue, and the peace and security sector to persons with disabilities, see that we can participate! I can tell you in some of the forums, when we attend, we speak! The persons with disabilities they get up!

Furthermore, disabled women's participation in decision making is central for the disabled people: "We have a female executive director (at the NCD) and whenever she is going to some meetings she invites disabled women whom are learning to speak up and make decisions. So disabled women are nationally and locally making decisions". Also, the president of NOUD is a disabled woman, which is further proof of their influence in the disabled community.

The disabled community is unified, it's gender equal and it also reflects equality amongst the different disabled groups. This unity is their strength in which they can reach out and advocate for disabled peoples right in the society. Their unity gives them a voice, a voice which mostly is respected and heard at the national and international level.

Moreover, in regards to disabled women's participation in the peace and security process outside the disabled community, their participation in decision making is limited in regards to peace and security issues. Also, their voices are more marginalized at the local and national level, due to stigmatization against disability, which will be further discussed under the section 6.2. However, invitations for disabled women to participate in the peace and security process has in general been good. As one disabled woman notes, "they have been doing well in making sure that we participate, sometimes when they are having a meeting they have sent letters and invited our presence". Even so, many disabled women also note that these

invitations to meetings in regards to peace and security are just out of consideration and that the people whom are inviting them are not really interested in listening to their opinions nor include them in the process. In this context one disabled woman notes, “Well people know that there is a lot of disabled women institutions around, but they just don’t want to include [...] they feel that we don’t have any input, so why should they invite us? They don’t think we have anything to do with them”. In correlation, many disabled women feel they don’t have any opportunity to influence nor contribute to open discussions, meanwhile some disabled women feel like people are listening to them and respect their voices. One reason for the variety in the women’s experiences may lay in the differences in education amongst them. While another may lay in the difference of discrimination against different disabilities. Physically challenged women did more often expressed that people are paying attention to them, meanwhile the blind women more often expressed the feeling of being ignored or discriminated. As one blind woman notes, “I’ve experienced it many times, that people don’t listen to me because I’m blind, even in my own organization. When we go for a meeting and I put my hand up and say that I would like to say something they just tell me to sit down”. The deaf women mostly expressed that they don’t have any opportunity to express their voices due to the lack of interpreters and the lack of understanding of sign language amongst the people in Liberia.

Even though the disabled women have taken part in the peace and security processes in Liberia, far from all disabled women have been included in the process. Many of the disabled women struggle with obstacles which limits their chances of participating in peace and security processes. Due to lack of awareness, inclusion and accessibility amongst others, disabled women have not been able to fully participate in peace and security processes. As one disabled woman notes,

I will say that women with disabilities has not been participating fully [...] You are just integrating but you are not being included. [...] meaning that you are just coming to sit in the meeting but you are not there to participate. Although, if you make every document accessible for me then you have included me, but if you just allow me to come and be sitting and the entire document has nothing to do with me that is just integrating because they are not putting me in the process. So, disabled women have not participated fully in WPS.

Even so, progress has been made and more disabled women are being included into the society and more disabled women are taking part in the peace and security dialogue. In continuing that progress obstacles which hampers their participation has to be addressed and further supportive measures for their participation has to be implemented.

6.2 Obstacles Experienced by Disabled Women to participate in Peace and Security Processes

Disabled women have in several ways experienced obstacles to participate in peace and security processes in Liberia (Figure 3). Obstacles experienced, will further be listed and discussed below.

