



Traditional Leadership and Conflict Management in Africa: An Examination of the Bole Chieftaincy in Ghana

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ABSTRACT

Many scholars have studied the roles of traditional leaders in a democracy, social cohesion, political participation, and cultural heritage preservation. However, the extent to which their roles impact conflict management has not received much academic attention. This study attempts to bridge this gap. The main objective of the study is to examine traditional leadership and conflict management in Africa, and the theory employed is a subjective or objective approach to conflict management. The study employed a mixed method. Approached and cross-sectional design, questionnaires, and interviews were used to solicit primary data from 364 respondents. The target population for the study was the members of the three chieftaincy gates, which are Sarfope, Jagape, and Denkeripe. Simple random sampling for quantitative data and the snowball sampling technique were used to select key informants; descriptive analysis and correlational analysis were used to ascertain the relationship between traditional leadership and conflict management; and a relative importance index was used to identify the conflict resolution mechanisms in the Bole Traditional Area of Northern Ghana. The analyses revealed that traditional leaders' roles have a positive impact on conflict management and collaborate with the central authority in conflict management in Ghana, but that this role is hampered by interference, corruption, inadequate resources, and conflicts of interest. The study recommends that the state put in place measures to improve the leadership skills of traditional rulers, increase collaboration between traditional and central authorities, and increase budgetary allocations for traditional authorities.

Keywords: Africa, Bole, Chieftaincy, Conflict Management, Ghana, Traditional Leaders

I. INTRODUCTION

Traditional leadership still plays a pivotal role in many modern states today, particularly in Africa. although this may not be as comprehensive as that of central authorities. It is important to note that traditional leadership is complementary to the central government in maintaining peace and order in their various jurisdictions, as exemplified by the highly organized monarchies of the Ashanti Kingdom in Ghana and the Oyomesi of Oyo in Nigeria (Gonzalez et al., 2019). Baser (2017) finds that many traditional authorities can manage conflicts within their jurisdictions and that the process is more involving, reconciliatory, and less punitive than the legal intricacies of the judiciary. De Bono (2018) agrees with this and further explains that before the colonization of Africa, traditional authorities formed the executive, the judiciary, and the legislature of a society. At that time, African traditional authorities controlled the army and declared wars or defended their territories whenever there was a need. They made laws that regulated the social behavior of their people and settled disputes amicably whenever there was a breach of social relations. Thus, traditional leaders acted as facilitators in conflict resolution.

The main problem or weakness of the reconciliatory form of conflict management is that when the parties have very strong personalities and no one wants to be seen as weak, reconciliation and forgiveness become very difficult to achieve because, to some people, forgiveness is a display of weakness, particularly in political differences. To address such conflicts, therefore, traditional authorities must devise very tactical means, or it may lead to further chaos.

For example, in Ghana, it would be difficult to simply tell National Democratic Party (NDP) members to forgive National Democratic Congress (NDC) members and go back to their normal ways. That would be quite simplistic in political reconciliatory terms and may not achieve any objective or purpose. This is because parties in conflict see each

other as constituting perpetual threats to each other's interests. In this regard, African traditional authorities record more success if they try to appeal to the interests of each conflicting party when it comes to such situations.

Rubenstein (2018) finds that in countries where the traditional system of governance operates side by side with the central system of modern states, traditional authorities are given jurisdiction over conflict management within their communities. Sometimes, however, it becomes difficult for traditional authorities to handle criminal cases because the methods of a traditional system may not be in tandem with those laid down by the Constitution of that country. In such cases, African traditional leaders hand over cases to state law enforcement agencies, like the police. Singer (2018) finds, however, that many people tend not to be satisfied with the traditional system of conflict management because some traditional leaders may be overcome by self-interest and may be partial and inconsiderate in exercising their discretion. Singer (2018) considers this a major weakness of the traditional conflict management mechanism. Väyrynen (2019) emphasized this point by saying that it is the traditional leaders' conduct and actions in conflict resolution that become a point of scrutiny by the community. It is noteworthy that despite the unscrupulousness of some traditional leaders, a good number of them have personal ethics and an appreciation of the respect that is given to those who do not settle for anything other than the truth. Väyrynen (2019) concludes that some traditional leaders are unable to manage their people because of illiteracy and poor leadership and social skills.

In another study, Wallenstein (2018) employed a triangulated mixed-methods design to solicit data from 125 respondents on the impact of African traditional leaders in conflict resolution in Kenya. Their study found that even though traditional leaders understood their roles as neutral arbitrators in conflict management and had the skills and knowledge required for conflict management, they needed to become more familiar with the dynamics of modern conflicts to be better positioned to manage inter- and intra-ethnic conflicts arising from primordial hatred and resource disputes. Traditional authority assumes the position of leadership through inheritance. This implies that determinants of position or lineage hold greater significance than skills and competence, allowing almost anyone from any educational background to hold a leadership position. However, leadership requires certain skills, and traditional leaders must take steps to learn some basic leadership skills in order to be able to lead effectively.

Singer (2018) found that in most African societies, traditional and modern institutions play complementary roles in ensuring peace and social cohesion. During the early colonial administration of Africa, in some cases, traditional rulers formed one house of parliament. In some places, there have been calls for traditional institutions such as chieftainships to be incorporated into the modern constitutional project. The formal adoption of traditional measures of conflict management would promote peace and development in Africa. It is expected that the politics of conflict management will be linked to the dominant traditions of African societies.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Gonjaland has suffered a lot of succession disputes in recent times. The Gonja Kingdom is lorded by the Yagbonwura and supported by five (5) divisional chiefs (Tampuri, 2016). The chieftaincy succession arrangement agreed to in 1930 created room for the Yagbon throne to be rotated between the numerous divisions and successions to the divisional chiefs of the various elite gates (Bediako, 2017). Bole Traditional Area has no substantive divisional chief; the conflict has been managed until this time.

