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THE ROLE OF GOVERNANCE IN PROMOTING INCLUSIVE SOCIETY IN MONTSERRADO COUNTY, LIBERIA.

UNIVERSITY OF KIGALI

SUBMITTED BY

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THIS DISSERTATION IS SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES, UNIVERSITY OF KIGALI, IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF MASTER IN PUBLIC POLICY AND MANAGEMENT

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Declaration

I, Veronica Lue Corvah, declare that this research is my independent and original work, except for the references to other people's work, which I have honorably acknowledged. I further declare that this dissertation, in whole or in part, has not been submitted for a degree to any institution or University.

Signed: _____   Date: _____

Veronica Lue Corvah

Approval

The Master's thesis, entitled "The Role of Governance in promoting an inclusive society in Montserrado County, Liberia," was done under my supervision and has been submitted to the University of Kigali thesis committee for examination with my approval as a supervisor.

Supervisor:

Signed: _____   **Date: __9th February 2025**

Dr. Daniel MBURAMATARE

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Dedication

I dedicate my research work to my loving and supportive parents, Mr. Boie F.L. Corvah and Mrs. Amelia N. Corvah, for always supporting me throughout my school year. I also want to dedicate my research paperwork to one of the many blessings God has given me: my one and only big sister, who is also my role model for supporting and willingly correcting me throughout the process. Conclusively, I do not forget my loving niece Chrispina D.H. Williams, who has always been a member of the support team throughout the process.

Acknowledgment

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List of Abbreviations

CDF	County Development Fund
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
EITI	Executive Industries Transparency Initiative
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GAC	General Auditing Commission
GEMAP	Governance and Economic Management Program
IMF	International Monetary Fund
KII	Key Informant Interview
LACC	Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nation Development Programme
WB	World Bank

Operational Definition

Accountability: How governing authorities/institutions continue to be responsive to the electorates or citizens aimed at facilitating their participation at all levels of public life are encouraged, whereas public servants are held answerable for their actions or inactions in the service of their communities (World Bank, 2011)

Disability: the lack or restriction of the ability to perform an activity in a manner within the range considered normal within the cultural context of the human being.

Inclusion: The process that involves adjusting homes, school and its environment, and society so that everyone, regardless of their state, can have the opportunity to interact, play, learn, work, and experience the feeling of belonging and experiment to develop into accordance with the potential and abilities.

Good Governance: A government's respect for the rule of law and individual human rights.

Integration: This is a process through which people with and without special needs are taught together to adapt to their environment.

Marginalized/vulnerable group: people who are knowingly/unknowingly denied the opportunity to interact, participate, learn, and work at all levels.

Transparency: The ability of the leadership in place to function with the absolute openness of all their dealings and encourage third-party reviews of developmental activities within their institutions.

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Abstract

Good governance is fundamental to promoting an inclusive society, ensuring transparency, accountability, participation, and the rule of law. In Liberia, challenges such as corruption, economic disparity, social exclusion, and limited citizen participation hinder governance effectiveness. This study explores the role of governance in fostering inclusivity in Montserrado County, Liberia, by assessing economic, political, social, and cultural factors that impact governance adherence and societal inclusion. This study was conducted in Montserrado County. It employed a mixed-methods approach, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative data collection. Surveys were administered to 425 participants, including government officials, civil society representatives, and marginalized community members. Focus group discussions and interviews provided more profound insights into governance practices. Data analysis involved frequencies and proportions and thematic analysis of qualitative responses. Findings indicated that, 262 (39%) believe that employment opportunities are partially distributed. Minority 7(2%) of the respondents confirmed transparency of government policies in promoting inclusivity, with 218 (72%) still seeing gender equity as a challenge. Despite the effort, there are still 333 (78%) participants who believed that no system put in place to address stereotyping. All groups, including community, Civil Society organizations (CSOs), and marginalized, testified that participation in decision-making is limited. A lack of trust between CSOs and local authorities also hampers effective collaboration. While efforts to promote good governance exist, economic disparities, corruption, gender inequality, and cultural biases were identified as significant barriers to inclusivity. Strengthening accountability mechanisms, increasing public participation, and addressing socio-economic disparities are crucial for achieving an inclusive society in Liberia. Policy recommendations include fostering multi-stakeholder collaboration and implementing targeted economic and educational reforms to bridge existing gaps.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

The study is introduced in chapter one. Furthermore, the study's background, problem statement, aims, research hypothesis, importance, and limits are all included, as well as the study's organization and delimitation.

1.1 Background

Nowadays, one of the fundamental goals for citizens, scholars, and policymakers seems to be the pursuit of equality and inclusion. An inclusive society, one where all individuals, irrespective of their race, socio-economic, gender, status, or disability, can participate fully and equally, is crucial for sustainable development and social harmony. Achieving such inclusivity, however, hinges significantly on the principles and practices of good governance. The promotion and consolidation of good governance is processed through accessioning information quickly, thereby informing decision-making at different levels of government (King, 2019). It is categorized by participation, transparency, accountability, and the rule of law and serves as the bedrock for creating an environment that nurtures inclusivity. (Gershon et al., 2018). These principles ensure that the needs and rights of all citizens, especially the marginalized and vulnerable groups, are addressed and protected. Good governance promotes active contribution and reasonable access to opportunities and resources by fostering trust between the government and its citizens.

The importance of good governance in promoting an inclusive society cannot be overstated. In most places, ineffective governance has led to social exclusion, inequality, and marginalization, thereby impeding social and economic development (Hoinaru et al., 2020).
Conversely, nations that have embraced the tenets of good governance have witnessed remarkable improvements in social cohesion, equity, and general quality of life. However, an inclusive society considers generation, age, gender, geographical locations, and different races and classes and ensures equal opportunity.

It also includes members of society with different competencies who determine the institutions governing social interaction as agreed upon. (*Moore*, 2023). According to the Social Development World Summit, an inclusive society is one in which everyone has rights and responsibilities and plays a significant role. Human rights, social justice, minority groups, democratic involvement, diversity of religions and cultures, and the rule of law must be pillars of such a society.

Social policies to lower inequality support inclusive societies by fostering adaptable, compassionate communities that welcome everyone. There are various social ways that inclusive societies operate. Kearney et all; stated that all forms of integration might imply that a stable society exists wherein one can find a niche (Kearney et al., 2010). This phrase expresses social integration and inclusion in its most basic form. Social integration, or social inclusion, refers to a society that welcomes diversity while encouraging participation rather than merely homogeneity. To achieve social integration and inclusion, people's voices must be heard, and their concerns must be addressed. All members (not just some) with diverse backgrounds must contribute and be societal stakeholders. This inclusivity of society creates and maintains stability and a willingness to accept change when needed.

International human rights laws essentially mandate that governments protect citizens' economic, social, and cultural rights, such as the rights to healthcare and education, as well as their civil and political rights, such as free speech, a fair trial, and political participation.

Not only do citizens of an inclusive society have the right to political involvement and education, but they also actively participate by exercising their rights to vote and education. The person's involvement in managing, organizing, and representing society is the most important factor in establishing an inclusive society.

One of the contentious ideas in international relations is good governance. Global governance has changed significantly during the past 20 years, moving from its primary concentration on political theory overview to include all disciplines. Due to this change, international institutions play a crucial role in addressing the global order's significant problems (Q. Huang, 2021). Institutions, regulations, standards, and legal agreements used to regulate interactions between states and promote collaborative action across a range of subject areas are collectively referred to as a method.

The idea of global governance is closely linked to high politics. It encompasses democracy, legitimate authority, and initiatives to combat poverty. (*SNS Democracy Council 2023*, 2023). The normative highlights that political conflict, social change, democracy, power, and the rule of law are the main foci of global governance. However, one of the most important aspects of global governance is the analytical use, which raises the implementation level. It highlights how crucial it is for global government to become involved in resolving issues at the state, regional, and global levels. Therefore, this thesis explores the critical role that good governance plays in promoting an inclusive society. Through a detailed examination of theoretical frameworks, case studies, and empirical data, the research aims to elucidate how effective governance practices can bridge the gap between different societal groups, ensuring everyone has a fair chance to make contributions and benefit from social, economic, and political processes.

1.2 Problem Statement

Inclusion is important in good governance because it allows for effective environmental management, promotes prosperity and resilience, and facilitates inclusive growth. Additionally, the value of governance negatively disturbs economic inclusion but positively influences financial stability, and inclusion surrounding finances facilitates the link between stability and the value of governance in Asian countries. To support inclusion effectively, international development actors should adopt political ways of thinking and work to be aware. (Malik et al., 2022), the rules and policies governments and their institutions create and implement may positively or negatively impact the financial industry. Any disruption in the financial industry may also affect the development initiatives of governments, organizations, and other sectors (Malik et al., 2022).

According to research done in Kenya, social, economic, and political injustices continue to exist there, which fuels disputes and pushes different communities and groups to the margins. Consequently, establishing systems of accountability and inclusivity for institutions under the rule of law may encourage and guarantee responsive public policies and participatory decision-making that do not leave anyone behind. This guarantees citizens unrestricted access to justice and the rule of law, both of which are necessary for sustainable development (Muigua, 2021).

A power shift that refocuses efforts on equality, development, and peace on the voices, human security, and rights of women and those most disadvantaged is necessary to achieve SDG 16 on peaceful, just, and inclusive communities. This calls for structural change rather than merely technological solutions, shifting from institutionalizing a system of governance that permits oppression and violence to one that promotes equality and peace for both people and the environment.

