



Research Article

LEADERSHIP ROLES IN THE MANAGEMENT OF CHIEFTAINCY CONFLICTS IN GONJALAND, GHANA

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ABSTRACT



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This paper emphasizes the enduring relevance of traditional leaders in Africa, despite challenges from colonial and post-independence governments. This paper fills a gap in understanding traditional leaders' role in conflict management, beyond their known contributions to democracy, social cohesion, and cultural preservation. Using a mixed-method approach, the research collected data from 364 respondents and twenty-two (22) key informants through various sampling techniques. The findings reveal that interference, corruption, inadequate resources, and conflicts of interest hinder traditional leaders' effectiveness in conflict management. The study recommends that the Ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs implement measures to enhance the leadership skills of traditional rulers and strengthen collaboration between traditional and central authorities. Additionally, it suggests that the Ministry of Finance seek parliamentary approval to increase budgetary allocations for traditional authority.

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Introduction

There is no single definition of conflict. Functionalists like Coser (1967) see conflict as a simple disagreement among people or a group of persons who perceive each other as a threat to their interest. Keller (2019) argues that not all conflicts are violent but violence rather signifies the intensity of the conflicts. González et al (2019) also believes that conflict is a process that passes through various stages of manifestations before it becomes fully manifest. McGuirk and Burke (2020) contend that when the conflict is well managed at the initial stage, there would be no violence because at the incipient and latent stages, the parties recognise their differences but are still committed to peace.

Conflict management encompasses the array of strategies, competencies, methodologies, and procedural frameworks utilized to mitigate the adverse ramifications of conflict on the individuals involved, ultimately aiming to restore interpersonal relationships to their prior conditions or to enhance them further (Wallenstein, 2018). Baser (2017) explains that conflict management possesses extensive applicability across various contexts. Rubenstein (2018) further elaborates on this notion by asserting that a salient characteristic of conflict management is its role as an initiative undertaken by the prevailing order to regulate the conflict or to prevent its escalation. Robbins asserts that the resolution of conflict necessitates the eradication of its underlying causes alongside the weakening of its impacts.

The institution of chieftaincy in African societies is as old as the societies themselves (Owusu-Mensah, 2013). It is widely recognized as one of the continent's oldest and most enduring traditional systems (Owusu-Mensah, Asante, & Osew, 2015). Early African civilisations like Ghana, Mali, Songhai, and Kanem-Bornu were established as early as the 6th century A.D., long before European colonization (Lentz, 2020). The sociopolitical structures of these empires highlight the leadership and governance of their monarchs and chiefs during the pre-colonial period (Kokkonen & Sundell, 2014). Despite the significant changes brought by colonialism, the chieftaincy institution has remained resilient.

Ghana, formerly the Gold Coast, was under British colonial rule from 1844 to 1957. The British used the institution of chieftaincy to implement their indirect rule policy, governing through paramount chiefs. After colonialism ended, Ghana developed two governance structures: the central government and traditional governance. Today, chiefs not only perform customary roles but also serve as intermediaries between the government and their communities. Chieftaincy remains important in Ghana, with the 1992 Constitution protecting its status. Chiefs, defined by the Constitution, hold significant power and influence, making chieftaincy a sought-after position.

Gonjaland has faced several succession disputes in recent times. The Gonja Kingdom is led by the Yagbonwura, supported by five divisional chiefs. A 1930 succession framework mandates that the Yagbon throne and divisional chief positions rotate

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among divisions and gates, respectively. While this framework helps determine which division or gate is next in line, it lacks provisions for selecting a specific family member from a gate, leading to challenges and disputes, particularly in the Bole Traditional Area. Although there are no historical records of disputes over the Yagbonwura position, issues are prevalent at the divisional and sub-divisional levels.

A major succession dispute emerged between the Jinapor and Lebu gates in the Buipe Traditional Area over the appointment of the Buipewura. The Jinapor gate challenged a decision made by the Yagbonwura, which had been confirmed by the Regional House of Chiefs, resulting in a legal conflict that was resolved in 2010. Similar issues have also arisen in the Kpembe and Wasape divisions. In the Bole Traditional Area, conflicts are common, as the Bolewura appointed chiefs in Ting, Sonyo, and Kalidu, despite prior appointments by the Yagbonwura, leading to dual leadership in these areas. The Gonja Traditional Council attributes these conflicts to a lack of agreement among Kingmakers on the appointment of chiefs, despite the existence of chieftaincy rotation protocols established in 1930 (GTC, 2019).

The Mandari skin holds great prestige in the Bole Traditional Area, as the Mandariwura traditionally succeeds the Bolewura. In 2013, after Mandariwura Mahama Pontongprong II became Bolewura, Issahaku Abdulai Kant was appointed as the new Mandariwura. However, members of the Sofope gate contested this decision, believing they had the right to nominate a candidate. The Yagbonwura overturned the Bolewura's choice and appointed Bukari Abudu as Mandariwura, resulting in a split among the community and the installation of two competing chiefs. The Regional Security Council stepped in to restore order, and the matter was referred to the Judicial Committee of the Regional House of Chiefs. In December 2017, the Committee ruled in favor of the Bolewura, confirming that, under the 1930 chieftaincy succession framework, divisional chiefs had the authority to appoint sub-divisional chiefs.