It is clear that Ghana has institutions for conflict resolution, such as the District, Regional, and National Security Councils, the Regional and National Houses of Chiefs, the Judiciary, and Committees of Inquiries. These institutions do not work in isolation and need people to operate them. The inability of these institutions to successfully resolve the successional conflicts in the Bole Traditional Area has made the researchers explore the role of both traditional and statutory leadership in conflict management in the Bole Traditional Area. Hence, fill the gap between the causes and economic, social, and security implications of the conflict.

The Savannah Region of northern Ghana is predominantly inhabited by the Gonja people, including subgroups such as the Ngbanya, Vaglas, Safalbas, Nchoruba, Nomee/Batigee, Mmmara, Hanga, Tampulmas, Nchumurus, and Nawuris. The Ngbanya are the largest group, believed to have migrated from the Mali-Songhai Empire between 1546 and 1576, led by Landa Wam. The region has experienced challenges in managing chieftaincy succession disputes, which have proven difficult to resolve over the years.

The Bole Chieftaincy, located in the Bole District of the Savannah Region, is a significant traditional chieftaincy with a rich history. The bole skin, one of the oldest and most revered in the Northern Region of Ghana, symbolizes authority and leadership, with its occupant holding the title of Paramount Chief. The highest traditional authority in Gonja land is the Yagbonwura, who oversees the area's affairs, promotes development, and resolves disputes. The succession to the Yagbonwura position traditionally follows matrilineal descent, involving kingmakers and elders in the selection process.



The Bole Traditional Area has faced various chieftaincy conflicts, including a notable dispute in 2010 that went to court. Similar conflicts have occurred in the Kpembe and Wasape divisions. For instance, the Bolewura installed chiefs in Tinga and Keblima, where the Yagbonwura had already appointed divisional chiefs, leading to dual authority issues. In 2019, disagreements among kingmakers regarding the installation of chiefs resurfaced, tracing back to a 1930 chieftaincy rotation arrangement in Yapei. The selection of the new Bolewura, Mahama Pontongprong II, was contested by the Safope Gate, who felt they had the right to propose a candidate. The Yagbonwura intervened and appointed Chief Bukari Abudu as the new Mandariwura, highlighting the complexities and challenges of managing chieftaincy conflicts in the area.

1.2 Research Objective

- i. To identify the effects of leadership on conflict resolution in Bole Traditional Area.
- ii. To identify the conflict resolution mechanisms available for Traditional Authorities to manage chieftaincy successions conflict in the Bole Traditional Area.

1.3 Research Questions

- i. What are the effects of leadership on conflict management in Bole Traditional Area?
- ii. What are the conflict resolution mechanisms available for traditional authorities to manage chieftaincy successions conflict in the Bole Traditional Area?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Framework

2.1.1 The Subjective/Objective Approach to Conflict Management

Slovic et al. (1977) assert that conflicts are about values and that people have different perceptions about what constitutes values. Conflicts arise when one feels something of value is being taken away or disregarded by another person. This theory explains the variability of conflict situations. It is individuals or groups who see a situation as conflictual, and it is the same individuals or groups who can be reoriented to see the same situation as non-conflictual. This theory is useful in managing the chieftaincy succession conflicts in Bole because if the conflict is seen as value-specific, then people can re-socialize or be reoriented to adopt positive attitudes towards perceived deprivation or inequality by resorting to non-violent means to seek redress rather than to see an act of provocation as a call to arms. The subjective/objective approach is adopted to explain how individual or group values can determine the resolution or not of a particular conflict.

2.1.2 Factors Affecting the Role of African Traditional Leaders

In Ghana, the traditional belief is that chiefs own the land, but this isn't always the case. Sometimes, the land is owned communally by influential families, who hold it in trust for future generations. Chiefs with land often earn income from renting it out. However, Bukari et al. (2016) note that higher education is now a requirement for becoming a chief, leading many chiefs to pursue careers outside traditional duties, which can create conflicts of interest and divide their attention. Modern chiefs, often well-educated and familiar with the demands of modern life, require steady income sources beyond traditional royalties and land sales, which can be burdensome for villagers. Some chiefs, lacking resources, may engage in arbitrary land sales or take kickbacks, which can compromise their roles in the community (David et al., 2020).

Chieftaincy succession is often by lineage in many African societies. The problem is that most of these succession arrangements are undocumented and sometimes ambiguous. These have led to several preventable disagreements, which have destabilized the chieftaincy system and thus the development of the country. The conflict between the Dagbon gates of Andani and Abudu was brought to a halt in 2019 after it started in 2002 (Allwood & Ahlsén, 2015; Bukari, 2016). The dispute led to the killing of Ya-Na Yakub Andani II, the overlord of Dagbon, and 30 of his people. It would have been worse if a state of emergency had not been declared in the traditional areas of Dagbon. The Wuaku Commission tried to investigate the roots of the dispute and found that the non-observance of the funeral of Mohammed (Mahamadu) Abdulai IV at the Abudu Gate triggered the conflict (Bukari, 2016). The Commission also found that both gates had been illegally hoarding weapons for some time.