Despite the urge to meet the target by 2030 in achieving the peace goal, inclusivity, and recent efforts to stabilize its governance structures and promote democratic values, Liberia continues to struggle with inequality, social exclusion, and inadequate access to essential services for many of its citizens. The legacy of conflict, combined with persistent corruption, weak institutional capacity, and socioeconomic disparities, has hindered the formation of a genuinely inclusive place where all individuals can fully share in social, political, and economic life. radical governance reform interventions have glaringly become the country's post-war recovery panacea. In Liberia, a study conducted by Gbartu, 2024 revealed primary desired results have not been achieved entirely given the pervasive corruption undermining all governance reform interventions to resuscitate and transform Liberia. (Gbatu & Pursuing, 2024)

According to UNDP data on the Human Development Index (UNDP, 2016), conflict-affected nations had inferior development indices across the board, including multidimensional poverty, work and unemployment, education, health outcomes, and human security. Good governance, which is defined by accountability, transparency, participation, and the rule of law, is crucial to promoting an inclusive society.

However, in Liberia, the principles of good governance are often undermined by systemic corruption, limited public contribution in making decisions, and a lack of effective accountability mechanisms. This demonstrates that young people may be inventive, raise money, and engage in political activities without being affiliated with institutions (Gesi report, sustainable Democracy, 2023). These challenges have resulted in a governance system that does not fully address the needs and rights of all citizens, mostly sidelined groups, including ethnic minorities, women, youth, and disabled people. The core issue in this study is the point to which the current governance practices in Liberia contribute to or hinder the promotion of an inclusive society. Specifically, the study

seeks to understand how good governance principles are implemented in Liberia and their impact on inclusivity.

The study thoroughly explains the opportunities and difficulties associated with advancing inclusion and good governance in Liberia by tackling these sub-issues. Policymakers, civil society organizations, and foreign partners aiming to create a more inclusive and fair Liberian society will find great value in the findings.

1.3 Objectives of the study

This study's primary purpose is to investigate the critical role of good governance in promoting an inclusive society. This study aims to make a meaningful contribution to a bottomless understanding of how governance practices can be developed and well implemented to ensure that all individuals, regardless of who they are or what they do, have equal opportunities to participate in and benefit from societal processes. However, our study addresses the issue of public policy and privacy, thereby providing evidence-based insights and recommendations that can inform policymakers, governmental institutions, and civil society organizations in their efforts to strategize and conduct governance structures and practices that promote inclusivity.

1.3.1 General objectives

The main objective is to explore governance's role in promoting an inclusive society.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

1. To measure economic factors affecting inclusive society in Montserrado County.
2. To evaluate political factors affecting inclusive society in Montserrado County.
3. To assess social factors affecting inclusive society in Montserrado County.
4. To assess cultural factors affecting inclusive society in Montserrado County.

1.4 Research Questions

➢ How do economic factors influence the development of an inclusive society in Montserrado County?

➢ How do political dynamics impact and promote an inclusive society in Montserrado County?

> ➢ What are the social factors affecting inclusive society in Montserrado County?
>
> ➢ How do cultural norms and practices affect creating an inclusive society in Montserrado County?

1.6 Scope of the study

This study fully investigates how good governance practices can improve an inclusive society, specifically focusing on Montserrado County, Liberia. The study explored various dimensions of good governance, including transparency, accountability, participation, and the rule of law, and its impact on inclusivity in various aspects. Considering the geographical context, the study will concentrate on Montserrado County, Liberia, examining its unique historical, political, and socio-economic context as Montserrado provides a relevant case study due to its post-conflict challenges and ongoing governance reforms. Montserrado houses the Country's capital and all its public offices, civil organizations, and institutions. They employed qualitative methods where in-depth interviews and focus group discussions were conducted to gather detailed insights from key stakeholders, including officials of government, civil society organizations, and marginalized community members.

1.7 Significance of the study

This research is important in providing information to governmental and non-governmental organizations about obstacles and problems of practicing good governance in the context of the locality under study, Monrovia, Liberia. This study also highlights the role of governance in addressing social and economic inequalities and ensuring equal distribution of opportunities among marginalized, vulnerable individuals and civil societies. By emphasizing the importance of participation and inclusion, the study advocates for governance systems that empower marginalized groups, thereby enhancing social justice and equity. The study could probably provide basic information to policymakers on the lack of good governance to develop possible interventions to rectify the prevailing situation. Furthermore, the study aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions). It provides insights on how good governance can contribute to achieving these goals.

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CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the conceptual framework defining the independent and dependent variables and offers a thorough analysis of relevant literature, including theoretical and empirical research. This study analyzed the most pertinent journals, web articles, policies, reports, and grey literature about governance practices in fostering an inclusive society.

2.1 Theoretical Review

2.1.1 Good Governance Theory

The multi-dimensional, multi-faceted, and complex nature of governance makes it impossible to derive a consensus on its definition when building up the literature on governance. The idea of noble governance was first applied at the Annual World Bank Conference on Development in 1992. The establishment of a typology of regulation mechanisms constituted an important step towards conceptual clarification. In terms of regulation for society, Jessop (1998) explained three ideal types of mechanisms. Such mechanisms are arranged in hierarchical order: (by the authorities), economic (by the market), and (by self-organized networks). Although these three mechanisms exist together in varieties of configuration in any society, Jessop characterizes the current expansion of the hierarchical model as governance to the detriment of the other two, leading to what amounts to a 'political breakdown. (Hufty, 2011).

There are many types of research that have been scientifically written in devotion to studying governance's role, thus including people's public demonstration of power, cultivating the civil society efficiency of public administration, the political culture of citizens, etc. Stojanovic et al. (2016) explored the role of good governance as it relates to achieving balanced socio-economic development. Additionally, in recent times, this concept has gained more relevance in developing countries. Also, the government transformation model is reflected in the works done in these countries. Danylyshyn (2016), Bangura, & Larbi (2006), den Heyer (2011), Shpachuk (2019).

Many international organizations in the West, under the UN umbrella, have pushed the idea of good governance. Underprivileged development has served as an eye-opener for promoting a proper governance agenda.

In recent years, good governance has emerged as one of the most engaging requirements for low— and middle-income Countries.(Abas, 2020). The Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) has a broad strategy that incorporates political components to plan for effective governance. More attention is paid to the private industry in an effort to guarantee good governance, although DANIDA notes the role of civil society organizations and other non-state actors in assigning the public sector the duty of promoting priorities and necessities (DANIDA 2007).

Low and middle-income countries should work together to achieve better governance.(Sharma et al., 2010). Numerous issues, including those related to the economy, environment, energy, peace, and politics, have plagued Liberia since the last civil war, which lasted from 1997 to 2003. Through a wide range of specialized programs and activities, UNDP remains one of the top organizations offering interventions for the sustainable management of Liberia's natural and environmental resources. However, the assistance has appeared to be concentrated on immediate needs rather than long-term strategic goals. In addition, UNDP's assistance has been general rather than targeted, which has led to a few isolated triumphs despite the sector's enormous requirements. (Background, 1972).

In order to address study questions on adherence to good governance practices, we thought to delve into Two approaches: the new analytical approach and the bottom-up approach. The focus of the analysis will be clear on improving the skills of people as well as their practice to improve governance. Development theories have been shifting from focusing on economic growth to addressing issues of human welfare and poverty alleviation. This is due to the fact that social and political factors were not taken into account alongside economic factors. According to modernization theory, development is the process by which traditional societies are changed into prosperous, contemporary ones. As a result, ideas and methods that prioritize democracy, such as equality, redistribution, gender, participation, and empowerment, have surfaced (Abas, 2020). In the downward approach, it is assumed that implementation starts with practices of governance that

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should follow a straight order as a result of good administration assuming different public policy implementation and formulation. This approach defines the starting point of the most powerful actors at the central level to produce desired results (Peschel & Orquin, 2013).

2.1.2 Public Policy Theories

The idea behind the policy process is that various actors and institutions shape public policies at every stage. These actors can form relationships (whether formalized networks or not) based on their beliefs and interests in defending an idea, and their actions are influenced by external events and the context in which they operate. A variety of theoretical models have been constructed to describe the different facets of the policy-making process (Wei le and Carter, 2017).

2.1.3 Collaborative Governance Theory

This research proposes policy for collaborative theory on governance. In order to ease the process by allowing people to take part in making which incorporates a variety of viewpoints and encourages collaborative problem-solving among public, business, and civil society sectors, this places a strong emphasis on stakeholder involvement and co-production of policies. It was created to address the shortcomings of the conventional downstream implementation strategy and to lessen the high expense and political sway of regulation (Wu & Thomann, 2023). Pierre and Peters (2020) defined governance as steering the economic process of society, thereby emphasizing the importance of collaboration, participation, and flexibility. Their suggestions indicated that beyond government, governance should contain some multi-sectorial actors, which include private sector actors, civil society organizations, and Stakeholders who are involved in talking to each other. However, democracy is the way through which decisions are made. Emerson et al., (2015) contend that governance involving multiple partners should be embraced by collaborative governance in order to transcend official, state-driven initiatives. In addition to including collaborative government and mixed models like public-private and private-social partnerships, this strategy calls for state collaborations across all sectors and the community, as well as co-management systems (Emerson et al., 2015).

In Liberia, Collaborative Governance Theory plays a vital role in fostering good governance by involving multi-sectoral stakeholders in the policy-making process. Liberia's history of civil conflict and political instability has left its governance structures weak and fragmented. Collaborative governance, which emphasizes the inclusion of government agencies, civil society, private sector entities, and local communities, can help bridge these divides and build more resilient governance systems.

