



Universiteit
Leiden

Master Thesis

**Vote against Sexual Violence? The History of Women's
Political Socialization on Sexual Violence during
Armed Conflict**

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14th June 2021

Word count: 9704

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Abstract

In this thesis, I examine how women's political socialization before a conflict is connected to the prevalence of sexual violence during conflict. The thesis contributes to the existing literature with its approach to a better understanding of sexual violence during conflict but also looking at how political socialization could favor certain behavior in conflict. Moreover, it opens a new field that distinguishes between peace and conflict times but acknowledges the importance of socialization before a conflict. The main argument is that the longer women had the chance to participate politically, the more influence they should have had on socialization, and the less sexual violence should happen during conflict. This is based on three mechanisms: women's value in a society, gender stereotypes and women's ability to change policies. The hypothesis will be tested in a large-N analysis by using Ordinal Logistic Regression. Two independent variables are being used in order to look at women's political socialization: the duration of female suffrage and women's legislative power before the conflict start. The results show that especially the duration of female suffrage can be associated with a lower prevalence of sexual violence during conflict. Against the expectations, it does not make a difference how much legislative power women had in the pre-conflict society. Female suffrage, however, can be seen as an important point in the socialization processes for women and men that has a negative effect on conflict-related sexual violence the longer it has been established.

Introduction

Violence against women is a global issue: latest figures show that at least 35% of women worldwide have experienced some kind of gendered violence, speaking of sexual and domestic violence (UN Women 2020). While these figures are concerning, the numbers are even higher when looking at its occurrence during conflict in the past decades, suggesting a link between conflicts and gendered violence (Wood 2009, Cohen 2013). In the Bosnian War, for example, approximately 30.000 women had experienced sexual violence during the conflict (Koo 2002). To explain the high prevalence of sexual violence during conflict, many policymakers including the United Nations Secretary General, António Guterres, see a close link between its occurrence and gender inequality:

“We must recognise that sexual violence in conflict largely affects women and girls because it is closely linked to broader issues of gender inequality and discrimination. Prevention must therefore be based on promoting women’s rights and gender equality in all areas, before, during and after conflict.” (Guterres 2019)

Sexual violence during conflict, which includes rape, sexual torture and slavery, forced prostitution or sterilization as well as forced pregnancy, follows different patterns and its magnitude varies not only between conflict but also between actors (Wood 2009). Guterres’ (2019) explanation that it is linked with gender inequality will be used in this thesis but as gender inequality is a broad term, the focus will lie on female¹ political socialization. Socialization is here defined as the process of an individual to learn and internalize values and norms of the society he or she lives in (Jeanes 2019).

The literature on sexual violence during conflict is characterized by different approaches and explanations. Some scholars have concentrated on specific characteristics of armed groups to explain the occurrence and variation of sexual violence during conflict (e.g., Sarwari 2021, Wood 2009) or looked at the strategic purposes of conflict-related sexual violence (e.g., Cohen 2013, Lilly and Marshall 2000), others (e.g., Cockburn 2004, Jefferson 2004) have explained the prevalence of sexual violence during conflict by looking at gender dynamics before and during a conflict, like Guterres (2019) recommended. However, especially studies looking at pre-conflict conditions (Cockburn 2004, Jefferson 2004) often gave the impression sexual violence during conflict is the logical consequence of a society that before conflict was characterized by high levels of gender inequality. This ignores the differences between peace and conflict times to a

¹ It must be mentioned that not only women but also men can be victims of sexual violence. However, as women are the most targeted group (Bastick et al. 2007, Apperley 2015), they will be the focus in this thesis.

certain degree which emphasizes the necessity of this research. Firstly, the focus on women's political socialization before a conflict is a novel approach that adds to existing literature looking at gender inequality and conflict-related sexual violence. Although, some research has been conducted in that field, this thesis recognizes the difference between conflict and peacetime but acknowledges that conditions before the conflict can impact the violence that happens within one. Secondly, to prevent sexual violence from happening it is necessary to understand what causes it. It helps to comprehend the linkage between the political sphere and the violent and intimate act of sexual violence. Finally, it can strengthen the efforts of the international community to include more women in politics, especially in countries that are in danger of political instability or even a civil war. To support women's political socialization before a conflict could improve their situation within the conflict and could lead to less victims of sexual violence.

The research question that derives from this is the following: *Does political socialization of women before a conflict impact the prevalence of sexual violence during conflict?*

Female political socialization could impact sexual violence during conflict in several ways. First, it can be expected that women who are politically socialized are more valued in a society. This makes violence against them less acceptable and can have an impact on the socialization of men and women and their behavior in conflict (Green 2006). Second, by letting women participate politically, a society breaks with traditional gender roles which could impact the expectations men and women grow up with (Melander 2005). When both genders internalize norms where women are not seen as the subordinate gender (Melander 2005), women should experience less conflict-related sexual violence. Third, women could support policies pre-conflict, such as laws against gendered violence, that impact the socialization of men and women (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2008). When people learn to condemn sexual violence before a conflict, they could be more likely to condemn it during conflict as well. The main argument is the longer women were politically socialized and able to participate in politics, the more influence they had on socialization processes and the less sexual violence happens during conflict.