Chieftaincy succession in many African societies, often determined by lineage, is typically undocumented and sometimes ambiguous, leading to disputes that destabilize the system. An example is the conflict between the Andani and Abudu gates in Dagbon, which escalated from 2002 to 2019, resulting in the deaths of Ya-Na Yakub Andani II and

30 others. The Wuaku Commission found that the conflict was triggered by the non-observance of a funeral rite and revealed that both gates had been illegally stockpiling weapons. Additionally, harmful customary laws have negatively impacted the chieftaincy institution. The 1992 Constitution directed the National House of Chiefs (NHC) to eliminate harmful customs, yet enforcement is weak, often allowing customs that benefit chiefs and elders to persist. This lack of regulation has led to human rights abuses and conflicts, such as the 1980 inter-ethnic war between the Konkomba and the Nanumba (Cammaert, 2019).

2.1.2 African Traditional Conflict Resolution Mechanisms

The concept of common humanity, or common life, is a foundational principle in African culture, where people see themselves as part of one unified community. This is encapsulated in the phrases "ubuntu" in Nguni Bantu and "utu" in Swahili, both meaning "human." These terms emphasize peaceful coexistence and the prioritization of collective interests over individual ambitions. In traditional African societies, conflict is viewed as a threat to communal well-being. The notion of individualism was introduced by Europeans through the spread of capitalist ideology. It is argued that African communalism emphasizes universal human values that transcend cultural and ethnic differences. Communal living in Africa includes the belief that every community member has a right to access natural resources, a principle crucial for resolving conflicts over resources like land (Mawuko-Yevugah and Attipoe, 2021; Krah et al., 2018; Davi et al, 2017; Lentz, 2020).

Reciprocity is a key principle in African communities that fosters an ideal environment for conflict resolution. This principle involves a shared exchange of rights, goods, services, and obligations, promoting peaceful coexistence and reducing the likelihood of conflict (Baker et al., 2019; Green, 2014; Gonzalez et al, 2019 and Ghasabeh, Soosay, & Reaiche, 2015). When a community faces a disaster or loss, other communities provide assistance, reinforcing a culture of community life and developing strong relationships. Reciprocity emphasizes the importance of exchange, maintaining collective security and supporting egalitarian social structures. It prioritizes the common good over individual interests, promoting fairness, justice, and mutual trust (Granderson, 2017).

In many Ghanaian societies, like the Dagombas and Konkombas, mutual obligation is deeply ingrained. These communities believe in helping neighbors with household tasks, gardening, or during times of need, with the expectation that the favor will be returned in the future. Those who fail to reciprocate are stigmatized and may not receive help in their times of need. Conflict resolution mechanisms in traditional African societies are designed to restore justice by repairing relationships, reintegrating conflicting parties into the community, and maintaining solidarity in addressing conflicts.

In traditional African societies, respect for parents, elders, ancestors, and the environment is deeply ingrained in customs, traditions, and taboos. These cultural norms, which often include fines and penalties for disobedience, help maintain social harmony by promoting respect and discouraging conflict-inducing behavior. Religion plays a crucial role in upholding these values. The concept of respect is embedded in taboos and social distance, dictating interactions based on gender, age, and status, thereby preventing and resolving conflicts. In northern Ghana, for example, it is customary to show deference to elders, avoiding rude behavior or disregarding their warnings to prevent curses. This respect for elders aids in conflict resolution, as they mediate and encourage reconciliation (Krah et al., 2018; Paolo & Issifu, 2021).

2.2 Empirical Review

2.2.1 Conflict Resolution Mechanisms in Ghana

Tweneboah (2021) asserts that while conflict is a normal aspect of human societies, it should not lead to the destruction of lives and property. Effective management and prevention are crucial. In Ghanaian societies, various mechanisms are employed to resolve conflicts. Osei-Kyei et al. (2019) conducted a study in northern Ghana, involving over 150 respondents, to explore these mechanisms. They identified both national security agencies, such as the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) and the National Intelligence Agency (BNI), and traditional institutions like the National House of Chiefs and the Regional Houses of Chiefs as key players in conflict resolution. The National House of Chiefs, consisting of paramount chiefs and a judicial committee, is specifically tasked with managing chieftaincy disputes. The integration of these mechanisms has been effective in resolving conflicts, though the circumstances under which they work best in multicultural contexts require further study (Winkler, 2010; Keller, 2019).

Additionally, Ibrahim et al. (2022) investigated indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms in the Upper West region, focusing on the Wala people. They found that the concept of *lesirii* plays a vital role in resolving chieftaincy conflicts among the Walas. However, the study did not address how *Lesirii* could be applied in conflicts involving non-native groups, such as Fulani pastoralists, suggesting an area for further research.



The literature reviewed identified one or another conflict resolution mechanism, including traditional councils, national and district chiefdoms, local mechanisms, mediation, and even litigation. Many of these mechanisms have been successfully applied to resolve decades-long conflicts, such as the Bimoba-Konkomba conflict in Bunkpurugu Yunyoo and the Dagbon Chieftaincy conflict in the Northern Region.

III METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

A cross-sectional design was adopted for this study because the lead researcher collected both quantitative and qualitative data. This necessitated the use of a mixed-methods strategy where both quantitative and qualitative strategies are used. The quantitative strategy enabled the researchers to use quantitative analytic techniques such as correlational analysis and a relative importance index to quantify the responses of respondents about the roles traditional leaders have played or should play to bring the Bole Chieftaincy conflict to an end. The qualitative strategy enabled the researchers to dig deep into the levels of collaboration between central and traditional authorities in resolving the succession conflict or dispute in the Bole Traditional Area, as well as the conflict resolution mechanisms that are available for resolving conflicts in the traditional area through extensive personal interviews. A combination of both strategies made the entire study richer than using either quantitative or qualitative strategies in isolation.