Studies have shown that multi-stakeholder engagement can improve accountability and transparency and strengthen trust in governance processes, which are vital for Liberia's post-conflict reconstruction and development (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Emerson, Nabatchi, & Balogh, 2012). By ensuring that diverse perspectives are considered, collaborative governance can address the needs of different communities, promoting social cohesion and inclusive development.

2.2 Empirical review

Regarding empirical results from studies conducted in the past, there is literature that contains more. Chong and Calderon (2001) presented a two-way connection that exists between institutions (good governance) and growth(Calderón & Chong, 2001). Political instability, corruption, and a lack of democracy can all contribute to bad governance, resulting in subpar economic performance Palifka and Rose-Ackerman (2016). Researchers occasionally concentrated on a particular facet of governance. Environmental governance (Mol, 2009) demonstrates that ecological planning (Y. Huang et al., 2022), community support is also required (Derakhshan et al., 2019), adaptive management and strong leadership can benefit people and biodiversity (Kenward et al., 2011). Development extends beyond the economic and environmental aspects to include social and several other aspects of governance. (Biswas et al., 2019).

Inclusive societies are defined by their ability to provide equal opportunities for all citizens, regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, disability, or socio-economic status. Good governance characterized by transparency, accountability, rule of law, participation, and responsiveness plays a pivotal role in fostering such societies. Empirical evidence from recent years demonstrates the link between governance quality and social inclusion outcomes across diverse contexts.

1. Governance and Social Inclusion: Evidence from Developing Countries

A 2022 study by Mutesa & Munyaneza examining Sub-Saharan African countries found that countries with strong governance indicators (rule of law, voice and accountability) experienced significantly lower levels of social exclusion. Their regression analysis demonstrated that increased political participation and transparency correlate with improved access to health, education, and economic opportunities for marginalized groups. Similarly, López-Acevedo et al. (2021), using data from Latin America, found that governance reforms aimed at decentralization and citizen engagement led to increased service delivery in rural and indigenous communities, indicating a direct relationship between participatory governance and inclusive development.

2. Digital Governance and Inclusion: OECD (2023) reported that digital governance initiatives, including e-governance platforms and open data systems, have expanded access to information and public services, particularly for women and youth. Countries that adopted digital platforms for service delivery during the COVID-19 pandemic saw improved reach to previously excluded populations.

In India, Kumar & Bansal (2023) found that digital identification (Aadhaar) and electronic service platforms significantly improved inclusion among low-income households by streamlining access to welfare schemes. However, they cautioned that governance must ensure digital literacy and data protection to avoid new forms of exclusion.

3. Governance and Gender Inclusion: A cross-national analysis by UN Women (2022) highlighted that countries with inclusive governance structures—those mandating gender quotas or institutionalizing women's participation in decision-making—had higher gender equality indices. Rwanda and Namibia were cited as successful cases where inclusive governance mechanisms resulted in measurable progress in women's political and economic empowerment.

4. Corruption, Accountability, and Exclusion: Corruption undermines inclusion by diverting resources and limiting access to basic services. According to Transparency International (2023), countries with lower corruption perceptions have more equitable public service delivery. A study conducted in Nigeria by Adebayo & Okonkwo (2022) confirmed that anti-corruption reforms significantly improved citizens' trust in government and increased public participation, especially among youth.

5. Post-Conflict Governance and Inclusion

Post-conflict settings require deliberate governance reforms to rebuild trust and foster inclusion. UNDP's Human Development Report (2021) showed that in post-conflict countries like Liberia and Sierra Leone, transitional justice mechanisms and community participation in local governance were vital for reconciliation and reintegration, particularly for women and former combatants. A 2023 field study in Liberia by Johnson & Wreh demonstrated that community-driven development programs led by local councils increased inclusion of youth and women in decision-making, although challenges remained due to persistent traditional hierarchies and weak accountability systems.

2.2.1 Good Governance and Sustainable Development

The meta-indicator of confidence in government institutions emphasizes the degree of perceived corruption the Liberians (Two, 2018). Good governance has been a key component of positive peace and development outcomes of social cohesion, stability, and peaceful cohabitation since the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted globally in 2015. Access to justice for everyone, creating inclusive, responsible, and effective institutions at all levels, and promoting inclusive societies and peace for sustainable development are all specifically called for in SDG 16 and its targets.

Liberia implemented GEMAP in 2005 to guarantee that all Liberian revenues would be available for the benefit of all Liberians, to give the government the right fiscal tools to collect the money needed for the country's development, and to strengthen Liberian institutions so they could take responsibility for reversing decades of inadequacies in financial and economic management. Liberia has undertaken several legal reforms to strengthen the judicial system, including training judges, lawyers, and court staff to improve the capability of the judiciary; transparency, which is included in the notable achievements of GEMAP, is the transparentizing of financial operations for the public sector. Particularly, civil society organizations and regular residents have been fully involved in the budget process of the national Government. All financial reports developed during the year can be found on the Ministry of Finance's website and in local dailies to encourage transparency.

The General Auditing Commission (GAC), also known as the Supreme Audit Institute of Liberia, was given independence by the Sirleaf-led government in its fight against corruption. In addition, her government established the Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission (LACC) and its policies, encouraged open budgetary, public procurement, and financial procedures, and ensured that Liberia had the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) and was in compliance with its regulations. Based on all these efforts to make meaningful contributions to good governance while trying to achieve the SDG target, there is still a gap exist in promoting societal inclusion (Gbatu, 2023). According to a study conducted in Kenya, an inclusive and participatory approach to development is essential to preventing the potentially destabilizing effects of marginalization and exclusion because the SDGs in general call for partnerships, integrated solutions, and for nations and member states to take the initiative and lead in reshaping the institutional and social landscape to lay the groundwork for significant reforms that contribute to the establishment of sustainable peace. (Muigua, 2021)

Ghana has also been progressing toward improved governance, leading to a more stable and tranquil political climate. As stakeholders, Ghana's private sector and civil societies support effective government. Ghana's governance performance has improved over time, and the country has long enjoyed stable and prosperous economic growth. However, there are still gaps between predicted results and capabilities. The government's inadequate capability hinders its ability to provide meaningful change to some of the most vulnerable groups in the country, such as women, children, and the impoverished. (Towah, 2019).

2.2.2 The impact of Good Governance on Inclusive society

A society is considered inclusive if it transcends racial, gender, class, generational, and geographic divides and guarantees equality of opportunity, inclusion, and the capacity of every individual to choose a consensus set of institutions socially regulating interactions. (July 2008, Helsinki, Expert Group Meeting on Promoting Social Integration). It is supported by social policies that seek to reduce inequality and create flexible, accepting societies. Every member of society, regardless of background, should have a voice and a stake in their community. Society's inclusivity fosters and preserves stability and a willingness to accept change when it's needed. (United Nations, 2009).

There is widespread agreement, backed by data, that social cohesion, the effectiveness of public spending, and the prevention of corruption are only a few of the important outcomes at the national and sub-national levels that depend on good governance ("Gov. Incl. Growth," 2016). In terms of inclusivity, governance is equally important. Better access to services and opportunities results from inclusive institutions' maintenance of competitive and functional markets, facilitating pluralism, widespread citizen engagement, and an efficient, uniform system of checks and balances. Accordingly, inclusive governance can improve development outcomes such as lower infant mortality or better health and literacy, according to cross-national data (e.g., Norris, 2011): (Evans and Ferguson, 2013). For instance, corruption disproportionately prevents the poor from accessing health and education facilities, according to Rajkumar and Swaroop (2002).

Good governance significantly impacts the inclusivity of society in Liberia by fostering economic growth and equitable resource distribution. Transparency and governance accountability attract domestic and foreign investments, leading to job creation and economic opportunities for marginalized communities. For instance, the formation of the Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission (LACC) has been instrumental in reducing corruption, thereby creating a more level economic playing field and enhancing investor confidence (Lee-jones, 2019). Furthermore, public financial management systems that are improved ensure that public resources are allocated efficiently, benefiting all societal segments and promoting economic inclusion(Khan et al., 2022).

Social equity in Liberia is also strengthened through good governance practices that enhance access to essential services such as health and education. Governance reforms aimed at decentralizing health services and improving educational infrastructure have ensured that underserved regions receive necessary services, thus reducing disparities. The Free and Compulsory Primary Education policy, implemented under good governance frameworks, has significantly increased school enrollment rates, particularly for girls and children from disadvantaged backgrounds (Doe, 2019). Effective social protection programs, a hallmark of good governance, have also reached the most vulnerable populations, thereby reducing poverty and fostering social equity.

Moreover, good governance promotes political participation and inclusiveness in Liberia's decision-making processes. Decentralization efforts have empowered local governments, enabling

more localized and participatory governance. This ensures that the voices and needs of local communities are incorporated into decision-making processes, enhancing inclusivity (Brown, 2017). Strengthened civil society organizations (CSOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs) play a critical role in advocating for the rights and needs of various community groups, thereby fostering a more inclusive governance landscape (Johnson, 2022). The establishment of County Development Funds (CDF) exemplifies how good governance practices can enhance community participation and ownership in the process of governance (Taylor, 2018).