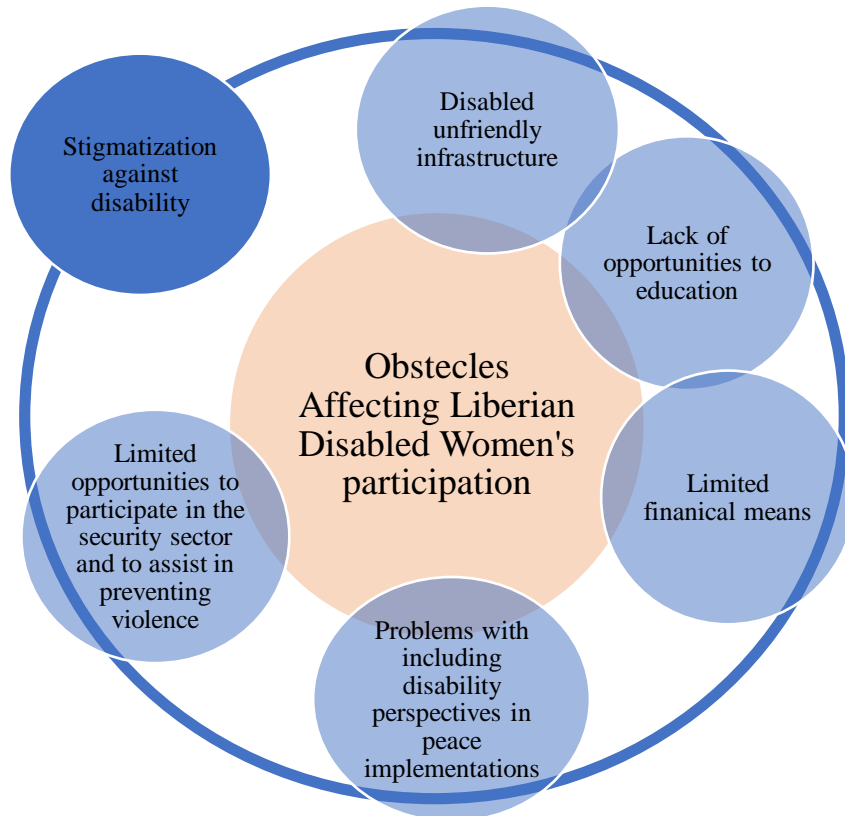


Figure 3: The figure present an overview of the obstacles experiences by Liberian disabled women, with the obstacle of stigmatization as an overarching obstacle which goes through and affects all the other obstacles experinced.

- (i) *Lack of opportunities to education* for disabled women is a serious problem, due to disabled unfriendly school buildings, lack of interpreters and stigmatization. This is a problem which my informants mentioned as a key problem to address, for themselves as for their children. There is a big difference in participation in peace and security processes between educated disabled women and non-educated disabled women. Disabled women whom holds higher positions are often educated and are more included in peace and security processes than other disabled women. The educational problem is also connected to the financial one, since many women find it hard to get a job without education and therefore the financial income suffers.

(ii) *Limited financial means.* Many disabled women sustain themselves by going out in the streets and beg, “I’m a disabled woman. I care for my children, but to survive we have to go on the streets and beg. We don’t get support in any way, and the government are not taking care of us, we the disabled women. So, we find it difficult in the country”. Having limited financial means in Liberia also means having limited amount of security, legal rights and access to medical care, “You have to get money so the lawyers or the judges can pay attention to you, but if you go there empty handed they will never look at you, they will see you as a beggar, to look for attention to get money from them, but they won’t pay attention to you”. If you do not even have the financial means to support yourself and your children and in so have to spend hours on the street to beg to survive, how then should you be able to find the time, energy and encouragement to involve yourself in the peace and security processes? In not supporting this vital aspect of disabled women’s lives, indirectly you do not support their participation in peace and security processes. Moreover, the financial problem is not only limited to the individual disabled woman but is also affecting the different disabled organizations and institutions. The NCD’s budget has been severely reduced and the disabled organizations have limited amount of financial means and there is more or less no support from the government.