3.2 Research Site

The research was conducted in the Bole District of the Northern Region, encompassing Bole Township, Mandari, and Bamboi (North Mo). According to the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS, 2014). The district has a population of 61,593 individuals. Out of this population, 51.4% are male, while 46.4% are female.

The economic activities in the district are diverse, involving farming, trading, charcoal burning, mining, and formal sector professions such as doctors, nurses, teachers, and administrators. Among the population, 59.6% are engaged in farming, 13.2% in sales and service provision, 8.2% in crafts and similar trades, and 4.8% work as nurses, teachers, or administrators.

Within the Bole Traditional Area (BTA), there are approximately 94 chieftaincy titles held by individuals from the three recognized chieftaincy gates, namely Sarfope, Jagape, and Denkeripe, occupying various locations in the area, according to information from the Ghana Traditional Council (GTC, 2019).

3.3 Target Population

The target population for the study was specifically the members of the three recognized chieftaincy gates, which are Sarfope, Jagape, and Dankeripe, who were 18 years and older. This is because they are familiar with the succession plans that have been in place since the 1930s. Three hundred and sixty-four respondents were selected using both probability and non-probability sampling techniques. Also, the snowballing sampling technique was used to select key informants for the focus group discussions and interviews. Those who were specifically affected by the conflicts, as well as those who were among the combatants, were identified through the respondents. In addition, five members of the District Security Council, five members of the Regional House of Chiefs, and two chiefs, each from the three recognized chieftaincy gates, were purposefully selected to participate in the focus group discussions (FGD) due to their in-depth knowledge about chieftaincy succession arrangements in Gonjal and the roles they have so far played in resolving the conflict. Three sessions of FGD were conducted, with each group participating only once. Each session lasted for about one and a half hours.

3.4 Determination of Sample Size

Yamane (1967) formula for sample size determination of an unknown population was used to calculate the sample size as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

Where: n

N = Sample frame = 4007

e = margin of error = 0.5

n = sample size

deducing

$$n = \frac{4007}{1+4007(0.05)^2} = 4007/11.017 = 364$$

3.5 Data Sources and Data Collection Methods

Primary data was collected largely from residents of the Bole Traditional Area. Respondents were drawn from the members of the three Sarfope, Jagape, and Dinkeripe chieftaincy gates. Primary data was, therefore, obtained through interviews and responses to questionnaires. Secondary data was gathered from sources such as books, journals, magazines, periodicals, dissertations, newspapers, government reports, and the internet, which discuss issues of chieftaincy conflicts in Gonjaland and those that discuss conflicts in general. The theories that explain conflict, leadership, and conflict management were extensively reviewed, and empirical studies conducted by others in the field of chieftaincy succession conflicts in other parts of Ghana and Africa were also extensively reviewed to complement the primary data that was gathered from the field. Each interview moment with respondents took about 30 minutes, and notification and consent were sought from all members. The interviews were conducted and questionnaires distributed by the research team over two months, from the month of March 2020 to May 2020 in Northern Ghana, especially Bole District.

3.6 Data analysis

Two levels of analysis were carried out. Firstly, inferential analysis was done using correlation and a relative importance index to determine the impact of leadership on conflict resolution in Bole Traditional Area and the factors that affect the functionality of traditional authority in Bole Traditional Area, respectively. Secondly, descriptive analysis using mean and variance was done to determine the collaboration between central authority and traditional authority in the resolution of chieftaincy succession conflicts in Bole Traditional Area and to identify the conflict resolution mechanisms that were available in Bole Traditional Area. The descriptive analysis was expressed in frequencies and percentages and presented in the form of graphs or tables. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to perform both descriptive and inferential analyses.

IV FINDINGS & DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Impact of Traditional Leadership on Chieftaincy Succession Conflict in Bole Traditional Area

This objective sought to ascertain the relationship between the roles of traditional leadership and chieftaincy succession conflict management in the Bole Traditional Area. A correlational analysis was done to determine this relationship. At a confidence level of 99%, the Pearson correlational statistics are shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Correlational Statistics

	Traditional Leadership (TL)	Management of Chieftaincy Succession Conflict (MCSC)
TL Pearson Correlation	1	0.798
Sig. (2-tailed)		0.00**
N	364	364
MCSC Pearson Correlation	0.798	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.00	
N	364	364

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

As indicated in Table 1, the level of significance of the correlation between traditional leadership and chieftaincy succession conflict is 0.00. This is less than 0.01, indicating that traditional leadership impacts the management of chieftaincy succession conflicts in the Bole Traditional Area. The Pearson correlational value is 0.78, which means that for every instance of traditional leadership, there is a 78% variation in the level of conflict management in the Bole Traditional Area. One of the key informants corroborated this when he said:

The role of traditional leaders in many African societies remains resiliently relevant because the institution of chieftaincy continues to survive despite frustrations by several governments, beginning from colonialism through post-independence Ghana to even contemporary Ghana. What sometimes affects the roles of traditional leaders in many areas, including conflict management, is a lack of resources. A lot is expected of traditional rulers; apart from immediate family demands, the entire population expects support from traditional rulers, and then there is the need to develop

communities in their traditional areas. These place a huge financial burden on the chiefs, but they have no sources of income other than royalties available and rent from lands. This often affects the effectiveness of the traditional chiefs.