One important corollary is that if a political system fails to deliver the anticipated public goods and services, establishing representative and participatory institutions of inclusive governance would not necessarily boost public support. This is especially difficult in emerging democracies with weak institutions of inclusive governance since there are frequently tremendous demands to perform and irrational expectations.(Menocal, 2020)

2.2.3 Barriers to improve Inclusive society

An inclusive society is one that accommodates and values the diverse backgrounds and experiences of all its members, ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to fully take part in political life, social and economic. Despite the aspirational goals set by international frameworks like the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), many societies still face significant barriers to achieving true inclusivity. Discrimination against disadvantaged people is the root cause of many exclusions. International human rights are violated when discrimination occurs because these rights guarantee that every individual has the right to enjoy their rights without unjustified distinction based on factors such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political opinion, birth, property, national or social background, or other status. Respect for each person's intrinsic value and dignity is the foundation of human rights, which are accorded to everyone equally and without bias. Establishing the groundwork for an inclusive society will mainly include removing or changing discriminatory customs and legislation. The United Nations human rights system has fundamental legally enforceable international human rights treaties that can be successfully used to encourage vulnerable groups to be included..(United Nations, 2017).

2.3 Conceptual Review

2.3.1 System Cultural Factors Affecting Inclusion

System barriers, including prejudice and discrimination centered on race, gender, ethnicity, religion, and added identities, remain significant barriers to an inclusive society. The Pew Research Center (2023) reports that in many countries, social attitudes towards minorities and marginalized groups have shown little improvement, with incidents of hate crimes and social discrimination remaining prevalent. These negative attitudes create environments where certain groups feel unwelcome and unsupported.

2.3.2 Cultural norms and stereotypes

Additionally, Cultural norms and stereotypes can also impede inclusivity. Societal expectations and traditional roles often restrict the opportunities available to certain groups, particularly women and ethnic minorities. For instance, the International Labour Organization (2022) found that gender stereotypes in many cultures limit the participation of women in workforce as well as accessing leadership positions. People's ability to make choices and exercise control over their bodies and lives might be hampered by social exclusion and gender inequity. According to a report, these encounters can also have an impact on people's mental health, resulting in conditions like despair and low self-esteem (From et al., 2018.). Research by the University of Oxford (2023) indicates that social networks tend to be homogeneous, with individuals primarily interacting with others who are similar to them. This lack of diverse interactions limits the integration of marginalized groups into broader social networks, perpetuating their exclusion.

Liberians were hoping that the new political environment would demonstrate inclusion and representativeness as the country started its democratic transition. However, past injustices and long-standing structural inequities still prevented some groups especially women, ethnic subgroups, and physically challenged people from fully participating in the nation's democratic processes. Overtime, one of the major challenges in Liberia is Gender disparities. Women have frequently been placed in inferior roles by traditional patriarchal norms and cultural practices, which have restricted their access to political decision-making positions, economic opportunities, and educational chances.

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Women's representation in politics has remained disproportionately low at all levels of government, despite Liberia making history in 2005 when it elected Africa's first female president, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. 2023 Democracy in the lead-up to the 2023 elections, the topic of gender and social inclusion acquired prominence due to requests for more representation and meaningful engagement of marginalized groups in politics. The international community underlined the importance of inclusive government, acknowledging that diversity in decision-making leads to more effective policies and programs that serve the interests of all citizens (Democracy, 2023).

2.3.3 Income and Employment Inequality

Economic disparities are major barriers to an inclusive society. The OECD (2023) reports that income inequality has been rising in many countries, with the challenge of wealth between the rich and the poor widening. This economic divide restricts access to opportunities for those at the lower end of the income spectrum, affecting full participation in society. It is noteworthy that disparities in wealth and income cause a chain reaction of ensuing social injustices in a variety of domains, including housing, employment, energy, connectivity, health care, education (Muma, 2019). Similarly, discrimination in hiring and workplace practices further marginalizes certain groups. The International Labour Organization (2023) found that ethnic minorities, women, and Challenged people face significant barriers in the labor market, including lower employment rates, wage gaps, and limited career advancement opportunities. These disparities are often the result of biased recruitment processes and discriminatory workplace cultures. Men are recognized to be more likely to die on battlefields in conflict areas, but a disproportionate number of women will be the victims of sexual abuse and other violations, and female homicide rates tend to increase (Muigua, 2021). Additionally, it has been shown that women are generally underrepresented in institutional governance, whether at the national, regional, or international level. This reinforces gender inequality in both peace and wartime by ignoring women's voices in decision-making (Rugi, 2020).

An important way to promote both employment opportunities for population groups at risk of social exclusion and a mindset change in society at large aims to improve the employability of the labor force through improved vocational education, active labor market policies and through developing or strengthening the small-scale private sector, including the social economy

(Hasdiana, 2018). Study findings showed that in UK, access to employment for Romania is connected to immigration status. they experience specific barriers in accessing the job market due to a lack of cultural understanding, discrimination, issues such language barriers and a lack of formal qualifications (Stateva et al., 2020). Since poverty is viewed as a barrier to full participation, including the poor is a crucial problem. However, social inclusion is about allowing everyone to benefit from economic growth, inclusive development, and pro-poor development. It is not just about reducing poverty and implementing pro-poor economic policies (Abbott et al., 2017).

2.2.4 Social factors affecting Inclusion

2.2.4.1 Education

Education is crucial in this sense because it provides opportunities to learn about the history and culture of one's own society as well as those of other societies, which cultivates an appreciation and comprehension of other societies, cultures, and religions. Particularly for young people, education provides the opportunity to instill values of respect and appreciation for diversity. However, education can help those who are disadvantaged or excluded participate in discussions and decision-making. Learning about historical processes and changes can help people better grasp how socially inclusive or exclusive policies have influenced both themselves and others. In the end, this information influences people's beliefs, choices, and assessments, particularly for those in positions of decision-making authority (United Nations, 2009). The foundation of inclusivity in society is the right to an inclusive education. An ethical school climate and, consequently, a more ethical society are produced via inclusion. However, everyone's right to an inclusive education is still elusive. In the context of their community school, inclusive education refers to the practice of teaching all students including those with disabilities in classrooms alongside their peers.

All students, regardless of their particular needs, have equal access to learning opportunities and actively participate in both the academic and social facets of schooling in an inclusive educational system (Lutfiyya & Bartlett, 2021). While the Education Law of 2001 made primary education free and required for all students, the New Education Reform Act of 2011 offered free and compulsory primary education as well as free and obligatory basic education through the ninth grade for all Liberian residents. In order to ensure gender equality and nondiscrimination in education, Liberia has also created a number of legislations.

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These include initiatives to protect curriculum from gender prejudice and campaigns to encourage girls to attend schools free from social discrimination. Although the legal basis for these regulations is established, the GoL is still working on operationalizing and putting them into effect. Additionally, these initiatives fall short in expanding educational chances for underprivileged people. Liberia's disabled children and teenagers still encounter barriers to educational participation eight years after the CRPD and its Optional Protocols were signed in 2007, including the enactment of the Children's Law in early 2012 (Ministry of Education Liberia, 2018).

2.2.4.2 Transparency

Transparency is widely recognized as a cornerstone of good governance and is increasingly being linked promoting inclusiveness in societies. Transparency entails the openness, accountability, and accessibility of information to the public, enabling citizens to understand, engage with, and influence life changing decisions. This literature review explores the recent research showing relationship between transparency and societal inclusion, highlighting key mechanisms through which transparency can enhance inclusivity.

Transparency helps to reduce corruption by making governmental processes and decision-making more open to scrutiny. When corruption is curtailed, resources have the chance to be distributed equitably, benefiting marginalized groups. According to Transparency International (2022), countries with higher levels of transparency tend to have lower levels of corruption, which correlates with better right to use public services for all citizens. This reduction in corruption fosters greater trust in public institutions, encouraging broader participation from all societal sectors, including marginalized communities.

Information access is a serious element of transparency that directly affects inclusion. When governments and institutions provide clear, accessible information about policies, programs, and services, it empowers all citizens, particularly those from marginalized groups, to make decisions for interventions. The World Bank (2023) highlights that transparency initiatives, such as open data platforms, significantly improve the ability of underserved populations to access vital services and partake in public life. Enhanced information access helps bridge knowledge gaps, ensuring that all community members are aware of and can benefit from available opportunities.

A study by Avritzer (2022) shows that participatory budgeting has led to more equitable distribution of public funds and improved infrastructure in underserved neighborhoods, demonstrating the power of transparency in promoting inclusive development. The 2011 Ibrahim Index of African Governance shows that Liberia's governance scores have steadily improved since 2006, which further supports the country's progress against corruption and anti-corruption efforts (Lee-jones, 2019).

Liberia performed very well above the regional average, ranking third out of 53 nations evaluated in the participation and human rights area. persistently weakened all attempts at governance change to revitalize and transform the nation (Liberia Revenue Authority Report, 2021). According to a Liberian article, corruption is pernicious by nature and impacts the political, economic, social, legal, and ethical aspects of society. By distorting competition, increasing transaction costs, and jeopardizing the functioning of free and open markets, it hinders the growth of global trade (Gbatu & Pursuing, 2024).

2.2.5 Research Gap

While there is growing scholarly interest in the relationship between governance and social inclusion, several important research gaps remain unaddressed, particularly in the context of low- and middle-income countries.

First, most existing studies focus on broad governance indicators such as transparency, accountability, and rule of law without deeply analyzing how specific governance mechanisms (e.g., decentralization, participatory budgeting, or inclusive legal frameworks) directly affect marginalized populations. There is limited empirical evidence that disaggregates the impacts of these mechanisms on different social groups, such as women, youth, persons with disabilities, and ethnic minorities.