I will proceed as follows: first, I examine the existing literature on sexual violence during conflict and the gap that this thesis wants to fill. Second, I build a theoretical framework on the linkage between the history of women's political participation and sexual violence during conflict before my hypothesis is presented. This will be examined in a quantitative analysis, which I explain in the third section, the methodology section.

Fourth, I present the results of the analysis. Finally, I summarize and reflect the research, look at important implications and give an overview for further investigations in this field.

Literature Review

There have been several studies looking at sexual violence perpetrated by armed groups and various explanations for its causes (e.g., Cohen 2013, Wood 2009, Jefferson 2004). This literature can be distinguished into three strands. First, some have concentrated on the victims of sexual violence during conflict. Second, there has been a focus on characteristics of armed groups that make sexual violence in conflict more likely. Third, there has been some research about the connection of gender equality and conflict-related sexual violence.

Victims of sexual violence during conflict

First, some scholars (e.g., Allen 1996, Wood 2006, Wood 2014) have focused on victims and why some people are more likely to experience sexual violence during conflict than others. Several reasons for this are mentioned in the literature. First, in some conflicts a relation between sexual violence victims and the belonging to a certain ethnic group can be observed. Although, Cohen (2013) did not find evidence that ethnic hatred and the prevalence of sexual violence are connected, there are some case studies that look at sexual violence as an instrument for ethnic cleansing in conflict (e.g., Allen 1996, Eade and Macleod 2011). In the Bosnian War, for instance, especially Muslim and Croat women were victims of sexual violence during the conflict (Allen 1996). In the Guatemalan civil war, Mayan women were particularly affected, with 88% of the recorded cases (Eade and Macleod 2011). Second, a pattern can be observed that the duration of occupation plays a role (Lilly and Marshall 2000). According to this, people are sometimes more likely to be victims because they live in a particular area that has been occupied longer than others. This was researched in the Second World War, where regions that were longer occupied by the Soviets had also more reports of sexual violence (Lilly and Marshall 2000). One theoretical explanation is that sexual violence is then used as a form of punishment for not surrendering (Lilly and Marshall 2000). Finally, another cause can be revenge. This can be due to the political attitude of the victim or because the victim is assumed to be on the side of the opponent (Wood 2006, 2014). For instance, Soviets targeted German women to punish Germans in general instead of punishing the soldiers that they fought against (Wood 2006). This is often highly connected to the first cause, ethnicity.

Characteristics of armed groups

A second strand of literature focuses on the characteristics of armed groups which make sexual violence in conflict more likely instead of concentrating on the victims of it. Although many armed actors use sexual violence, not all do so (Wood 2014). The variation of the use of sexual violence between armed groups follows sometimes specific characteristics. One of these characteristics is leadership of the armed group. Studies show that when leaders prohibit sexual violence this can have an effect on how often it is used during conflict (Wood 2009). Wood (2009) found that a rebel group in Sri Lanka did not use sexual violence because the leaders opposed it. Moreover, it matters how these leaders are chosen. Rebel groups where leaders got elected are less likely to use sexual violence (Sawyer et al. 2020). This effect increases when rebel groups include civilians in the elections (Sawyer et al. 2020). Another characteristic of armed groups which is connected to sexual violence in conflict is the technique of recruitment. Insurgent groups that use abduction as technique and cannot rely on voluntary methods are more likely to perpetrate rape (Cohen 2013). Moreover, state forces that use coercive recruitment methods like pressganging are more likely to use sexual violence because of weaker social ties and lower social cohesion (Cohen 2013). A final explanation that makes armed groups more likely to perpetrate sexual violence is ideology. While rebel groups with a leftist ideology are less likely to use sexual violence in a conflict, religious insurgents are more likely to use it (Sarwari 2021). The theoretical explanation Sarwari (2021) offers for this finding is that leftist insurgents are closer connected to gender equality and women's rights due to their ideology.

Gender equality and sexual violence during conflict

The third strand of literature focuses on the connection of gender equality and sexual violence during conflict. According to Cohen (2013), there is no significant connection between gender inequality and conflict-related sexual violence. However, this finding is not only contested by Sarwari (2021), but also by other scholars (e.g., Jefferson 2004, Cockburn 2004). Jefferson (2004), for instance, argues that the status of women before a conflict can explain sexual violence during conflict. By looking at Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of Congo, he observes that gender inequality before a conflict was followed by numerous cases of conflict-related sexual violence (Jefferson 2004). The main argument is here that the perception of women during peacetime as "second-class citizens" (Jefferson 2004: 4) had a significant effect on how they were treated in conflict. This is supported by scholars like Cockburn (2004), who explains the connection between

gender equality before conflict and sexual violence during it with the concept of the continuum of violence. She argues that sexual violence starts with structural discrimination against women and then flows into other kinds of discrimination including violence, like sexual violence (Cockburn 2004). The expectation that derives from this is that when states fail to protect women from sexual violence in peacetime, they are likely to fail as well to protect them in conflicts (Jefferson 2004). Thus, according to this theory, it is not necessary to distinguish between war and peace because the discrimination of women would flow into other kinds of violence like sexual violence not because a conflict starts but because it is the logical consequence of structural violence (Cockburn 2004). And although, this could explain sexual violence during conflict, it could also explain it during peacetime (Cockburn 2004).