(iii) *Disabled unfriendly infrastructure.* The lack of wheelchairs and the lack of ramps and elevators is an obstacle, especially since there are stairs basically everywhere to access buildings. Even the governmental buildings and many school buildings lack a disabled friendly structure, and in so excluding the Liberian disabled people. These factors make disabled women to stay away and therefore limits their participation. In this context one participant in the study notes:

Well the obstacles that I see is our structures, like when they are having a meeting in some private building, it’s very hard for a person living with a disability in a wheelchair to access that building, because they normally don’t build ramps around here. [...] For that reason, some people feel that they are shut away, like they don’t want you to participate. For that reason, they will stay away, and when they are staying away their voices will not be heard.

(iv) *Problems with including disability perspectives in peace implementations.* The problem is based on the lack of acknowledgment for disabled women in practical implementation efforts. Disabled women are attending meetings about peace and security, they are participating in several other aspects as well, and they are speaking up for their rights. Even so, disabled women don’t seem to have the power to influence what’s written on the agenda. As one disabled women points out, “When we are speaking about the peace process, [...] Every meeting under the Ellen Johnson Sirleaf administration I attended, the poverty reduction strategy we are a part of it, the sustainable development goal we are part of it, but not much are being seen about persons with disabilities in the documents”. In regards to the implementations about peace

and security it is not satisfying for the disabled women. One aspect that is being pointed out is the limited references to disabled women in the LNAP for implementing UNSCR 1325, only three references exist about disabled women out of 48 pages in the LNAP (Ministry of Gender and Development 1 2009). This is an aspect which the disabled women highlight as an issue. As one disabled woman notes, whom was involved in the UNSCR 1325 implementation in Liberia:

Well the peace and security, [...] our voices were being hear there, but when the document came out, we didn't see our points. We felt really bad because that was not the right thing to do, we felt offended. I raised it in the last meeting when I was invited again, and I told them that you can't see our voices in the document, so now we are trying to revise the 1325.

- (v) *Limited opportunities to participate in the security sector and to assist in preventing violence.* The disabled women's evolvment in the security sector, has been more or less nonexistent. In general, many women in Liberia are taking part in the security sector whereas none of the informants had any knowledge of any disabled woman working in the security sector. One disabled woman argues that the reason for this is the following:

The main obstacle they will say is that you are not physically fit [...] They are failing to know that the security sector is not only about running here and there. We can read and wright and because of that we should be able to participate in the office, they should give us the opportunity to participate in the office.

Furthermore, many disabled women experience that there is no security for them in the country and that the police do not attend to their security needs. As one of many disabled women argues, "Prevention against violence for women in our country is not really helpful, because a lot of days we are being victimized, things are not fine, the men are not helping to support the women, they don't care [...] If you take that to the police there will be no better. Nothing has been done". In this context another participant of the study highlight why it is important to including disabled woman into the security sector to better prevent violence against disabled people:

If they get disabled women into the security sector they know how disabled people should be treated. But if the disabled people, the women, are not involved they are only thinking about the able people. But disabled women know how to attend to the disabled, because they are treating their friend. So, they will inform and enforce the law, that is how I want for the security sector to bring the peace.

- (vi) *Stigmatization against disability* is the main obstacle for participation, since it's infiltrated in the norms of many communities and amongst many people in Liberia. It is an overreaching obstecle which goes through and plays a part in all the other obstecles experinced (Figure 3). Some people

discriminate disabled women because they are misinformed about the meaning of disability. Disabled women have been accused of being witches and also of being possessed by spirits. People have therefore out-distanced themselves from them. Liberian people also tend to assume that all the disabled women are poor and uneducated, even if it might not be the case. Many disabled women live with shame and are very shy because of how their surroundings threaten them. Here one disabled woman notes that, “The stigma is our main problem, even if you are someone who is good at something people will just look at you as you are simple”. Moreover, another disabled woman points out that the discrimination against disability are so serious at times that disabled women are being dehumanized by their own family and community:

When you get polio, you won't be able to walk, then they will call you a snake, only a snake crawls so you are a snake, in fact you are a witch. If your family starts that the community will pick it up, everybody will pick it up. Every time you are walking, you feel hurt and then your physical appearance tells people that something is wrong with you [...] In African setting, especially in Liberia, people will just conclude that that person is not a human being, that person is a witch, and they will do it over and over until it will kill you, that's what's killing most of the disabled people in this town [...] Many people don't know that polio is a sickness, they will just conclude and make you feel bad every day.