Another key informant who was a member of the Gonja Traditional Council also explained:

Our roles are affected by a lack of recognition from the government, financial difficulties, gross disrespect from subjects, political and foreign influences, and sometimes our chiefs are not transparent and honest enough with their people, so they lose their confidence and support.

Yet another said, “In this kingdom, leaders are highly respected. Remember, we are a centralized society. When they speak, we listen. They have been very influential in managing this conflict.”

How traditional and political leaders collaborate in conflict management in the Bole Traditional Area

The second objective of the study sought to ascertain how traditional leaders collaborate with the central authority in managing conflict in Bole Traditional Area. Respondents were asked to indicate how traditional leaders joined hands with the central government to manage conflicts in the traditional area. Their responses were varied, as shown in Figure 1 below.

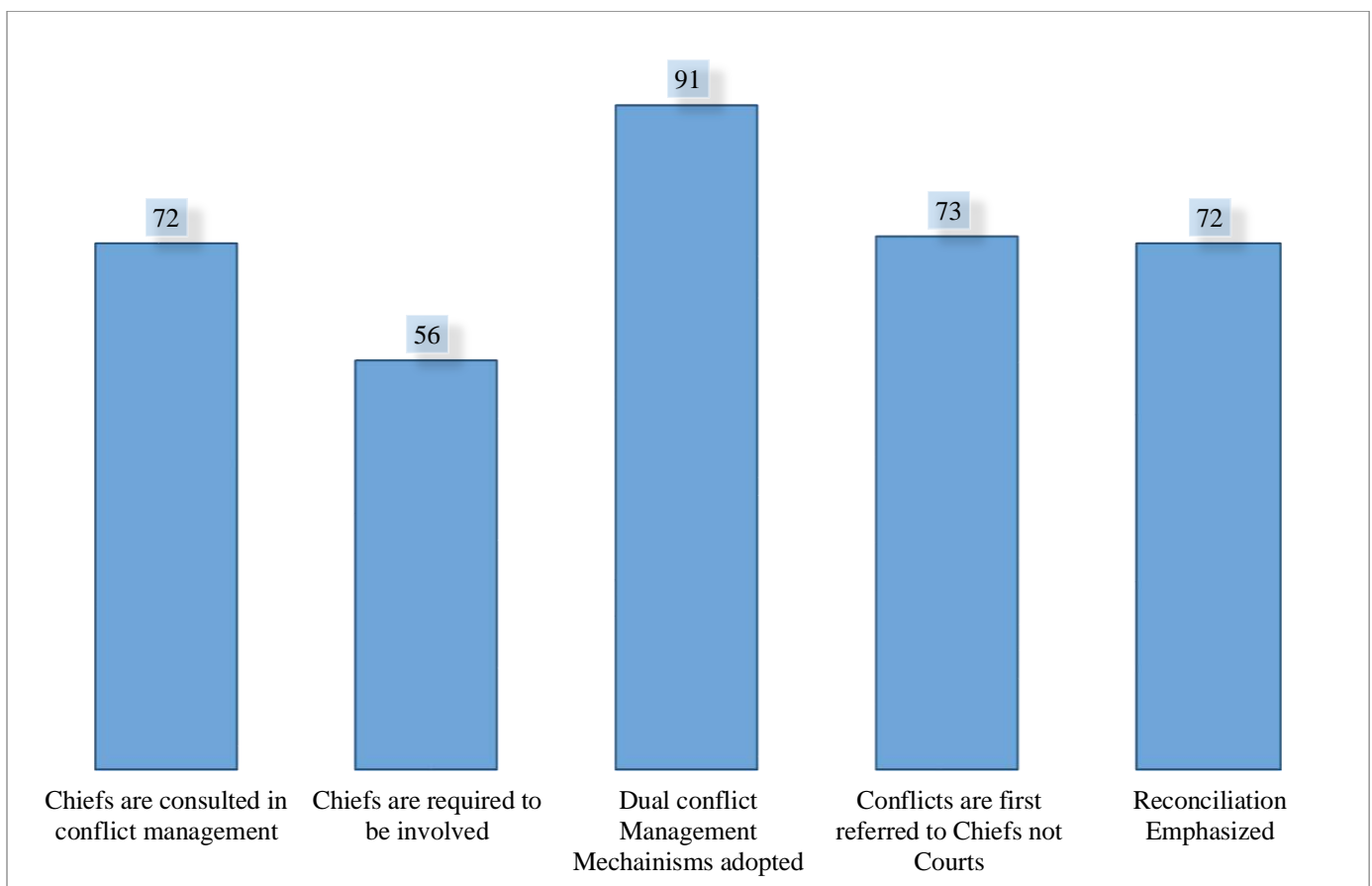


Figure 1
Traditional and Political Leaders Collaborate in Conflict Management in the Bole Traditional Area

As indicated in Figure 1, ninety-one participants, representing 25% of the total respondents, indicated that in most cases of conflict management in the Bole Traditional Area, a dual system of conflict management exists, where the traditional conflict resolution mechanisms are used alongside the Western justice system adopted by Ghana after independence. This often brings both traditional and central leaders together. Seventy-three respondents, representing 20% of the total respondents, indicated that the Chief Palace is the first place of call in times of conflict before any other place, so any decision by the central government to manage conflicts, especially chieftaincy conflicts, is rooted in the outcome of decisions from the Paramount Chief, the Yagbonwura. Seventy-two of the respondents, representing 19.7% of the total respondents, indicated that all procedures for conflict resolution emphasized reconciliation rather than punishment and that this is a core principle of the traditional justice system, which requires the expertise of the traditional leaders. Another seventy-two respondents indicated that chiefs are consulted whenever the central government is to decide on any conflict situation in Bole Traditional Area. Fifty-six respondents, representing 15.4% of the total



respondents, indicated that the Constitution of Ghana provides that chiefs are necessarily consulted whenever the government is to decide on conflict management within their jurisdiction. All the responses of the participants put together indicate a high level of collaboration between the central authority and the traditional authority in conflict management within the Bole Traditional Area.