This is as a major critique on the existing literature looking at gender equality and sexual violence in conflict because it does not account for variation in conflict-related sexual violence. If the theory of Cockburn (2004) would be generalizable this would mean that there is no variation whatsoever between women's situation in peace and in conflict. It would mean that women are not more vulnerable and not more affected by sexual violence during conflict than they were before during peacetime. It would explain sexual violence during conflict as the logical consequence of structural violence that happened before. However, motives to use sexual violence vary often between conflict and peacetime. Especially during conflict sexual violence happens in different forms and can be used for strategic reasons of armed groups as well as a lack or a breakdown of organizational structure (Bastick et al. 2007). Moreover, displacement or recruitment techniques, two things mostly characterizing conflict times, can impact form and occurrence of sexual violence during these times (Bastick et al. 2007, Cohen 2013). It is, therefore, necessary to distinguish between peace and conflict time even when looking at pre-conflict conditions that could impact gender equality and the prevalence of conflict-related sexual violence.

The lack of existing studies that look at sexual violence in conflict and gender equality before conflict with emphasizing the necessity to distinguish between conflict and peacetime demonstrates the relevance of this thesis. Moreover, there has been no focus so far on women's impact on politics and socialization processes before conflict and how it can influence the prevalence of sexual violence during conflict. It is necessary to look at women's political power to see if and how long they were able to influence the political sphere. When women were able to participate politically long before the conflict

started, they may have had more impact on the socialization of men and women which consequently could lead to less cases of sexual violence during conflict.

Theory

Socialization can be seen as a “process of inducting actors into the norms and rules of a given community” (Checkel 2017: 594). During these processes, people obtain beliefs and values that are perceived as achievable and appropriate by their society (Usta et al. 2016). This results in people adapting their behavior and internalizing the norms. However, sometimes, even against the internalized norms, people adapt first their behavior to new situations, like new legislations, which later internalize these novel behavioral patterns in norms (Checkel 2017). This can be the case with aggressive and violent behavior towards women, which could increase when it is supported by a society or when it is not punished by the system established in the society (Usta et al. 2016). Violence in general can be fostered but also hindered by certain social processes (Checkel 2017).

These socialization processes and social structure in general can be distinguished into four dimensions: ecological, economic, system of values and political (Inkeles 1969). The focus in this thesis will lay on the political dimension by concentrating on political participation and how it can impact socialization processes of men and women. Direct political participation is, for instance, when a citizen votes in elections, gets voted into a parliament, or is part of the executive as minister (Pausch 2012). All these kinds of participation have “a clear and expected link to policy outcomes” (Fayomi and Adebay 2018: 542). Women’s chance to actively participate politically is not only important for states to ensure equal representation but can also impact the political socialization of both, men and women (Didi 2020, Inkeles 1969).

To answer how women’s political participation prior to conflict affect socialization processes and the prevalence of sexual violence during conflict, I will present three causal mechanisms: women’s value in a society, gender stereotypes, and policy changes through women’s participation.

Women’s value in a society

First, women’s pre-conflict political participation can be an indicator of how women are valued in a society and therefore, whether a society is gender equal (Melander 2005). In societies where gender inequality is prevalent, on the one hand, women are often not taken part in the public sphere, such as in politics (Kimmel 2000). Thus, they are often not

perceived as independent political actors of the community (Allen 1996). This supports victimization of women which makes violence against them seem more acceptable or less punished as they are not valued as much as men are (Copleon 1994, Green 2006).

On the other hand, societies that give women the possibility to participate politically try to counteract this female victimization (Green 2006). Normally, this does not only happen through equal opportunities in the political sphere, but also through supporting better career options or more education for women (Green 2006). When women get these opportunities, it can be assumed that they will face less discrimination because of their gender which then results in less oppression, such as by sexual violence (Green 2006). This has been proven by several scholars (e.g., Bailey 1999, Whaley 2001, Yodanis 2004). For instance, Bailey (1999) and Whaley (2001) found out that rape occurred less in cities of the United States where gender equality was higher. Another study of Yodanis (2004), who researched the occurrence of sexual violence in European countries, came to the conclusion that there is a negative correlation between the status of women, measured with political, educational and occupational variables, and sexual violence.

Therefore, it matters if societies support women to participate politically because it demonstrates how they value women in general. Especially generations that grow up with the idea that women have a high status in society should be highly influenced by these values and adapt their behavior to it (John et al. 2017). This is why the longer a society supports women's political participation the more should this society value women as people already grew up with these beliefs. In turn, these people could be less tempted to use sexual violence even under exceptional circumstances like conflicts (Jefferson 2004).

Gender stereotypes

Gender stereotypes and the socialization into typical gender roles might influence the occurrence of sexual violence during conflict as well. In traditional gender roles, masculinity is often associated with power and domination, while femininity is connected to subordination (Skjelsbaek 2001). Moreover, traditional gender expectations link certain behavior, like fighting or using other kinds of violence, with men (Cockburn 2004). When the power is unequally distributed, and men have much more power in the political sphere than women, this supports a culture of masculinity that is more likely to use violence and fulfill the traditional gender stereotypes (Cockburn 2004).

Societies where women do not get the possibility to participate politically are also more likely to reproduce and maintain these gender stereotypes and expect women to stay subordinate (Melander 2005). On the contrary, societies that enfranchise women or share legislative power between genders diverge from the traditional gender roles because they give women political power (Melander 2005). Breaking with these gender stereotypes can change a society in the long-term (John et al. 2017). For instance, societies, where gender roles are more equal, are also expected to be less violent because they reject violence in general (Melander 2005).