The quote above shows how much the stigmatization against disability can affect the disabled women's mental health, and how much they suffer due to the continued discrimination against disability.

6.3 Supportive Measures Experienced by Disabled Women to participate in Peace and Security Processes

Support and encouragement for disabled women to participate in peace and security processes has been present in the past. With the former presidents, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, administration the disabled women received support in regards to encouragement, empowerment, financial support and acknowledgement. In this context one disabled woman argues:

The peace process has been a very good thing since the day Madame Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was elected. First it was not an easy thing for disabled women to be heard, but now when Madame Johnson Sirleaf has given us the freedom to speak out, our voices can be heard and people are coming to our aid.

Today, the supportive measures for disabled women in Liberia are more limited. Most disabled women haven't experienced any support in regards to housing, access to food or clean water. There is also very limited support in managing the

environment and many disabled women express that they need more support from their government. Although, one aspect which is supportive for disabled women is the increased acknowledgment of disability has as a cross-cutting issue. Several different sections of the government have included disabled people or disabled perspectives in some ways. For one they have a disabled educational unit at the Ministry of Education which specifically focus on improving the education for disabled people in the country.

Further supportive measures are needed to increase disabled women's participation in peace and security processes. One of the future supportive measures that disabled women feel is needed is vocational training. In line with this, one disabled woman notes, "we need to be educated, and then educated in the vocational side because we are not targeting government jobs, because in most of the ministries around here they got stairs and we don't climb stairs". A grand source of employment in Liberia is the government, and due to the disability unfriendly structures at the government buildings many disabled women are not able to work there. So, in gaining vocational training they can start their own business and gain their own financial income through entrepreneurship anywhere they would see fit. Moreover, better opportunities to education aimed for disabled people is needed, more interpreters for deaf women are needed to support their schooling as well as disabled friendly school buildings so physically challenged women are able to enter the buildings. Many disabled women whom had children also mentioned that they needed support in getting scholarships or financial means in other ways to pay their children's tuition fees and in so being able to support their children's schooling. For some disabled women this was the most important aspect.

Furthermore, support in gaining awareness about disabilities amongst the general population in Liberia is needed to reduce the stigma against disabled women and increase their participation. As one participant in the study notes:

One thing is getting more awareness at the community level, but what I think is most needed now, [...] I think that at the various institutions we need to create awareness to the bosses and from the bosses back to the people that work under the bosses. So, the awareness with the stakeholders is what I think we should do or we make them to look at the convention and tell them of the rights of the convention.

Other aspect which the disabled women mentioned, was needed support in receiving housing in safe areas and help with getting food and clean water. Since many disabled women has limited financial means, support in these areas would have a positive affect for many disabled women's quality of life. Also, healthcare was another subject frequently mentioned since many of the disabled women needed medical healthcare or assistance but few of them can afford it. A final thing which would be supportive, is to get documents and strategies implemented with disability perspectives included. All of these supportive measures combined would help improve the disabled women's lives, get them more included in the society and thereby get them a profoundly better opportunity to engage and increase their participation in peace and security processes.

7. Analysis and Discussion

In this section the findings will be analyzed and discussed through the theoretical framework the Power Cube combined with the Concept of Agency and Intersectionality.

7.1 Dimensions of Power affecting Disabled Women's participation in Peace and Security Processes

The empirical findings show that the disabled women in Liberia whose testimonies and thoughts constitute the backbone of this thesis have felt that they are able to participate in peace and security processes, in line with the development and recommendations of UNSCR 1325 in their particular country. If not at the individual level at least through organizations for the disable. This is not fully in line with available reports, which suggest that disabled women are mostly excluded from peace and security processes in Liberia (UNDP 2012: 123; SIDA 2014; UNICEF 2012: 2, 28) or previous research, which states that it's not clear if disabled women participated in the development of the LNAP in Liberia (Ortoleva 2012: 409).