One of the key informants corroborated this when he said:

The leaders and the central government work together. There is a constitutional provision that allows chieftaincy disputes to be settled by the regional and national houses of chiefs. This is involved and decentralized.

Factors that militate against the roles of traditional authorities in managing chieftaincy succession conflicts in the Bole Traditional Area

This objective sought to identify the various factors that undermine the role of traditional rulers in managing chieftaincy succession conflicts in the Bole Traditional Area. When respondents were asked to indicate such factors, their responses were as shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Challenges of Traditional Rulers in Managing Conflicts in Bole Traditional Area.

Parameters	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Foreign Interventions from foreign mediators meddle with the roles of traditional leaders	119	90	5	90	60	364
	33.70%	24.70%	1.4%	24.70%	16.50%	100%
Corruption on the part of traditional leaders wanes public confidence in their judgements and decisions	120	89	0.00	115	40	364
	33.10%	24.50%	0.00%	31.50%	11.00%	100%
Conflict of interest on the part of leaders affects their objectivity and fairness	118	93	12	89	52	364
	32.40%	25.50%	3.30%	24.50%	14.30%	100%
Inadequate Resources to meet their financial needs, as well as the need of their communities, often limit their roles in resolving conflicts	135	71	15	76	67	364
	37.10%	19.50%	4.10%	20.90%	18.40%	100%
The leadership style of some traditional leaders sometimes affects their effectiveness.	119	89	0.00	115	41	364
	33.70%	24.50%	0.00%	31.50%	11.80%	100%

As indicated in Table 2 above, statements that measure the challenges of traditional leadership in managing conflicts were made, and respondents were expected to show their levels of agreement or disagreement with such statements to ascertain the prevailing views of participants about such statements. The aggregate of their responses was used as a determinant of the validity or invalidity of the statements in terms of measuring the construct. The first statement was: “Foreign interventions from foreign mediators meddle with the roles of traditional leaders.” To this statement, 119 participants (33.7% of the total) strongly agreed; 90 of them (24.7% of the total) agreed; 24.7% disagreed; and 60 of them (16.5% of the total) strongly disagreed.

Separating the responses into two separate extremes of agreeing or disagreeing, of the 362 participants, 209 agreed with the statement, whereas 150 disagreed with the statement. The statement was therefore accepted, which means that the presence of foreign mediators interferes with the functionality of traditional leadership in conflict management.

The second statement was: “Corruption on the part of traditional leaders wanes public confidence in their judgments and decisions.” To this statement, 120 respondents (33.1% of the total) strongly agreed, and 89 participants (24.5% of the total) agreed. However, 115 respondents (31.1% of the total) disagreed, and 40, representing 11.0%, strongly disagreed. Overall, a total of 209 participants agreed that corruption wanes the popularity of traditional leaders and consequently the effectiveness of their roles in resolving conflicts, whereas 155 of them disagreed. Again, more people agreed with the statement than those who disagreed, so the statement was upheld.

The third statement was: “Conflict of interest on the part of traditional leaders affects the effectiveness of their roles.” To this statement, 118 participants (32.4% of the total) strongly agreed, 93, 89 (24.5% of the total) disagreed, whereas 52 (14.3% of the total) strongly disagreed. There was a higher number of participants who agreed with the statement (211) than disagreed (141). This means that conflict of interest affects the effectiveness of the roles played by traditional leaders in resolving conflict within the Bole Traditional Area.

The fourth statement was: “The inadequacy of financial and other resources available to traditional leaders often makes them susceptible to external influence, thereby affecting the effectiveness of their roles.” To this statement, 135 participants (37.1% of the total) strongly agreed, 71 (19.5% of the total) agreed, but 76 (20.9% of the total) and 67 participants (18.4% of the total) disagreed and strongly disagreed, respectively. The number of participants who agreed



with the statement was higher than that of those who disagreed (206 and 143, respectively). It was therefore concluded that a lack of resources limits the effectiveness of traditional leaders in resolving chieftaincy succession conflicts in the Bole Traditional Area.

A final statement concerning the factors that affect the role of traditional leaders in chieftaincy succession conflict resolution was made: “The leadership style of traditional leaders affects the effectiveness of their roles in conflict management.” To this statement, 119 participants (33.7%) strongly agreed, 89 (24.5% of the total) agreed, 115 respondents (31.5% of the total) disagreed, and 41 (11.8% of the total) strongly disagreed. When the number of respondents who strongly agreed and agreed was combined against a combination of those who disagreed and strongly disagreed, it was revealed that more participants agreed and strongly agreed (207) than respondents who disagreed and strongly disagreed (156). This statement was also upheld.

The analysis of the data collected on a Likert scale, therefore, shows that factors such as foreign intervention from foreign mediators who may not be familiar with the Gonja tradition and customs, corruption on the part of traditional leaders, conflict of interest on the part of traditional leaders, inadequate resources, and poor leadership style combine to limit the effectiveness of the role of traditional leaders in conflict management within Bole Traditional Area. This was corroborated by a key informant:

The chieftaincy used to be a revered institution, but the corruption of traditional leaders, parochial interests, and bribes, which are often motivated by a desire for wealth, have undermined the once revered institution and so limited their authority over the people.