When men and women have been socialized with less traditional gender roles before a conflict, this could impact their behavior during conflict. It can be expected that the socialization with less traditional gender stereotypes impacts the prevalence of sexual violence in two ways. First, as men and women grow up in a society that rejects violence in general more, they should also be more likely to reject using violence, like sexual violence, during conflict. Second, when people have been socialized with seeing women influence politics by voting and/or running for office, they should not see women as the subordinate gender anymore.

Policy changes through women's political participation

Women's ability to participate politically also impacts the policies and the issues addressed by the government. When women get enfranchised, it leads to an increased pool of voters (Barnhart et al. 2020). This, in turn, leads politicians to pay more attention to the perspectives, opinions and concerns of women as they are interested to gain their vote (Caprioli and Boyer 2001). The policies that derive from this are more likely to address issues women are interested in and should also take female perspectives more into account (Yodanis 2004, Davies and True 2015). As studies show, female opinions can be helpful as women address particularly issues that are often ignored by men like reproductive rights, gendered violence, and social inequalities (e.g., Baskaran and Hessami 2020, Inter-Parliamentary Union 2008, Barnhart et al. 2020). However, it is not only about the issues that they address but also the different life experiences and socialization that bring diverse knowledge into politics (Sundström et al. 2017). Women still suffer from serious disadvantages in most societies, and this is what they have in common (Young 1997). Instead of claiming that there is one female opinion, they share a social perspective which derives from their position in society and their socialization. Including them legislatively “means promoting certain starting points for discussion”

(Young 1997: 366) that without them would not start, for instance, while addressing issues like gendered violence.

Hence, the inclusion of women changes political priorities, for example, when looking at stricter laws and policies against gendered violence (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2008). This, in turn, could have an impact on the socialization process of both genders (John et al. 2017). Men and women could grow up with values that condemn sexual violence since laws impact their behavior (Melton and Nader 1986). The law can be a moral guide that alters social structures, and ultimately, leads to different socialization processes (Melton and Nader 1986). This is observable, for example, in the United States where the discrimination law on the basis of gender had much impact in shaping the public opinion and its moral views about cases of sexual harassment (Bilz and Nadler 2014).

Although voting can already change the attention of policy makers towards women's perspectives, women's ability to change policies could be even more successful when they achieve legislative power. Sundström et al. (2017) argue that to change legislations and alter policies, women would need legislative power rather than formal political equality through voting. According to this, they need legislative presence as ministers or delegates to change the political sphere (Sundström et al. 2017). Therefore, it is important to look at both how long women were enfranchised and how long and to what extent they had legislative power. Through new policies that are supported by women, it should impact the socialization of men and women as they adapt their behavior towards the new policies and legislations (Checkel 2017). The longer these legislations have been into force, the higher should also be their influence on the norms and behavior of the people (John et al. 2017). This could impact the prevalence of sexual violence during conflict because if people have learned from a very early stage on, through policies and legislations, that sexual violence is not acceptable, then they are probably less inclined to use it during conflict.

On the basis of the presented mechanisms, women's value in a society, gender stereotypes, and policy changes through female political participation, the hypothesis is the following:

The longer women participate politically in a pre-conflict country, the less sexual violence occurs during conflict.

However, the mechanisms I presented are not uncontested and a competing theory should be briefly highlighted. The backlash theory expects the opposite to my presented

hypothesis. The assumption is that more gender equality could influence sexual violence by threatening male power (Green 2006, Seifert 1996). Therefore, it could be linked with more sexual violence because men feel threatened by women's prospect of obtaining equality (Baron and Straus 1989). They would use rape to put them "back in their place" (Baron and Straus 1989: 61). However, very limited empirical evidence was found (e.g., Austin and Kim 2000, Baron and Straus 1989).

Research Design

To analyze the relation between the women's political socialization before a conflict and the prevalence of sexual violence during conflict, I merged datasets including the Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict dataset (version 2; Cohen and Nordas 2019), the Parline dataset (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2021), and the Varieties of Democracy dataset (Coppedge et al. 2021). The basic unit of analysis is the country in conflict between the years 1989 to 2015. The analysis includes every country that was in conflict and where sexual violence was reported after 1989. In the Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict dataset (Cohen and Nordas 2019) are some locations with multiple countries mentioned. Those cases had to be excluded as it is not clear in which country how much sexual violence happened and the analysis is dependent on countries as basic unit of analysis. In total, the analysis contains 78 countries as can be observed in the Table 1.

Dependent variable

The dependent variable is the prevalence of sexual violence which is operationalized in the dataset of Cohen and Nordas (2019) as an "estimate of the relative magnitude of sexual violence perpetration" (Cohen and Nordas 2019: 9) per conflict and year. They measure it on an ordinal scale from 0 to 3. 0 means no reported cases of sexual violence in a particular year in a country in conflict. When there have been isolated reports of sexual violence occurring in a conflict country in a particular year, the code is 1. When sexual violence was describes as widespread, frequent or in large numbers in a particular year in a country in conflict, it is coded with a 2. A 3 stands for massive reports of sexual violence in the conflict year in a particular country. This means sexual violence was described as systematic, innumerable or massive (Cohen and Nordas 2019). The data was collected by using the United States State Department Human Rights Country Reports. To do a cross-sectional analysis, I will use the highest reported sexual violence prevalence per country by any armed actor. As can be observed in Table 1, the mean of this variable is 1.29 which means that on average there were at least isolated reports of sexual violence.