Second, regional and context-specific analyses are lacking, especially in post-conflict or fragile states like Liberia, where governance institutions are still evolving. The role of traditional authorities and informal governance systems in shaping inclusive outcomes is under-researched, despite their significant influence in many communities.

Third, the intersection of digital governance and inclusion remains relatively underexplored. Although recent literature acknowledges the potential of e-governance in improving access to services, few studies critically examine the digital divide and its exclusionary effects on vulnerable groups, particularly in rural areas.

Fourth, longitudinal and impact evaluation studies are scarce. Most research offers cross-sectional insights without assessing the long-term outcomes of inclusive governance reforms. This limits our understanding of what governance strategies are sustainable and replicable across different settings.

Finally, there is a need for more participatory and community-based research that captures the lived experiences and perceptions of those who are often excluded from governance processes. Without integrating these perspectives, policy recommendations risk being top-down and ineffective in practice.

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Figure 2.2.6 Conceptual Framework

Independent variables
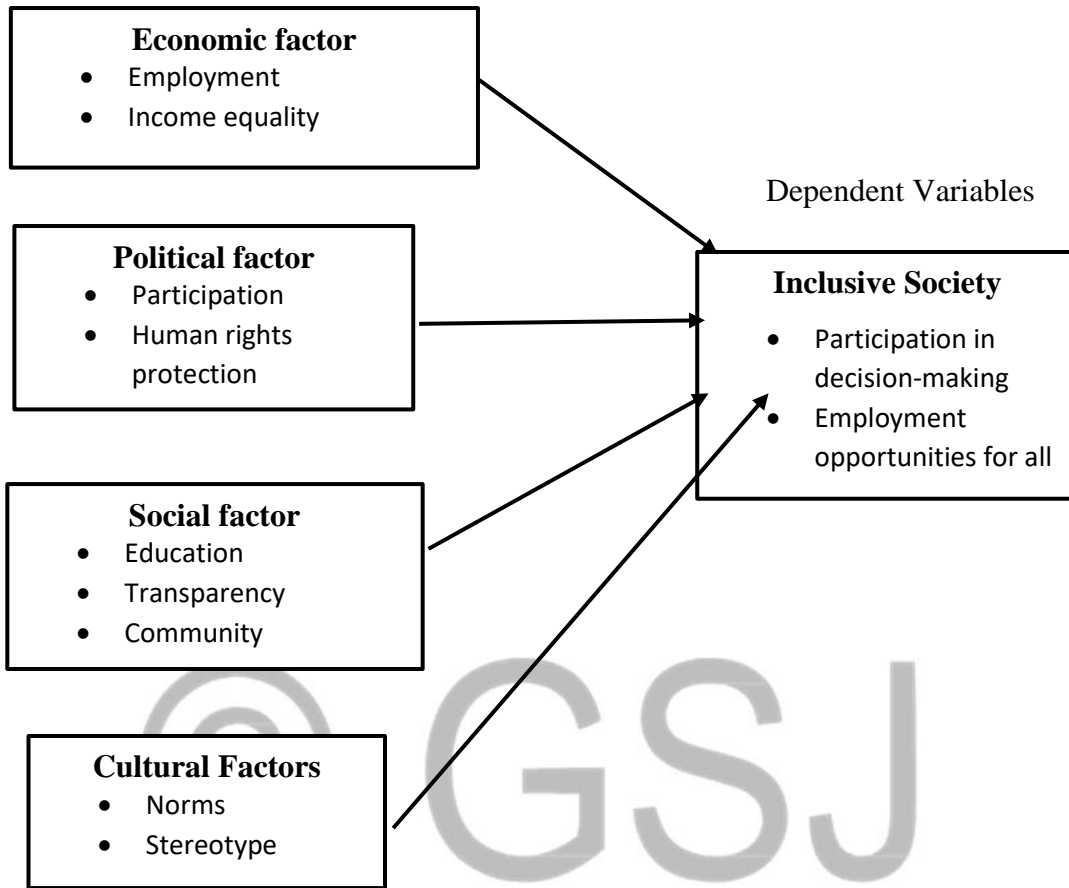
Source: Researcher, 2024

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

Chapter 3 describes the research methodology and covers the sample size, population size, data processing and analysis techniques, and research design. Thus, it defines the demographic and sample size, outlines the research methodology, and explains the data processing and analysis.

3.1 Research Design

This descriptive cross-sectional study used qualitative data-gathering methods. Using this approach, the researcher identified the significance of good governance in fostering an inclusive society.

3.1.1 Research Context

The study's location was one of Liberia's fifteen counties, Montserrado County. It is situated in southwest Liberia and shares borders with Margibi, Bong, and Bomi counties. In terms of geography, Montserrado County is divided into rural and urban areas. The only cities in Montserrado County are Monrovia and Paynesville. The remaining 85% of the county is rural. All 19 Ministries, as well as their legislators and governing bodies, are located in Montserrado. At 1,909 square kilometers (737 square miles), Montserrado is the smallest county in terms of area, but it has the biggest population, about 1,293,349, and it has the top population density in Liberia.

3.2 Target population

To ensure that all members chosen through the data collection technique would exhibit a culturally sensitive, balanced understanding of the dynamics of stability and governance in Montserrado County, Liberia, the study population specifically targeted 425 public sector officials. Additionally, this demographic dynamic made it possible to obtain accurate and thorough perspectives on African traditions and activities that are pertinent to stability, generally good governance, and inclusion. Participants in the study included policymakers, legislators, academics, civil servants, civil society organizations, political leaders, and members of the vulnerable or marginalized community who could articulate indicators of sustainable development and good

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governance, political instability, and the relationship between these factors. As the study's major informants and respondents, these participants served as the main sources of primary data.

Inclusion criteria:

The study included officials working within the public sector of government and civil organizations. At the community level, it included participants 18 years of age and above who were capable of making decisions.

Exclusion Criteria

Officials absent from work or on annual leave from the office were excluded from the study.

3.3 Sample Design

3.3.1 Sampling Technique

A multistage sampling was employed. Stage 1: the 17 political districts will be selected.
Stage 2: Once a district was selected, representatives from each district were selected for the study.
Stage 3: For Community FDG, 1 Community in each district was randomly selected for the FGD.".
We used a purposive sampling technique to choose key informants and case study regions that offer a range of viewpoints on inclusivity and governance so that the study could have a reasonably representative sample of the population at the ministries and organization levels. Purposeful sampling is a well-liked technique in qualitative research for locating and selecting examples containing a lot of information while optimizing the use of limited resources. (Shaheen et al., 2018). In the community, randomly selected across different vulnerable groups. Discussions were held with each group: Women, youth, disabled, unemployed, and religious groups.

3.3.2 Sampling Size Determination

The sample size was computed using the Cochran formula at the required level of 10% precision non-response rate and 95% confidence interval, and the minimum size was established using the projected proportion of the population (unknown) of 50% excellent governance practice.

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$$n = \frac{(Z) \times P\,(1\text{-}P)}{(d)^2}$$

n=minimum sample size

p=estimated proportion of the population (p 50% =0.5)
d= margin of error (5%)
Z= value for confidence interval

$$n = \frac{3.8416 \times 0.5\,(1\text{-}0.5)}{(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{0.9604}{0.0025}$$

n=**384.16**

Non-response rate 10% 10×100/10=0.1

0.1×384.16=38.4

384.16+38.4=**425**

3.4 Data Collection Methods

3.4.1 Data Collection Instruments

We created a semi-structured survey with both open-ended and closed-ended questions. We gathered primary data for the analysis, including inclusion measures, gender inequality index, political involvement rates, online publications, and governance indicators and dimensions.

3.4.2 Procedures Data Collection

Information was gathered from civil organizations, marginalized groups, and line ministries and agencies. We conducted in-person key informant interviews for the qualitative data. Still, depending on the respondents' availability, we did some interviews via email, one-on-one phone, or audio recording. Since they are the major informants, these were the primary sources of the data. We held focus groups with the underrepresented groups in the community.

3.4.3 Data Processing

Training research assistants in interviewing, data collection, and information extraction from policy papers was part of the process. Nonetheless, training requirements for research assistants stipulated that they needed to be knowledgeable about the subject of governance and its importance in fostering an inclusive society. The names of the participants were kept private. The principal investigator double-checked the gathered data daily to find any mistakes or omissions, and remedial measures were implemented. An external storage device was used to back up all the data for analysis and transcribing.

3.5 Data Analysis

The collected data was cross-checked daily against completed surveys, imported into Excel, and verified. Epi Info was used to analyze the exported data. First, to identify the differences in the data, we performed descriptive analysis to look for proportions and frequencies. Age was classified as a continuous variable with equal intervals. We explored indicators under the factors such as political, economic, cultural and social and calculated responses for frequency and proportions. For the focus group discussion, we transcribed the participants' responses that were recorded. We recorded the participants' answers to identify the barriers to promoting inclusivity and good governance.

3.5 Limitations of the Study

Purposive sampling was utilized in this study, which may make it more challenging to obtain a larger sample since, with such vast amounts of data, diversity issues surfaced and proved to be a barrier for the entire study regarding accountability issues.

3.6 Ethical consideration

Before beginning the data gathering procedure, the study proposal was sent to the UL-PIRE IRB for ethical approval. Before that, permission was also requested from Liberia's line ministries, agencies, and civic groups. The purpose of written informed consent was to guarantee that participants were fully informed about the study. In addition to being told about no risk associated with data usage, participants were given the option to decline participation during the interview

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because it was entirely voluntary and to leave at any time. Every piece of information was kept private. Hard copies of the data files were secured in cabinets to maintain secrecy, and only the lead researcher, research assistants, and supervisors had access to the soft copies, which were saved and kept.

CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

Chapter four presents the study's findings based on participant responses, aligning with the specific objectives.

4.1 Demographic characteristics of participants

The first part of the study questionnaire collected demographic data from the selected participants. This section documented pertinent details such as the respondents' age range, gender, educational level, and employment status. The data was gathered to fully comprehend the participants' varied histories and characteristics and examine the potential effects of various demographic variables on their viewpoints or experiences with the research issue.

4.1.1 Gender of Participants

Table 4.1.1 Distribution of Participants by Gender

Variable	Frequency(n-425)	Percentage (%)
Sex		
Female	147	34.58
Male	278	65.42
Total	**425**	**100**

Source: Primary data, 2024

Table 4.1 shows the distribution of participants by gender for evaluating the role of governance in promoting an inclusive society. The findings show that male participants accounted for 278 (65%) while females were 147 (35%) out of the 425 total.

4.1.2 Age of Participants

Table 4.1.2 Distribution of Participants by Age Group

Variable	Frequency(n-425)	Percentage (%)
Age group (yrs)		
18-27	65	15.29
28-37	140	32.94
38-47	164	38.58
48 & above	56	13.17
Total	**425**	**100**

Source: Primary data, 2024

Table 4.1.2 shows the distribution of participants by age group. Participants ranged in age from 18 to over 47. The majority of participants, 164 (38%), were between the ages of 38 and 47, with 140 (33%) being from the 28–37 age range.

4.1.3 Employment Status of Participants

Table 4.1.3 Distribution of participants by Employment status

Variable	Frequency(n-425)	Percentage (%)
Employment Status		
Employed	306	72.0
Unemployed	119	28.0
Total	**425**	**100**

Source: Primary data, 2024

Table 4.1.3 indicates the distribution of participants by employment status. The majority of participants, 306 or 72%, were working and fully employed by their institutions and organizations. The minority, 119 (28%), were not employed.

4.1.4 Participants' Level of Education

Table 4.1.4 Distribution of Participants by Level of Education

Variable	Frequency(n-425)	Percentage (%)
Education Level		
None	30	7.05
Primary	20	4.71
Secondary	109	25.65
Tertiary	266	62.58
Total	**425**	**100**

Source: Primary data, 2024

Table 4.1.4 shows the how the education levels are distributed among the participants. Majority of the participants had some formal education. 266 (63%) of the participants had high level of education at the tertiary level and 109 (25.7%) finished high school up to university level.

4.2 Economic Factors Affecting Inclusive Society in Montserrado County

Only 8 (2%) of the total respondents agreed that resources of economic concerns are equitably distributed at their various institutions. Additionally, 262 (39%) of respondents believed that resources such as employment and finances are partially distributed across institutions. **See Table 4.2**.

Table 4.2: Analysis of Economic Factors Affecting Inclusive Society

Variables	Frequency(n=425)	Percentage (%)
Are there targeted programs to support economic empowerment?		
Yes	78	18.35
No	347	81.65
Are economic resources, such as employment and financial services, equitably distributed in your institution		
yes	8	1.88
No	149	2.82
Partial	262	38.59
Not sure	8	56.71

Source: Primary data, 2024

4.3 Political Factors Affecting Inclusive Society

Respondents in the minority, 7 (2%), indicated that the government's policies are transparent, and 221 (52%) expressed how opaque the government's policies are in promoting inclusive society. Of the total respondents, 204 (49%) strongly believe that corruption hinders an inclusive society in government, as shown in **Table 4.3.**

Table 4.3: Analysis of political factors affecting inclusive society

Variables	Frequency(n=425)	Percentage (%)
How transparent are the Local government's policies and actions in promoting an inclusive society		
Opaque	221	52.00
Transparent	186	43.76
Very opaque	11	2.59
Very Transparent	7	1.65
Do you believe corruption significantly hinders inclusivity in government?		
Agree	145	34.12
Strongly Agree	204	48.00
Disagree	69	16.24
Strongly Disagree	7	1.65

Source: Primary data, 2024

4.4 Social Factors Affecting Inclusive Society in Montserrado County

Out of the total respondents who participated in the study, 91 (21%) expressed that education is accessible to everyone in the community with moderate 306 (72%) awareness of about the rights of inclusion for marginalized groups. Half, 218 (51%) of the respondents also indicated that gender equality remains a challenge.

Table 4.4: Analysis of Social Factors Affecting Inclusive Society

Variables	Frequency(n=425)	Percentage (%)
Is education accessible for everyone in your community?		
Yes	91	21.41
No	334	78.59
What is the level of public awareness about the rights and inclusion of marginalized groups		
High	5	1.18
Low	96	22.59
Moderate	306	72.00
Very low	18	4.24

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Does Gender inequality remain a challenge in achieving inclusivity		
Yes	218	51.29
No	207	48.71

Source: Primary data, 2024

4.5 Cultural Factors Affecting Inclusive Society in Montserrado County

Respondents 325 (76%) clarified that traditional leaders support efforts towards inclusion; however, 333 (78%) of respondents indicated that there are not many programs or interventions to address stereotypes.

Table 4.5: Analysis of cultural factors affecting inclusive society in Montserrado County.

Variables	Frequency(n=425)	Percentage (%)
Are there cultural programs or interventions to address stereotype		
Yes	92	21.65
No	333	78.35
Are there specific cultural stereotypes that hinder the inclusion of marginalized groups?		
Yes	121	28.47
No	304	71.53
Do cultural norms influence the acceptance of everyone in your community?		
Yes	159	37.41
No	266	62.59
Do traditional community leaders support efforts toward inclusion?		
No	100	23.53
Yes	325	76.47

Source: Primary data, 2024

4.6 Focus Group Discussion

4.6.1 Community Members

When asked how you or others in your community participate in decision-making processes impacting your lives,

Respondents said community dwellers' participation is often limited. Most often, they are seen and heard during town hall meetings organized by local leaders. However, attendance can be inconsistent due to a lack of awareness or skepticism about the impact of participation. With the follow-up question: What are the main obstacles preventing people in your community from fully participating in governance activities?

Participants further explained that barriers include illiteracy, lack of awareness, financial constraints, and cultural norms that discourage marginalized groups from participating. Fear of political reprisals also deters some from voicing their concerns.

Participants' reaction to the question: ***How open and transparent do you feel the local government is in sharing information about its plans and actions?*** Showed that the local government in Liberia struggles with transparency. While some information is shared through community meetings or radio broadcasts, many community members feel critical details about budgets or development plans remain opaque, leading to mistrust.

With the challenges faced in accessing basic services like education, healthcare, or employment opportunities in your community

Participants also stated that challenges included inadequate infrastructure, poor road networks, and inconsistent service delivery. Many communities lack nearby health facilities or schools, and employment opportunities are scarce, particularly for youth and women. Corruption and nepotism further hinder equitable access to services.

The question: Do you feel your community's needs and opinions are heard and addressed by local leaders? Why or why not?

Participants emphasized that most community members feel their voices are not adequately heard. Decision-making is often top-down, and local leaders may prioritize personal or political interests over community needs. Limited accountability mechanisms exacerbate this issue.

4.6.2 Civil Society Representatives

When asked, what role does your organization play in promoting inclusivity and good governance in Montserrado County?

Participants explained that Civil society organizations in Liberia often focus on advocacy, education, and capacity building. They further explained that they promote inclusivity by organizing workshops, engaging marginalized groups, and advocating for policy changes to address systemic inequalities.

Regarding collaboration, participants were asked: *How effectively does the government collaborate with civil society to address the needs of marginalized groups?*

One participant said, "Collaboration exists but is often fragmented". It was emphasized that government agencies occasionally consult civil society organizations (CSOs), but such engagement is sporadic and lacks consistent follow-through. Interestingly, marginalized groups are still left underserved despite these efforts.

Participants were also asked about the key challenges your organization faces in advocating for better governance and inclusivity

Participants outlined challenges, including limited funding, political interference, and resistance from government officials. There is also a lack of trust between CSOs and local authorities, hampers effective collaboration.

Participants also gave their experience: how effective are the mechanisms in place to hold local authorities accountable?

Accountability mechanisms, such as audits or community monitoring committees, exist but are underutilized. Corruption and weak enforcement of governance laws reduce their effectiveness.

4.6.3 Marginalized Groups

Participants were asked to describe instances where they felt excluded from opportunities or decision-making processes in their community. Participants explained that those who are marginalized, such as women, youth, and people with disabilities, often report exclusion from local governance meetings and job opportunities. Discrimination and cultural biases contribute to this exclusion.

Participants were also asked if they felt adequately represented in governance structures or decision-making processes.

They replied that most marginalized individuals feel underrepresented due to systemic barriers and tokenism. Women and youth, for instance, are often given symbolic roles without actual decision-making power.

How do societal or cultural norms affect your ability to participate equally in community activities or governance?

Patriarchal norms and traditional hierarchies limit women and youth roles in governance. For example, women may face restrictions in voicing opinions during public meetings, and youth are often dismissed as inexperienced.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATION

5.0 Introduction

This section summarized the main findings from the preceding chapter. It outlined the key findings, discussed areas that needed work, and offered suggestions based on the study's findings. The report, which also included suggestions, highlighted the findings' ramifications.