Having determined the weight of each response, the study calculated the relative importance index as shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Calculating the RII of Conflict Resolution Mechanisms in Bole Traditional Area

Statement	5(f)	4(f)	3(f)	2(f)	1(F)	Total	N	RII	Ranking
Police and military are the ones that resolve conflicts in this traditional area	656	572	0	196	10	1434	364	3.93956	1
Gonja traditional council is one of the mechanisms used in resolving chieftaincy succession conflicts in the bole traditional area	735	372	0	238	5	1350	364	3.708791	2
Bole traditional council is one of the mechanisms for resolving chieftaincy conflict	805	156	15	196	66	1238	364	3.401099	3
The national house of chiefs resolve the conflicts in this traditional area	590	420	0	154	64	1228	364	3.373626	4
Conflicts in this traditional area are often resolved by the regional house of chiefs	554	392	0	230	42	1218	364	3.346154	5
Cases are Sent to the Courts	555	312	0	178	86	1131	364	3.107143	6

As indicated in Table 4 above, respondents identified the police and military as the most used mechanisms for conflict management in the Bole Traditional Area, with a relative importance index of 3.93. This is followed by the Gonja Traditional Council, which consists of the Yagbonwura and elders drawn from the five divisions that constitute the Gonja Kingdom. The Gonja Traditional Council was ranked second, with a relative importance index of 3.71. This was closely followed by the Bole Traditional Council, which consists of the Bolewura and five elders drawn from the gates that constitute the Traditional Area. The Bole Traditional Council had a relative importance index of 3.40. The National House of Chiefs was also identified as one of the conflict resolution mechanisms, with a relative importance index of 3.37, as well as the Regional House of Chiefs, with a relative importance index of 3.34. The judiciary was also identified as one of the conflict resolution mechanisms, with a least relative importance index of 3.10, indicating that it is the least-used conflict resolution mechanism within the Bole Traditional Area. During the interview with some key informants, one of the key informants, who was a retired High Court Judge, explained:

Bole has been relatively calm over the years. This situation we have now started a few years ago in Mandari after the death of the then-Mandariwura. The Mandari skin is particularly important because, per the succession arrangements in the Bole Traditional Area, the Mandariwura succeeds the Bolewura by default. So, when the Mandari skin became vacant, it was the turn of the Sarfope gate to present a candidate. What we are told is that they were unable to come up with a consensus candidate, so the then Bolewura, Awuladese Pontomprong Mahama (II), had the prerogative to appoint anyone among the qualified persons within the gate. The Bolewura appointed one Abdalai Issahaku Kant, who happens to be his nephew. His brother Abubakari Abudu was not satisfied with the appointment

and so headed to the Yagbonwura as the customs demanded. Yagbonwura subsequently investigated and nullified the appointment of Abdalai Issahaku Kant and installed Abubakari Abudu instead. Supporters of both parties rose against one another. The police and military were deployed to ensure calm. The case was subsequently sent to the Regional House of Chiefs, as the constitution requires. The Judicial Committee of the Northern Regional House of Chiefs upheld the appointment of Abdalai Issahaku Kant in January 2018. Per the succession arrangement in the Bole Traditional Area, Abdalai Issahaku Kant was supposed to be installed as the Bolewura. This, however, contradicts the succession arrangements in Gonjaland as provided for the 1930 arrangement, which provides that the Yagbonwura alone has the prerogative to appoint any of the divisional chiefs within the Kingdom. The Yagbonwura, therefore, installed Abubakari Abudu as the Bolewura, but Abdalai Issahaku Kant also installed himself as the Bolewura contemporaneously. Conflict again reignited, and police were sent to maintain calm while the case was sent to the Regional House of Chiefs once more. So, you see, throughout the narratives, you will realize the mechanisms used have been traditional authorities, from Yagbonwura to the Regional House of Chiefs and perhaps the police and the military.”

4.2 Discussions

4.2.1 Impact of Traditional Leadership on the Chieftaincy Succession Conflicts in Bole (Northern Ghana)

Correlational analysis of the association between the role of traditional leaders and conflict management shows that at a 99% degree of confidence, the P value was 0.00 ($P=0.00<0.01$) indicating that traditional leadership is positively associated with the management of conflict in the Bole Traditional Area. This means that traditional leaders play vital roles in conflict management. This finding was corroborated by interview responses from key informants and Focus Group Discussions held with participants who were purposively selected. This is in line with Rubenstein (2018) who finds that to embolden the effectiveness of the traditional system, the roles of traditional leaders must be re-emphasized alongside general beliefs and values involving the sanctity of truth, providence, proverbs, idioms, oral history, oral storytelling and altruism which constitute important elements of the political economy of traditional societies. Also, the integration of useful and complementary values will lead to the positive transformation of a society. Traditional leaders who are custodians of the customs and tradition of their people can identify the basic values that make up a society and link them in defining the basic conditions under which a society can be seen to have been transformed (Brogden, 2018). Ghana for instance has legislative and judicial decentralization schemes 'as a framework for integrating the existing conflict management methods and skills of the national government and national ethnic groups' (Boakye & Béland, 2019).