When looking at Table 2, the frequencies of the dependent variable can be observed. In 34.6% of the cases there were no reports of sexual violence during conflict. 22 countries had isolated reports and 9 cases had widespread incidents of sexual violence during conflict. In 20 countries were massive reports about sexual violence during conflict. Overall, there have been reports of sexual violence in nearly two-thirds of the countries (65.6%) in conflict since 1989.

Independent variables

To measure women's political socialization before a conflict, I will look at two independent variables: duration of female suffrage and women's political participation index. Both of these measures can give a good overview on how women got socialized politically. First, by looking at the duration of female suffrage shows how long women were able to formally participate in politics. Second, the women's political participation index shows how much legislative power they had before conflict. To look at how long women had the possibility to vote, I will use the dataset Parline (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2021), that has collected global data on national parliaments and when women gained suffrage in particular countries. To observe how long their influence was, I will subtract the year women gained suffrage from the start year of the conflict. The mean of the variable "Duration of female suffrage before conflict start" is 38.79 years, which means that in average women had the chance to vote for more than 38 years before the conflict started in their country. However, as the standard deviation with over 21 years shows, the variation of this variable is very high. In two countries, Indonesia and Iraq, the conflict started before women were enfranchised which is why there are two negative values for this variable. This can be seen in Table 1.

Second, to examine how long and to what extent they had legislative power, I will use the Women Political Participation Index of the Varieties of Democracy Dataset (Coppedge et al. 2021). It measures how women are represented in political positions by looking at the percentage of women in the lower/unicameral chamber of the legislature and how political power is distributed by gender. It is measured from low (0) to high (1). I will take the average of the index from the year the first woman entered the parliament as a delegate until the conflict start. This is based on the assumption that starting with the first female delegate women started to have more legislative power and were able to influence the political sphere. As Table 1 shows, the mean of the Women Political Participation Index is 0.47 which means that, on average, women had moderate political power before conflict.

Control variables

Other factors that could influence the relationship between the political participation variables and the prevalence of sexual violence during conflict need to be included as control variables in the analysis. First, I will control for democracy by using the Polity V dataset (Marshall and Gurr 2020) because it can be an important factor when it comes to repression and human rights violations (Cohen 2013). The polity score is measured from -10 (hereditary monarchy) to +10 (consolidated democracy) (Marshall and Gurr 2020). To make sure that democracy is not influencing the results, I will always control for the polity score the year before the conflict started, assuming that the conflict start could impact the score too much. Since it is common in conflict studies to use the squared term, I will do so (Hegre et al. 2001).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics

Variable	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Prevalence of sexual violence	83	0	3	1.29	1.21
Duration of female suffrage before conflict start	82	-22	88	38.79	21.42
Women Political Participation Index	80	0	1	0.47	0.19
Democracy	82	-10	10	-0.74	5.93
Democracy squared	82	-100	100	-0.19	43.84
Conflict intensity level	82	0	1	0.30	0.46
Years of female suffrage before first conflict	81	-50	55	22.08	18.39
Population	82	12.87	20.84	16.37	1.49
Year of highest prevalence	83	1989	2019	2000.77	9.86
Fertility rate	81	1.51	8.05	4.66	1.92
Valid N	78				

Second, I will control for the conflict intensity level as the literature indicates a link between higher conflict intensity and the numbers of sexual violence (Sarwari 2021). For this, the Uppsala Conflict Data Program and the Armed Conflict Dataset (Gleditsch et al. 2002, Pettersson and Öberg 2020) of the Peace Research Institute Oslo are being used where the intensity level is coded for 1 (minor) when the number of battle-related

death is between 25 and 999 and it is coded for 2 (war) when the battle-related deaths are higher than 1000 in a given conflict year. For the analysis, I computed a dummy variable where 0 is a low intensity level and 1 is a high intensity level. The number of the highest intensity per conflict is being used.

Third, I will control for the years of female suffrage before the first conflict started. This is because sometimes a country suffered from a different conflict before the conflict I look at (which lasted at least until 1989 because the prevalence of sexual violence variable starts at 1989). To see if it matters how long there was the possibility of socialization during peacetime with female suffrage before a conflict, I will therefore see how long women the chance had to vote before the first conflict started. For this I will subtract the year of female suffrage from the year of the first conflict after the suffrage was gained. The information on when the first conflict occurred after women were enfranchised is gathered from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (Gleditsch et al. 2002). The year of female suffrage is again derived from the Parline dataset (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2021).

Table 2. Frequencies of Prevalence of sexual violence during conflict

Prevalence of sexual violence	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
No reports of sexual violence (0)	27	34.6	34.6
Isolated reports of sexual violence (1)	22	28.2	62.8
Widespread reports of sexual violence (2)	9	11.5	74.4
Massive reports of sexual violence (3)	20	25.6	100
Total	78	100	

Fourth, a larger population can have an impact on how likely states repress their citizens (Cohen 2013). This, in turn, could have an impact on to what extent citizens were able to participate politically which could also influence women’s possibility to actively participate politically. I will use the data of the World Bank (2021) which has listed the number of citizens per year. For the analysis, I will look at the year before the conflict started and create the natural logarithm to avoid large numbers.