In regards to the *levels of power* position disabled women have generally perceived that they have been able to participate at local, national and global levels in peace and security processes. They have attended several international meetings with the UN, in discussing peace and security. They were invited to several different governmental institutions and female peace movements. They also organized trainings, meetings and workshops to educate disabled women in the country about WPS at the local level.

In regards to *spaces of power* position in the closed spaces disabled women's participation is marginalized, since they perceive their presence in decision making as limited in general. Although, they have a lot of influence in the disabled community in regards to decision making. The invited space for disabled women to participate has in general been productive. The disabled women have been invited to participate at several different meetings on several different occasions. Even so, there is a problem with being invited to participate primarily on the basis of your disability as opposed to being fully included. The disabled women's participation in peace and security processes is strongest in their claimed space, the disabled community. This claimed space is the most important foundation for them to be able to participate in the peace and security processes at the local, national and

global levels. It is also due to this claimed space in which they are given different forms of power to participate in the peace and security dialogue.

In regards to the *forms of power* position, disabled women's visible form of power is limited although still present, again mostly in the disabled community. In regards to the disabled community, disabled women have been given a lot, if not most of the visible form of power from the disabled people they are representing. This finding goes against the findings of Nyqvist Brandt's research, since they conclude that women are excluded from formal and visible power in most parts of Liberia (Nyqvist Brandt 2012: 69-83). What this might suggest is that the disabled community is more gender equal and that the women get more support from the disabled men in comparison to women in general in the rest of the society.

Moreover, Stienstra argues that a key gap in the implementation of resolution 1325 is found in the intersection between women and disability (Stienstra 2019: 1, 9-10). This thesis has addressed the subject and it has shown, through the findings, that disabled women lack the power of being able to decide what should be put on the peace agenda, in documents and/or in implementations processes. In other words, they have a lack of hidden power in regards to peace and security processes. Therefore, one reason for why disability has not been included to any great extent in UNSCR 1325 may be explained by the lack of power amongst disabled women in this area and the hidden form of power. So, to be able to include an intersectional approach and a more comprehensive disability perspective in the implementation of UNSCR 1325 it is vital to increase disabled women's hidden power and to let them participate in the agenda setting and implementation processes.

Furthermore, the main obstacle experienced regarding participation is found in the invisible form of power, due to the stigmatization of disability. This affects the disabled women negatively at most levels, spaces and forms of power, and so it hampers their participation significantly. The stigma seems to be an obstacle both for women in general (Nyqvist Brandt 2012: 69-83) as for disabled women (Ortoleva 2012: 118). Although, in going beyond the surface and in uncovering the multifaceted ways in which disabled women are being discriminated, my thesis contends that disabled women may suffer more from stigma than women in general. This will further be elaborated under the section 7.3.

7.2 Disabled Women's Capacity to Act in Peace and Security Processes

A new kind of agency was developed for the disabled women through the Ellen Johnson Sirleaf regime. From basically not having any agency, the disabled women gained capacity to act through the acknowledgment that the Jonsson Sirleaf regime provided.

Even so, the problem of seeing disabled women as primarily victims and not as agents of change can still be seen in implementations and documents, like the LNAP (Ortoleva 2012: 118, 409). In just referring to disabled women under the pillar

prevention in the LNAP, in regards to preventing gender-based violence against them (Ortoleva 2012: 409; Ministry of Gender and Development 1 2009) and not referring to disabled women under the pillar participation and empowerment, disabled women are indirectly seen as victims rather than agents of change. So, this continued view of disabled women as victims alone, in implementations and documents, would need to change if inclusion was to be widened. Disabled women are victims in many ways, although and most importantly, they are also agents of change and participants in peace and security processes, which needs to be acknowledged in peace implementations.