5.1 Summary of Findings

5.1.1 Evaluating the Economic Factors Affecting Inclusive Society

To assess the economic factors affecting inclusive society, our study findings revealed that most participants responded negatively to targeted programs set up to support economic empowerment. This could probably be due to a lack of awareness or knowledge of such programs. On the other hand, according to a report on youth employment, the main objective of the Liberian Government's Agenda for Transformation (AfT) is to increase economic opportunities and promote greater inclusivity, with a particular emphasis on women, youth, and rural areas. One of the ways to do this is through productive employment, which is undoubtedly a means of lifting people out of poverty. If sufficient possibilities for education and long-term employment are established, a rapidly expanding youth population can profit from growth. (Report 2015).

5.1.2 Evaluating the Political Factors

According to our findings in assessing political factors affecting inclusive society, respondents saw government actions and policies in promoting inclusive society as opaque. Additionally, most participants strongly agreed that corruption hinders inclusivity in government. The presence of corruption has become a significant hindrance to development. Corruption has been a persistent issue in Liberia's administration, as evidenced by the World Bank's most current Worldwide Governance Indicators (World Bank 2017). From 37 out of 100 in 2016 to 32 in 2018, Liberia's score on Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index declined (Transparency International 2018).

According to Transparency International Bangladesh, the phenomenon in question undermines the confidence of the general public, reallocates valuable resources away from crucial services, and sustains the persistence of societal disparities (Transparency International Bangladesh, 2020)

5.1.3 Evaluating the Social Factors Affecting Inclusive Society

In assessing social factors affecting inclusive society, our findings and participants' responses indicated that education is not accessible to everyone. students with disabilities, significantly virtually impaired students, go through a lot of difficulties to learn. Many children in Liberia are placed in "special education" settings where they can participate and study in regular classrooms (if the quality of those institutions and teachers improves). Because of this, a large number of kids with the most severe disabilities—who might require more specialized support—cannot get into specialized settings and are thus losing out on education completely. (Ministry of Education Liberia, 2018).

Beyond academic performance and attendance, inclusive education aims to address the needs of all students while enhancing their involvement and general well-being (Cerna et al., 2021). "A matter of adopting a socio-ecological approach regarding the interactions between students' capabilities and environmental demands, stressing those educational systems must adapt to and reach all students and not vice versa," according to Amor et al., is how they define inclusive education. (Amor et al., 2018). Additionally, with the issue of gender inequality, most respondents still see it as challenging and affecting inclusivity in society.

Gender inequality has always been a problem in Liberian society. Even though Liberia made history in 2005 by electing Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Africa's first female president, to head the country, women's presence in politics has remained disproportionately low at all levels of government. Because male candidates typically receive endorsements from political and traditional authorities, women's political engagement is observed to be restricted by male dominance in political parties.

5.1.4 Evaluating the Cultural Factors Affecting Inclusive Society

We also assessed the cultural factors affecting inclusive society. However, responses showed that the majority emphasized that there are no programs to address cultural stereotypes and stereotypes are generally hindering inclusion rather than a specific one. According to a study in the United States, stereotype experience can trigger a series of processes, including motivational, cognitive, physiological, and attentional mechanisms (Casad and Merritt, 2014). They added that a stigmatized individual may become more alert and pay closer attention to environmental cues that could indicate prejudice and discrimination when they realize that their stigmatized status may be significant in a given situation (Casad & Bryant, 2016).

In addition to increasing resilience in the face of social crises, a society that values cultural diversity fosters a sense of belonging and shared identity, which advances not only economically but also in the general well-being of its people. Women have frequently been placed in inferior roles by traditional patriarchal norms and cultural practices, which have restricted their access to political decision-making positions, economic opportunities, and educational chances. Recognizing that diversity in decision-making results in more successful policies and programs that fulfill the interests of all citizens, the international community emphasized the significance of inclusive governance. (Democracy, 2023).

5.2 Focus Group Discussion

To learn more about the opinions and experiences of various stakeholders, such as local residents, civil society organizations, and marginalized groups, focus groups were held. Separate conversations were arranged, giving participants a forum to express their viewpoints and have candid conversations on matters about social inclusion. Our findings showed that there is limited participation in the decision-making process when it comes to community dwellers and marginalized groups. They feel that they are underrepresented in government forums. Increased public engagement provides a vital platform for expressing diverse opinions, according to a study performed in Indonesia. Active participation in the decision-making process increases the likelihood that the created policies and programs will appropriately reflect the true needs and goals of the people involved. This suggests that the decisions rendered are valid and can better handle the community's issues (Sari, 2023).

On the other hand, our findings recorded that Civil society organizations strive to strengthen coordination and collaboration with the government. Throughout this study, participants emphasized the importance of civil society organizations (CSOs) in the governance environment, with their role in irregularities, inefficiencies, as well as cases of mismanagement. In a Bangladesh study, the participants highlighted civil society organizations (CSOs) role as champions for policy reforms, bringing attention to important concerns and persistently advocating for change (Nisa Nipa & Hasan, 2023)Our study pointed out limited funding and political interference as key challenges faced in advocating for an inclusive society. Most often, government officials resist advocacies for change.

A study conducted in post-Soeharto also shared similar findings that CSOs face numerous obstacles that have implications for their efficacy and long-term viability. The obstacles faced involve various factors such as legal and regulatory restrictions, limited resources, political influences, and accusations of inefficiency and corruption (Umam et al., 2020). Many civil society organizations in Liberia heavily depend on external financing sources, such as funds provided by overseas donors, partners, and organizations. Although the acquisition of external finance is crucial for the functioning of these organizations, it also gives rise to concerns over their long-term viability and autonomy (Atia & Herrold, 2018).

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5.3 Conclusion

The findings of this study highlight the critical role of good governance in fostering an inclusive society in Liberia. Significant challenges remain while progress has been made in implementing governance principles such as transparency, accountability, participation, and the rule of law. These include economic disparities, corruption, lack of transparency, social exclusion, and cultural barriers that hinder full participation in governance. Key challenges identified include inadequate economic empowerment programs, limited access to education and employment opportunities, and persistent gender inequality. Additionally, marginalized groups, including women, youth, and people with disabilities, continue to face exclusion from decision-making processes. Political corruption and a lack of transparency in government actions further exacerbate governance shortcomings.

Despite these challenges, civil society organizations are vital in advocating for inclusivity and holding government institutions accountable. However, their efforts are often hampered by limited funding and political resistance. For Liberia to build a more inclusive society, strengthening governance structures by enhancing transparency, enforcing accountability measures, and increasing public participation in decision-making is imperative. Investing in economic empowerment initiatives, ensuring equitable access to resources, and addressing cultural stereotypes are essential to fostering inclusivity.

By addressing these governance gaps, Liberia can create a society where all citizens, regardless of gender, socio-economic status, or disability, have equal opportunities to contribute to national development and benefit from public services.

5.4 Recommendation

- The government of Liberia should open more channels of dialogue to encourage more active public (including marginalized groups, women, and civil society) participation in decision-making processes.

- The government of Liberia should ensure that rules and regulations are in place to support the implementation of good governance to improve them. This entails fortifying

accountability systems and enforcing severe penalties for integrity, ethics, and corruption transgressions.

- The government of Liberia should establish mechanisms to ensure an equal distribution of resources, employment, and education opportunities.

- The government of Liberia should strengthen coordination and collaboration with civil society organizations as they bridge the gap in exploring potential avenues through which they can augment their effectiveness in advancing good governance and resolving urgent societal concerns

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Informed Consent
Project Title:

The Role of Governance in Promoting Inclusive Society in Montserrado County, Liberia, 2024

Principle Investigator: Veronica Lucretia Corvah

Institution Affiliation

University of Kigali

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

The importance of good governance in promoting an inclusive society cannot be overstated. In many parts of the world, ineffective governance has led to social exclusion, inequality, and marginalization, thereby impeding social and economic development. It has been asserted that

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realizing SDG 16 on peaceful, just, and inclusive societies requires a power shift that re-centers work on equality, development and peace around the voices, human security and rights of women and those most marginalized. This requires not just technical fixes, but the structural transformation that moves from institutionalizing a form of governance that enables domination and violence to institutionalize a form of governance that enables equality and peace for people and planet. Despite the urge to meet the target by 2030 in achieving the goal toward peace, just, and inclusive society and recent efforts to stabilize its governance structures and promote democratic values, Liberia continues to struggle with issues of inequality, social exclusion, and inadequate access to basic services for many of its citizens. The legacy of conflict, combined with persistent corruption, weak institutional capacity, and socio-economic disparities, has hindered the creation of a truly inclusive society where all individuals can participate fully in social, economic, and political life. radical governance reform interventions have glaringly become the panacea for the country's post-war recover. By addressing these sub-problems, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities related to promoting good governance and inclusivity in Liberia. The findings will offer valuable insights for policymakers, civil society organizations, and international partners working towards the development of a more inclusive and equitable Liberian society.

PROCEDURES

If you agree to participate in this research study, you will participate in a face-to-face interview for about 15 minutes, during which I will fill out the questionnaire. Your name will not be included on the questionnaire, and all personal references that might be used to identify you will also not be included.

RISKS/DISCOMFORTS:

I believe this study presents minimal risk to you. The most significant risk of participating in the study is the risk of the loss of privacy. The information you provide will be kept secure so that only the researchers can access it. Your participation in this study is voluntary. You do not have to join this or any research study. You may refuse to answer any question at any time, and your refusal to participate in any way will not involve any penalties.

ALTERNATIVES TO PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You do not have to join this or any research study. If you do join and later change your mind, you may quit at any time. If you refuse to join or quit early from the study, you will not be punished or lose any benefits to which you have a right.