Fifth, next to conflict intensity I will also control for the year of the highest prevalence reported. This is to see if time has a significant impact either due to the improvement of reporting or because the occurrence of sexual violence incidents during

conflict increases (Cohen 2013). I will use the first year of the highest reported prevalence of sexual violence from the Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict dataset (Cohen and Nordas 2019).

The last control variable will look at the fertility rate. This is because especially in countries where women have a low social standing, motherhood becomes one of the most important measurements of women's lives (Caprioli 2000). It shows a combination of social, economic, and political aspects and could impact women's chance to participate politically. When women have a lack of access to reproductive health services this can restrict their possibilities to take an active role in a society (Caprioli 2000). I will use the Varieties of Democracy dataset (Coppedge et al. 2021) that looks at the mean number of children a woman would give birth to in a country per year. To decrease the likelihood that the conflict had an impact on the number, the fertility rate of the year before the conflict start will be used.

After checking for multicollinearity, it can be observed that only two variables have a higher VIF index which indicates a correlation: *Duration of female suffrage before conflict start* (VIF=1.746) and *Years of female suffrage before first conflict* (VIF=1.569). As both are measuring the length of female suffrage, one for the conflict I am looking at in the analysis (after 1989) and one for the first conflict after women gained suffrage, the correlation is not surprising. Moreover, as both values are still close to the value of 1, this is not concerning.

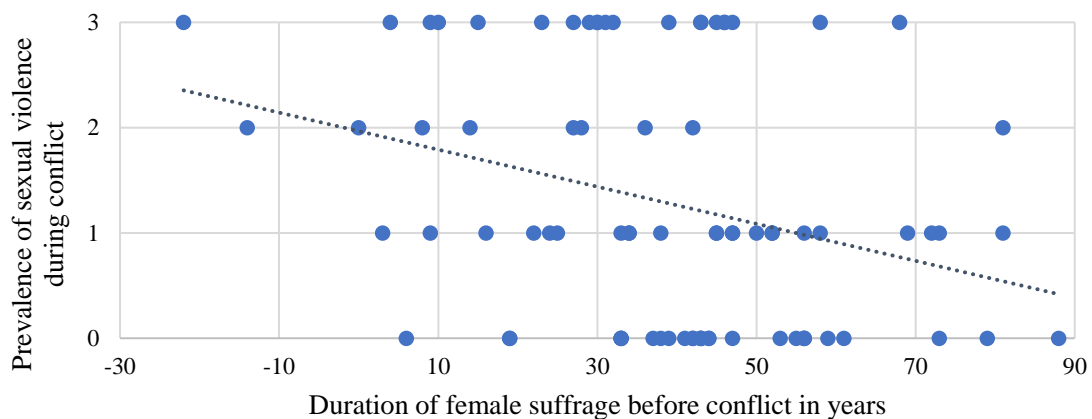
Results

As the dependent variable is ordinal, I performed a large-N study using Ordinal Logistic Regression analysis. The Tables 3 and 4 report all the results of eight different ordinal logistic regression models. Model 1 includes only the independent variables, while Model 2 to 5 include always some of the controls. In Model 6, I included all the controls and the independent variables. Model 7 has only the *Duration of female suffrage before conflict start* as independent variable with all control variables and Model 8 includes the *Women Political Participation Index* with the control variables.

As it can be observed in Table 3 and 4, the coefficient of the *Duration of female suffrage before conflict start* shows in every model a negative correlation with the prevalence of sexual violence during conflict. This means that the longer women had the opportunity to vote in a country before a conflict, the less sexual violence will occur during conflict. This correlation is significant in Model 1-7. These findings support the hypothesis, and it can be expected that all causal mechanisms of the theoretical

framework play a role in this outcome: women’s value in a society, gender stereotypes and impact of women on policies. These results also support previous results on the importance of women’s suffrage (e.g., Caprioli 2000, Barnhart et al. 2020). When looking at the outliers of this relation in Graph 1, it can be observed that there are some cases that are not in line with these results. For instance, Tajikistan had female suffrage 68 years before the conflict started, and still had massive reports of sexual violence during the conflict. Turkey is another example for an outlier, with widespread reports of sexual violence and 81 years of female suffrage before the conflict. On the other hand, Laos had 6 years of female suffrage before the conflict started but no reported cases of sexual violence. Overall, the trend line in Graph 1 shows the negative relation that is also proven by the ordinal logistic regression analysis.