4.2.2 Factors Militating Against the Role of Traditional Leaders in Conflict Management

The 1992 Constitution directed the National House of Chiefs (NHC) to eliminate harmful customs, yet enforcement is weak, often allowing customs that benefit chiefs and elders to persist. This lack of regulation has led to human rights abuses and conflicts, such as the 1980 inter-ethnic war between the Konkomba and the Nanumba. (Cammaert, 2019; Krah, De Kruijff & Ragno, 2018). Also, David et al. (2020) argue that modern chiefs, often well-educated and familiar with the demands of modern life, require steady income sources beyond traditional royalties and land sales, which can be burdensome for villagers. Some chiefs, lacking resources, may engage in arbitrary land sales or take kickbacks, which can compromise their roles in the community. Analysis of the data collected in this regard revealed that foreign interventions from foreign mediators who are not familiar with the customs and traditions of the people of the Bole Traditional Area were some of the factors that militated against the role of traditional leaders in conflict resolution (58.4%). Others included corruption on the part of some traditional leaders (57.6%), conflict of interest among traditional leaders (57.9%), lack of finance (56.5%), and poor leadership style (58.2%). Discussions with key informants during varied sessions of focus group discussions at various locations and with different groups of discussants revealed similar findings, as did the personal interviews conducted with some key informants.

4.2.3 Conflict Resolution Mechanisms in Bole Traditional Area

The analysis of the data collected in this regard indicated that various mechanisms are used in conflict resolution in the Bole Traditional Area. These include the Police and Military (RII = 3.9), the Gonja Traditional Council (RII = 3.7), the Bole Traditional Council (RII = 3.4), the Regional House of Chiefs (3.37), the National House of Chiefs (RII = 3.3), and the Judiciary (RII = 3.1). This means that at some point, some of the conflicts are settled through the police and the military, but many times too, the police and the military only come in to stop physical confrontations. But other mechanisms, like mediation and negotiations by the Gonja Traditional Council, the Regional House of Chiefs, and, in rare cases, the judiciary, are employed to manage conflicts in the Bole Traditional Area. The views of the discussants at the FGD corroborated this.

Effective management and prevention are crucial. In Ghanaian societies, various mechanisms are employed to resolve conflicts. Osei-Kyei et al. (2019) show that in northern Ghana, mechanisms identified include national security agencies, such as the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) and the National Intelligence Agency (BNI), and traditional institutions like the National House of Chiefs and the Regional Houses of Chiefs as key players in conflict resolution. The National House of Chiefs, consisting of paramount chiefs and a judicial committee, is specifically tasked with managing chieftaincy disputes. The integration of these mechanisms has been effective in resolving conflicts, though the circumstances under which they work best in multicultural contexts require further study (Winkler, 2010).

Theoretically, the study's findings suggest that the people of Bole or the chieftaincy dispute in Bole were more inclined towards values. The subjective/objective approach to conflict management theory argues that conflicts are about values, and people have different worldviews or perceptions about what constitutes values. It further argues that conflicts arise when an individual feels something he or she values is being taken away by another person or when one feels he or she is being cheated by the traditional system. This is in line with Slovic et al. (1977), who assert that conflicts are about values and that people have different perceptions about what constitutes values. Conflicts arise when one feels something of value is being taken away or disregarded by another person. The subjective/objective approach is therefore applicable in the study, helping to explain how individual or group values can determine the resolution or otherwise of a particular conflict. The study found that the Bole Chieftaincy conflict was resolved by a traditional court rather than the use of arms.

V CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

The study concludes that traditional leaders play vital roles in conflict resolution, which is not unexpected because many modern states in Africa still run a dual leadership system where traditional authority operates alongside central authority. The justice systems in post-independence Africa appear more complicated and costly. The more reconciliatory and cheaper nature of the traditional conflict resolution mechanisms makes them a favorite for many Africans. Traditional authorities are solely responsible for the traditional justice system, hence the vitality of their role in conflict management.

The study concludes that factors such as interference from politicians and foreign mediators, corruption of traditional leaders, conflict of interest of traditional leaders, inadequate finance, and poor leadership styles affect the role of traditional leaders, which is also not surprising. Foreign mediators do not know the cultural triggers of chieftaincy succession conflicts and many other conflicts in Africa.

Mechanisms of conflict management in Ghana include a combination of both traditional and modern contrivances used together. In times of conflict, the police and military are often deployed to quell violence among combating parties, after which other mechanisms like adjudication, reconciliation, and negotiations are employed by various institutions charged with conflict management to resolve the conflicts. The Traditional Councils are crucial in resolving conflicts, especially chieftaincy succession conflicts. When they are unable to reach a consensus, the cases move to the Regional House of Chiefs, which may handle them or may also refer them to the National House of Chiefs. When any of these levels fail, conflicting parties may go to the Supreme Court with the leave of the National House of Chiefs. It suffices to say, therefore, that Ghana employs various forms of conflict resolution mechanisms to resolve chieftaincy and other conflicts.

5.2 Recommendations

The study reveals that traditional leaders play a vital role in conflict resolution. It is therefore recommended that the Ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs put in place programs that will train traditional chiefs in conflict management to further enhance their ability to resolve conflicts within their jurisdictions.

The study found that there is collaboration between traditional leaders and central authorities in conflict management. It is, therefore, recommended that the Government of Ghana formulate policies that will further integrate the traditional and central authorities so that they may better collaborate in conflict management.

The study also found that lack of finance, corruption, conflict of interest, and poor leadership style militate against the role of traditional leaders in conflict management. It is, therefore, recommended that the Ministry of Finance make budgetary allocations to the various traditional areas through their respective district assemblies so that they may be better resourced to manage conflict in their jurisdiction. It is further recommended that the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission monitor the traditional leaders closely so that corrupt and unscrupulous chiefs may be held



responsible for their actions to reduce corrupt and indecent practices that weaken public trust in the chieftaincy institution in Ghana.

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