BENEFITS:

The benefits of participating in this study are that you have the opportunity to provide feedback in a structured manner regarding promoting good governance in Liberia

WITHDRAWAL PROCEDURES:

You may quit from the study at any time. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer. If you wish to discontinue the study, please notify the study staff right away. If you refuse to join or quit early from the study, you will not be punished or lose any benefits to which you have a right.

COMPENSATION:

There is no compensation for participants in this study.

PRIVACY INFORMATION:

I, Veronica, will take several steps to keep any personal information about you private to the fullest extent possible. Reports created will not identify you by name. The interview summaries will include general characteristics of each participant but will not include enough information that would allow anyone to identify you.

Individuals directly involved with the research or in a management capacity may review the information from the interview. The entire research team is required to keep your identity confidential. The information that identifies you will not be given to people who are not working on the study unless you give permission.

CONTACT INFORMATION

The information on this disclosure statement explains the rights you are entitled to by joining this study. If at any time you have questions about the research study, you may ask the interviewer, or you may call the Principal Investigator (Veronica Lucretia Corvah, Cell # 0770303702). If you have questions about your rights as a study participant, you may contact the UL-PIRE IRB:

CONSENT:

_____ has been informed of the nature and purpose of the procedures described above including any risks involved in its performance. He or she has been given time to ask any questions and these questions have been answered to the best of the investigator's ability. A signed copy of this consent form will be made available to the subject.

_____   _____

Investigator's Signature   Date

I have been informed about this research study, its' possible benefits, risks, and discomforts. I hereby agree to take part in this research study as a subject. I recognize that I am free to withdraw this consent and quit this project at any time, and that doing so will not cause me any penalty or loss of benefits that I would be otherwise entitled to enjoy.

_____   _____

Subject's Signature   Date

Appendix II: Certificate of Ethical approval from Liberia

University of Liberia

Institutional Review Board (ULIRB)

Capitol Hill, Monrovia, Liberia

Tel: +231-775348744/775953914/776615408

email: taylorjc@ul.edu.lr /saydeegs@ul.edu.lr /jebboeek@ul.edu.lr /kayjebboe@gmail.com

UL-IRB/JCT-CH/135/'24
ULIRB IORG-IRB Number: **IRB00013730**
FWA number: **FWA00032959**.

January 8, 2024

Ms. Veronica Lucretia Corvah
School of Graduate Studies
University of Kigali

Dear Ms. Corva:

Subject: **"The role of governance in promoting inclusive society in Montserrado County,**
Liberia, 2024"

Per the Policies and Procedures Handbook of the University of Liberia Institutional Review Board
(ULIRB), I am pleased to inform you that the ULIRB has approved your research as described above
through a thorough review process and on January 8, 2025. As part of its responsibility, the ULIRB will
evaluate the research throughout to ensure adherence to human subject practices. The approval for
the research/exemption ends January 7, 2026.

During this research, please inform the ULIRB immediately of any changes or occurrences in the
procedures relating to human subjects. Apart from the protection of human subjects, you are prohibited
from changes in the protocol that has been approved of the IRB. All changes must be communicated to
the IRB without delay.

Kindest regards.

Sincerely,

Prof. Dr. Jonathan C. Taylor
Vice President for Graduate Studies and Research & Chair, ULIRB

Appendix III: Questionnaire

Section 1: Demographics

1. Age group?
2. Gender?
   - ☐ Male
   - ☐ Female
   - ☐ Other
3. What is your employment status?
   - ☐ Employed
   - ☐ Unemployed
   - ☐ Self-employed
4. Education Level?
   - ☐ primary
   - ☐ Secondary
   - ☐ Tertiary
   - None

Section 2: Level of Adherence to Good governance

Transparency

5. How often are government decisions and policies in your community communicated openly to the public?
   - a) Always
   - b) Sometimes
   - c) Rarely
   - d) Never
6. Financial reports and budgets made accessible to the public?
   - a) Always
   - b) Sometimes
   - c) Rarely
   - d) Never

Accountability

7. Public officials are held accountable for their actions?
   - a) Always
   - b) Sometimes

- o c) Rarely
- o d) Never
- o

8. There are independent mechanisms to investigate and address corruption within governance structures?
    - o a) Always
    - o b) Sometimes
    - o c) Rarely
    - o d) Never

Rule of Law

9. Laws are consistently applied across all levels of society?
    - o a) Always
    - o b) Sometimes
    - o c) Rarely
    - o d) Never
10. Are citizens confident that they can access justice fairly and promptly?
    - o a) Always
    - o b) Sometimes
    - o c) Rarely
    - o d) Never
11. Do you believe local government officials adhere to the rule of law?
    - o ☐ Yes
    - o ☐ No

Participation

12. Are citizens highly involved in decision-making processes?
    - o a) Always
    - o b) Sometimes
    - o c) Rarely
    - o d) Never
13. Are governance forums inclusive in representing marginalized and vulnerable groups?
    - o a) Always
    - o b) Sometimes
    - o c) Rarely
    - o d) Never

Responsiveness

14. Do government institutions respond to community concerns or crises?
    - o a) Always

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- o   b) Sometimes
- o   c) Rarely
- o   d) Never

Equity

15. Are resources and opportunities distributed equitably among all societal groups?
- o   Always
- o   b) Sometimes
- o   c) Rarely
- o   d) Never

16. Does adherence to governance principles improve social welfare?
- o   ☐ Yes
- o   ☐ No

17. How would you rate the adherence to good governance practices in Montserrado County?
   ☐ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Fair ☐ Poor

Section 3: Inclusivity in Governance

18. Do you feel included in decision-making processes at the local level?
   A. Yes
   B. No
   C. Not applicable

19. Are there sufficient platforms for marginalized groups to voice their concerns?
   ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure

Section 5: Factors affecting Inclusive Society

Social Factors

20. Is education in Montserrado County inclusive of all individuals, including marginalized groups?
- o   ☐ Yes
- o   ☐ No

21. How accessible is education for marginalized groups in your community?
- o   Very Accessible

- o Accessible
- o Not Accessible
- o Not Sure

22. Are there programs to increase community engagement and participation?
- o ☐ Yes
- o ☐ No

23. Does gender inequality remain a challenge in achieving inclusivity?
- o ☐ Yes
- o ☐ No

24. To what extent do societal norms and attitudes affect the participation of marginalized groups in social activities?
- o Strongly Agree
- o Agree
- o Neutral
- o Disagree
- o Strongly Disagree

25. Are there community initiatives in place to promote inclusivity in education and health services?
- o ☐ Yes
- o ☐ No

26. What is the level of public awareness about the rights and inclusion of marginalized groups?
- o Very High High
- o Moderate
- o Low
- o Very Low

Political Factors

27. Are local governance systems inclusive of all societal groups, including women, youth, and persons with disabilities?
- o Yes
- o ☐ No

28. What is the extent of participation by marginalized groups in political decision-making processes?
- o Extensive
- o Moderate
- o Limited
- o None
- o

29. Do you believe corruption significantly hinders inclusivity in governance?
- o Strongly Agree
- o Agree

- o Neutral
- o Disagree
- o Strongly Disagree

30. How transparent are the local government's policies and actions in promoting inclusivity?
- o very Transparent
- o Transparent
- o Neutral
- o Opaque
- o Very Opaque

Economic Factors

31. Are economic resources, such as employment and financial services, equitably distributed in your institution?
- o Yes
- o Partially
- o No
- o Not Sure

32. What is the impact of income inequality on the inclusivity of your institution?
- o Significant
- o Moderate
- o Minor
- o None

33. Are there targeted programs to support the economic empowerment of marginalized groups?
- o ☐ Yes
- o ☐ No

34. To what extent does unemployment among marginalized groups hinder their social and economic inclusion?
- o Greatly
- o Moderately
- o Minimally
- o Not at All

Cultural Factors

35. Do cultural norms influence the acceptance of marginalized groups in your community?
- o Yes
- o ☐ No

36. Are there specific cultural stereotypes that hinder the inclusion of marginalized groups?
- o Yes
- o ☐ No

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37. Do traditional community leaders support or hinder efforts towards an inclusive society?
   - ○ Yes
   - ○ ☐ No
38. Are there cultural programs or interventions to address stereotypes and promote inclusivity?
   - ○ Yes
   - ○ ☐ No

Open-Ended Questions: Focus Group Discussion (Qualitative)

Questions for Community Members

1. **How do you or others in your community participate in decision-making processes that affect your daily lives?**
2. How open and transparent do you feel the local government is in sharing information about its plans and actions?
3. What challenges have you faced in accessing basic services like education, healthcare, or employment opportunities in your community?
4. Do you feel your community's needs and opinions are heard and addressed by local leaders? Why or why not?
5. What are the main obstacles preventing people in your community from fully participating in governance activities?

Questions for Civil Society Representatives

1.
   What role does your organization play in promoting inclusivity and good governance in Montserrado County?
2. How effectively does the government collaborate with civil society to address the needs of marginalized groups?
   What are the key challenges your organization faces in advocating for better governance and inclusivity?
3. In your experience, how effective are the mechanisms in place to hold local authorities accountable?

Questions for Marginalized Groups

1. Can you describe instances where you felt excluded from opportunities or decision-making processes in your community?
2. What specific challenges do you face in accessing education, healthcare, or job opportunities?
3. Do you feel adequately represented in governance structures or decision-making processes? Why or why not?
4. How do societal or cultural norms affect your ability to participate equally in community activities or governance?
5. What role do local organizations or groups play in helping you address the challenges of exclusion?