Furthermore, Ortoleva (2012) notes that some NAPs for implementing the UNSCR 1325 are addressing disabled women, although most of them do not apply the disabled perspectives in practice (Ortoleva 2012). This argument is in line with my research. The pillar prevention was the only pillar which had references to disabled women in the LNAP and it is alarming that many disabled women still feel victimized and claim that little has been done to prevent violence against them. The disabled women whom did not have the financial means to live in safe areas in Liberia claimed that they were victimized due to their disability. Hence, the continued violation against disabled women is both a cause of lack of financial means to live in safe areas and also outflow of discrimination of disabled people. What is clear is that the UNSCR 1325 implementation processes in Liberia might not have had the impact in practice which one could wish for and that the references to disabled women in the LNAP under the pillar prevention, have not achieved satisfied results for many disabled women in practice.

Although some setbacks do exist, disabled women have, through the new agency gained from the Ellen Johnson Seleaf regime, taken the opportunity and been able to maintain their own agency through their unity in the claimed space. The disabled women's claimed space is important when analyzing enhancing women's agency in the peace and security processes. Previous research has highlighted the importance of CSOs for enhancing women's agency (Björkdahl & Mannegren Selimovic 2019). The argument is in line with the findings of this thesis. In regards to disabled women's participation, the disabled community is an important factor for their participation. Many disabled women are shy, due to continuing discrimination and disempowerment, and are therefore dependent on the unity of the disabled organizations to have the courage to speak up. That unity is important, in particular by helping to increase the empowerment of disabled women who participate and in continuing to increase their participation.

Moreover, to further increase disabled women's capacity to act in peace and security processes previous research has suggested several different ways in which this could be done (Ortoleva 2017: 12-13; Gottschalk 2007: 59-60). Through the needed support mentioned by Liberian disabled women to participate in peace and security process, this study can add to the previous research in adding to the list of supportive measures. See section 6.3 for future support needed for Liberian disabled women. All of these supportive measures mentioned combined, if addresses, would help in increasing Liberian disabled women's agency in peace and security processes. In so doing, it might achieve a decrease in the general perception of

disabled women as victims and an increase the perception of disabled women as participants and agents of change in peace and security processes.

7.3 Intersectionality as an approach to uncover multifaceted discriminations

Disabled women have in several different ways experienced obstacles to participation, see section 6.2. Stigmatization towards disability has been highlighted as a main obstacle. Ortoleva (2012) highlights that disabled women face double discrimination due to their gender and their disability. Disabled women are therefore at a greater risk of abuse, gender-based and other forms of violence, extreme poverty, lack of health care, poor education (Ortoleva 2012: 118). Unfortunately, this argument is in line with my findings. Looking at disabled women's participation in peace and security processes through the invisible forms of power and employing an intersectional approach has made it clear that norms exist which discriminated Liberian disabled women in many different ways. Their disability rather than gender is the root cause of such discrimination, affecting their levels of education and financial income, though this varies from individual to individual. In line with this Fynn Bruey notes that the discrimination against women, especially disabled women, hampers the implementation 1325 in Liberia (Fynn Bruey 2018: 34). As such, the double discrimination, as well as the ways in which it hampers disabled women's participation, has to be accounted for and addressed to increase disabled women's participation in peace and security processes and to increase the promotion of the UNSCR 1325 in Liberia.

8. Conclusion

The purpose of this research has been to gain new insights into Liberian disabled women's experience in peace and security processes through the conduct of interviews and observations. This research has had the aim to contribute to existing research on the 1325 agenda more broadly (Davies & True et al 2019; Ortoleva 2010; Siniestra 2019) and, more specifically, research on the implementation of the UNSCR 1325, in post-conflict Liberia (Ortoleva 2012; Nyqvist Brandt 2012; Fynn Bruey 2018). In conducting field research in Montserrado County in Liberia for eight weeks, between April – June 2019, this thesis has been able to provide an in depth understanding of disabled women's experience as participants in the peace and security process, which previous research has highlighted is needed (Ortoleva 2012; Aaron et al 2014).