Graph 1. Scatter plot of Prevalence of sexual violence during conflict and Duration of female suffrage before conflict in years



However, against the expectations, it does not make a difference for conflict-related sexual violence how much women are included in political processes. This can be seen as none of the coefficients for the variable *Women Political Participation Index* neither in Model 1-6 nor in Model 8 are significant. The expectation that legislative power of women would change socialization and in the end lead to less sexual violence during conflict is therefore not proven. Moreover, the coefficients between the *Women Political Participation Index* and the prevalence of sexual violence are positive in Model 1-6 and Model 8. Although this is not significant, it is interesting that the coefficients indicate a positive relation, which would mean that a higher legislative power could lead to higher cases of sexual violence. This is exactly the opposite way than expected in the hypothesis. These coefficients are observable in Table 3 and 4. However, as these findings are not

significant, it means that having legislative power, as delegates or ministers, does not necessarily impact the prevalence of sexual violence during conflict. This does not mean, though, that it is not important to include women out of representation and democracy reasons. These findings only show that female legislative power pre-conflict does not alter how much sexual violence can be observed during conflict. The results speak particularly against the expectations of Sundström et al. (2017) that especially delegates get the chance to change the political sphere. They expected that formal political equality is not enough to protect women's rights and that they need representation to alter political socialization and protect their rights (Sundström et al. 2017). The results of this thesis, however, show that legislative presence is not as important as formal political equality and that especially women's suffrage, and not women as delegates or ministers, alter political socialization processes and lead to less sexual violence during conflict.

However, there are some reasons that could explain these insignificant results. First, theoretically it could be that legislative power has maybe no or only little effect on political socialization and that other variables are more important. These variables could, for instance, be political education or social background. Moreover, looking only at legislative presence of women ignores the possibilities to participate politically out of the parliamentary context, for instance, at demonstrations or in non-governmental organizations. The expectation political socialization would alter only with suffrage and legislative involvement is, therefore, not enough and needs to be taken into account for further research. Second, methodologically, it could make sense to look qualitatively into how much women actually changed pre-conflict when gaining legislative presence, to see if the expectations of the theoretical framework can be confirmed. If they were not able to change anything regarding policies or daily agenda of the government, this could be a reason why they also did not have a significant effect on the prevalence of sexual violence. Moreover, it could make a difference to see if on the local governance level more women are included instead of researching at the national level and if that changes the results. This is because the barriers to join the local government should be lower and impact socialization even more as it is closer to the citizens (Van Deth and Tausendpfund 2013).

When looking at the control variables, some surprising results must be noted. First, it is interesting that the polity score, with the variable *Democracy squared*, does not impact the prevalence of sexual violence during conflict. This suggests the impact of female suffrage on the socialization processes is not dependent on if the country is an

autocracy or a democracy. Assuming that women would especially change the political sphere in democracies which could subsequently impact the prevalence of conflict-related sexual violence, therefore, has not been proven. Second, there is a positive correlation between higher *Conflict intensity* and the prevalence of sexual violence during conflict. This indicates that a conflict with higher battle-related deaths is more likely to have more reports of sexual violence during conflict. Third, *Population* is against the expectations and findings of Cohen (2013) not significant in the models and can, therefore, not explain the variation in sexual violence during conflict. However, the variable for the *Year of the highest prevalence of sexual violence* is highly significant in both, my analysis and the analysis of Cohen (2013). This means that there were higher reports of sexual violence in the past years than in 1989 where the dataset started. This could be either because sexual violence during conflict becomes more prevalent or because reporting sexual violence cases improved over the years. A last interesting finding is that the *Fertility rate* does not have a significant effect on the prevalence of sexual violence during conflict. Although, Caprioli (2000) sees fertility rate as one of the measures of gender equity, this does not seem to impact occurrence of sexual violence during conflict. This, however, can be connected to one of the problems of one literature strand that was already mentioned above: the level of gender equality in a society before a conflict cannot be the only explanation for the variation of sexual violence in conflict.

Looking at the validity of the results, it can be observed that Model 5 and Model 6 have the highest explanatory value. Model 5, where only the variable years of female suffrage before first conflict was excluded, has a Nagelkerke's R^2 of 0.385 which means that the Model can explain 38.5% of the variation in the prevalence of sexual violence. Interesting is that the variable is not really adding explanatory value to Model 6, where the Nagelkerke's R^2 value is 0.386, which means that controlling for *Years of female suffrage before first conflict* changed only 0.1% of the explanatory value. This is probably because there are two female suffrage variables in the dataset that are closely related, and thus adding one of them changes only a small part of the explanatory value.

However, some limitations of this research need to be addressed. First, some cases had to be excluded from the dataset because they had more than one country as location, or the datasets of the independent variables were showing missing values. In the end, of 103 locations in the Cohen and Nordas (2019) dataset, only 78 were included which needs to be taken into account. Second, the theory assumes that everyone has been socialized in the same way in a country and does not leave much space for variation. Though, the

socialization processes can be different between regions, age, educational background or gender. Sadly, it is not possible so far to look at micro-level data on the individual level to sexual violence in conflict, but this could be an incentive for further research. Third, this research does not distinguish between actors. Sometimes, it is not the soldiers of a country who commit sexual violence but international actors. Moreover, as can be seen in the study of Wood (2009), sometimes it does not only vary within regions but also within actors of the same conflict. For these cases, the socialization argument is not suitable, as it can be assumed that the actors have been socialized the same way during peacetime, requiring further explanations for this.

Table 3. The prevalence of sexual violence during conflict, Model 1-4

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
No reported cases of sexual violence (0)	-1.376* (0.603)	152.510** (45.851)	146.151** (46.257)	4.150 (2.502)
Isolated cases of sexual violence (1)	-0.137 (0.584)	153.890** (45.912)	147.588** (46.257)	5.596* (2.541)
Numerous cases of sexual violence (2)	0.434 (0.588)	154.536** (45.938)	148.244** (46.282)	6.253* (2.558)
Duration of female suffrage before conflict start	-0.038** (0.011)	-0.030** (0.017)	-0.028* (0.014)	-0.029* (0.012)
Women Political Participation Index	0.847 (1.109)	0.306 (1.158)	0.846 (1.228)	1.365 (1.163)
Year of highest prevalence		0.077** (0.023)	0.073** (0.023)	
Fertility rate			0.159 (0.138)	
Conflict Intensity Level				1.633** (0.498)
Democracy squared				-0.001 (0.005)
Population				0.300 (0.154)
Years of female suffrage before first conflict				
-2LL	200.202	191.621	187.842	188.650
Cox and Snell's R ²	0.097	0.216	0.235	0.245
Nagelkerke's R ²	0.104	0.233	0.253	0.263
N	80	80	79	80

Note: ordinal logistic regression coefficients with standard errors in brackets.

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

Table 4. The prevalence of sexual violence during conflict, Model 5-8

	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
No reported cases of sexual violence (0)	136.906** (50.191)	133.597* (52.534)	145.714** (51.785)	119.309* (50.410)
Isolated cases of sexual violence (1)	138.581** (50.253)	135.272** (52.592)	147.390** (51.847)	120.884* (50.461)
Numerous cases of sexual violence (2)	139.361** (50.277)	136.052** (52.614)	148.143** (51.870)	121.594* (50.479)
Duration of female suffrage before conflict start	-0.030* (0.013)	-0.030* (0.015)	-0.028* (0.014)	
Women Political Participation Index	1.705 (1.274)	1.677 (1.275)		0.976 (1.235)
Year of highest prevalence	0.067** (0.025)	0.066* (0.026)	0.073** (0.026)	0.058* (0.025)
Fertility rate	0.119 (0.147)	0.118 (0.147)	0.039 (0.137)	0.240 (0.136)
Conflict Intensity Level	1.823*** (0.522)	1.817** (0.523)	1.787*** (0.508)	1.676** (0.511)
Democracy squared	-0.003 (0.005)	-0.003 (0.005)	-0.005 (0.005)	-0.001 (0.005)
Population	-0.172 (0.167)	-0.157 (0.178)	0.104 (0.173)	0.102 (0.171)
Years of female suffrage before first conflict		-0.004 (0.015)	-0.002 (0.015)	-0.019 (0.014)
-2LL	171.762	171.702	177.117	178.584
Cox and Snell's R ²	0.358	0.358	0.349	0.319
Nagelkerke's R ²	0.385	0.386	0.376	0.344
N	78	78	80	79

Note: ordinal logistic regression coefficients with standard errors in brackets.

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

Conclusion

In this thesis, I aimed to understand if female political socialization can influence the prevalence of sexual violence during conflict. The theoretical expectation was based on

the assumption that female political participation impacts socialization processes of men and women by showing women's value in a society, decreasing the importance of gender stereotypes, and women's active influence on altering policies towards more gender sensitive issues. The findings show that the duration of female suffrage before a conflict can be seen as an important factor for socialization processes of men and women. This has a significant and relevant impact on the prevalence of sexual violence. Against the expectations, the effect has not increased when looking at how women were actively able to change policies in legislative positions.

There are several takeaways from this thesis. First, the results align with research conducted by scholars such as Caprioli and Boyer (2001) and Barnhart et al. (2020), who have placed a greater focus on women's suffrage and whose research has contributed to the understanding of the importance of suffrage in general. It adds a new dimension of this importance by looking at its impact on violence against women during conflict. Second, it shows the significance of researching pre-conflict conditions and socialization that influence sexual violence during conflict. This emphasizes a broad understanding of the violence that happens in a conflict by distinguishing between conflict and peacetime but also acknowledging that behavior during conflict can be influenced by conditions during peacetime. Third, it shows the importance of socialization when looking at conflict-related sexual violence. When people have been longer socialized towards a more gender equal society, for instance by giving women the right to vote, then this impacts how they act during conflict towards women. A final takeaway is that the power distribution between men and women and how the number of women actively changing the political sphere as delegates does not significantly impact the prevalence of sexual violence during conflict. However, these findings are not emphasizing to not include women in politics, rather suggesting they do not have an impact on the prevalence of sexual violence during conflict.

Moreover, the findings have several implications for further research and policy makers. First, the importance of socialization before a conflict needs further research to explain the variation of violence during conflict, within peace and conflict studies. Second, it would be helpful to see how other pre-conflict conditions like economic and social status of women impact the prevalence of sexual violence during conflict, as these are important factors for gender equality next to political participation (Caprioli 2000). This could increase the understanding of sexual violence during conflict and the pre-conflict conditions that favor it. Third, it should be further researched how and when

political participation can have an impact on whether women experience sexual violence during conflict or not. It is important to go further and look at what makes suffrage so significant for socialization processes and how political participation beyond the parliamentary context, for instance in non-governmental organizations, could impact sexual violence during conflict. Finally, for policy makers and the international community the duration of female suffrage before conflict can be an indicator if in an actual conflict sexual violence could be more prevalent. This helps to adjust policies towards sexual violence during conflict and maybe find ways to better protect people from this kind of violence when knowing that women before conflict start were not enfranchised for a long time.

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