The objectives have been to examine, in line with the recommendations of the UNSCR 1325, how disabled women perceive their roles as participants in the peace and security processes in Liberia, including in what ways they experience obstacles to participation and how they experience participatory supportive measures. The findings show that the disabled women in Liberia, subject to this study, have participated in several different ways in the peace and security process, but that many obstacles still exist to their full participation. Supportive measures for their participation have been present but limited at best. Future support is needed to ensure full participation of disabled women in the peace and security process in Liberia.

The thesis has used the Power Cube, combined with the Concept of Agency and Intersectionality to analyze the findings and to provide an in-depth understanding of disabled women's participation in peace and security processes in Liberia. In analyzing disabled women's participation in peace and security processes through the power cube, this study has been able to uncover in which power dimensions Liberian disabled women's participation is strong, in which dimension it needs to be improved and how the dimensions correlate to each other. Through the lens of the Power Cube it shows that disabled women's participation in peace and security processes is strongest in the claimed space; the disabled community. The main obstacle for their participation is found in the invisible form of power, due to stigmatization. Finally, to further improve disabled women's participation in peace and security processes, and to increase the disability perspectives in future peace implementations, like the UNSCR 1325, disabled women's hidden forms of power need to be supported and improved so they will be able to further influence what's included in future peace agendas.

Also analyzing the findings through the concept of agency has added force to my argument and analysis, in particular to UNSCR 1325 implementations. It has also helped in investigating the importance of the disabled women's claimed space.

Through the Concept of Agency, it is shown that the new agency gained from the Ellen Johnson Sirleaf regime, has helped the disabled women to gain agency through their unity in the claimed space. It is shown that their unity is of outmost importance for their participation. It has also shown that there is a present problem of perceiving disabled women as primarily victims and not as agents of change in documents and implementations, like the LNAP, which is an aspect that hampers the disabled female participation in peace and security processes. Furthermore, it is shown that the UNSCR 1325 implementations in Liberia might not have had the impact in practice which one could wish for and that the references to disabled women in the LNAP under the pillar prevention, have not produced more agency amongst many disabled women in practice.

Intersectionality as an analytical tool has also been useful as a complement in understanding the negative impact the invisible form of power has had on disabled women. Intersectionality has helped to uncover the dual discrimination towards disabled women in Liberia, composed of gender, but first and foremost their disability. Intersectionality has also helped to understand in which ways the dual discrimination reveals itself as an obstacle to the disabled women to participate in peace and security processes. Their disability rather than gender is the root cause of such discrimination, affecting their levels of education and financial income among other aspects, which has to be accounted for and addressed to increase disabled women's participation in peace and security processes.

In combining these different analytical tools to explain and understand the disabled women's perceived roles as participants in peace and security processes, this research has been able to uncover several aspects of their participation, seen from different perspectives, and in so being able to more thoroughly examine their experienced participation.

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Appendix 1

Information sheet about the study

Department of Social science, Lund University

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Supervisor: Annika Rosamond Bergman

Women with Disabilities, Peace and Security. A field study investigating disabled women's experiences of peace and security processes in post-conflict Liberia

This study aims to give a deeper understanding of disabled women's experiences in peace and security processes and at the same time examine how to increase the participation of women with disabilities in peace and security processes. The research field of women with disabilities in peace and security processes in Liberia is mostly under researched. The lack of research about the subject in Liberia conceals the importance of disabled women's representation and participation in the matter. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to document Liberian disabled women's experiences of peace and security processes, in line with the implementation of the *UN Security Council Resolution 1325, in post-conflict Monrovia, Liberia. This field research is localized to Monrovia, Liberia and will be conducted as a part of my bachelor thesis at Lund University. The interviews will be used to collect information which will help to conduct the research and reach the purpose of the study.

Participation in the study is completely volunteer, anonymous and your answers given will be treated with complete confidentiality. You may skip questions, pause or stop the interview at any time without giving a reason. Your signed consent form will be stored separately from the responses you provide.

You may retain this information sheet for reference and contact me with any queries.

**UN Security Council Resolution 1325 is the most comprehensive international resolution for addressing women's needs alone, and highlight their participation in conflict areas as well as pre- and post-conflict areas.*

Appendix 2

Consent form

Women with Disabilities, Peace and Security. A field study investigating disabled women's experiences of peace and security processes in post-conflict Liberia

Researcher: Mathilda Grönlund

I have read the information sheet about this study (Yes/No)

I have had the opportunity to ask questions (Yes/No)

I have received satisfactory answers to my questions (Yes/No)

I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time,
without giving a reason (Yes/No)

I agree to participate in this study (Yes/No)

I give my consent to audio record this interview (Yes/No)

Signed _____

Name _____ Date _____

This consent form will be stored separately from the responses you provide.

Appendix 3

Interview Guide

1. Introduction

Would you like to tell me about yourself, what you do on a daily basis and if you are a member of any disabled or non-disabled organizations?

Would you like to tell me about your experiences of the peace process after the war in Liberia and your views on how the peace process has impacted disabled women?

Can you tell me about your experiences of security in Liberia? Has security implementations had an impact on disabled women?

In the peace and security programs in Liberia, how has the needs of disabled women been addressed or not addressed?

2a. Peace and security processes - Participation and empowerment

In what way has disabled women been able to participate in peace and security programs, which has been implemented to make Liberia more peaceful and secure? For example, programs implemented to prevent violence, solve conflicts, peace negotiations, peace-building, peacekeeping, humanitarian projects, post-conflict reconstruction programs, truth and reconciliation commissions, special courts, demobilization, disarmament or reintegration programs?

What obstacles are there for disabled women to participate in peace and security programs?

What support are there for disabled women to participate in peace and security programs?

What difference have you experienced between non-disabled women's support to participate and disabled women's support to participate in peace and security processes?

Have you participated in any peace and security programs? If that is the case could you tell me about your participation in this/these programs?

In what way has disabled women been given support to increase their access to housing, clean water and food?

In what way have you been given support to make the environment better in your community in Liberia? For example, have you been able to decrease the use of plastic and the disposal of trash for yourself and others?

2b. Peace and security processes – Prevention

Do you feel secure where you live in Liberia and/or in the country in general?

In what ways has the prevention of violence against women been present and helpful in Liberia?

In what ways has measures been taken to specifically prevent violence against disabled women?

In what way has disabled women been able to participate to prevent violence in Liberia?

3a. Participation in peace and security processes - Levels

At what *levels (global, national and local) have disabled women been able to participate in peace and security programs?

How have you experienced disabled women's relation with the international community in regards to peace and security programs? (global)

How have you experienced disabled women's relation with the national government in regards to peace and security programs? (national)

How have you experienced disabled women's relation with local organizations in regards to peace and security programs? (local)

3b. Participation in peace and security processes - Spaces

Can you tell me about disabled women's participation in decision making arenas, like negotiations, government institutions and political meetings? (Closed)

How have you experienced your governments interest or the international community's interested in inviting disabled women to consult, observe or participate in any peace and security programs? (invited)

Can you tell me about disabled women's participation in local organizations which work for peace and security? What about your own organization? (claimed)

3c. Participation in peace and security processes - Forms

How have you experiences disabled women opportunities to influence open discussions or decision-making in organizations or social movements in regards to peace and security? (visible)

How have you experienced disabled women's opportunities to influence which issues should be raised in organizations or the government in regards to peace and security, have disabled women been able to frame what's important or not? (hidden)

In what ways has excluding norms or discrimination against disabled women (in Liberia) impacted your participation in peace and security programs?

4. Closure

Out of the topics that we have discussed, is there anything you would you like to highlight, anything you feel is important to acknowledge?