On May 31, 2017, Bolewura Mahama Pontongprong II passed away at Korle-Bu Teaching Hospital, rekindling tensions in the Bole Traditional Area. After his funeral rites, the Yagbonwura appointed a divisional chief for Bole, a move that violated the Bole Traditional Council's internal protocol, which requires that a Bolewura must first rise through the Mandari skin (Ashahadu, 2018). In response, the Mandariwura declared himself as Bolewura, leading to gunfire during the event, which left two people dead and several others injured (Goody, 2018). The Regional Security Council intervened again to restore peace, instructing both sides to stay away from the Palace until the issue was resolved. Currently, the Bole Traditional Area lacks a substantive divisional chief, and although the conflict has calmed, it remains unresolved.

Ghana has various institutions dedicated to resolving conflicts, including the District, Regional, and National Security Councils, the Regional and National Houses of Chiefs, the Judiciary, and Committees of Inquiries. However, these institutions rely on human intervention to function. The inability of these institutions to effectively resolve the succession disputes in the Bole Traditional Area highlights the need for researchers to investigate the factors hindering conflict management and resolution in the area.

Theoretical Issues

Behavioural Theory:

Behavioural theorists believe that the behaviours of people determine whether or not they become leaders (Berkovich,

2016). Blomme et al. (2015) observed that showing concerns for individual needs and establishing good interpersonal relationship with others are very important behaviours that can make one a leader. Chow found out that people are more attracted to persons who are considerate, simple, easy going and would make consultations before taking any decisions and less attracted to those who are rigid, hard-handed, and inconsiderate and make no consultations before taking decisions for the group. Fiedler and Leadership (2015) observed that such people who are liked by others often emerge as leaders, especially in a democratic dispensation. Fourie et al. (2017) suggest that leaders utilize various leadership styles, which may be autocratic, democratic, or laissez-faire. An autocratic leader makes decisions independently without consulting subordinates, while a laissez-faire leader allows subordinates to make decisions and takes a minimal management role, often just holding the title without active involvement. In contrast, a democratic leader involves subordinates in the decision-making process. However, one needs to be recognized as a leader before adopting any particular style. This explains traditional and central leadership in Ghana. Many people were voted into power or appointed into power because of their capabilities as well as their attitudes towards people. Legitimate leaders wield the support of the people and so if the leaders involved in managing the succession conflict are legitimate leaders, they should be able to end the conflict because the people will certainly listen to them.

Contingency Theory (Situational)

Contingency theories suggest that leaders can be both naturally predisposed and shaped by experience. While some may inherit leadership roles through aristocratic lineage, others achieve them through unique skills and perseverance. These theories argue that no single leadership style fits all situations; the effectiveness of a leadership style depends on various factors like organizational performance and follower dynamics (Ghasabeh, Soosay, & Reaiche, 2015). Contingency theories, a subset of behavioral theories, challenge the idea of a universal path to effective leadership. Advocates emphasize the importance of leaders adapting to contextual demands, shifting between task-oriented and relationship-oriented approaches as needed (Maduka et al., 2018).

Leadership Styles

Transformational Leadership

Steffens and Haslam (2020) described transformational leaders as leaders who widen and uplift the interests of their followers, arouse their consciousness and gradually guide them to transcend their own interests in order to improve the organisation. Berkovich (2016) also pointed out that transformational leadership is a style of leadership which is people oriented. It creates emotional attachments between leader and followers. This type of leadership style places much emphasis on feelings and values of followers and the leader's role plays an essential part in giving meaning to the actions of followers (Blomme et al., 2015). According to Maxwell (Ghasabeh et al., 2015) through a relationship-building process, transformational rulers acquire impact and are seen as trusting and supportive. Strategically, transformational leaders have the capacity to inspire and motivate supporters to conduct exceptional behaviours and improve their levels of performance (Maduka et al., 2018). A transformational leader must undoubtedly use abilities to communicate the vision efficiently and appeal to the interests of followers.

Transactional Leadership

Naidu and Van de Walt (2005) described transactional leadership as a style of leadership which rewards performance and punishes under-performance. Transactional leaders are seen as leaders who reward staff for completing the job, thus acquiring transactional authority (Nawaz & Khan, PhD, 2016). According to Jackson and differences (2020), apart from a rational exchange reward system for excellent performance and penalty for poor results, a strong degree of focus is put on goal accomplishment. Vidal, Campdesuñer, Rodríguez, and Vivar (2017) also described transactional leadership as a mechanism of social exchange where a leader agrees and clarifies duties with his followers because a properly finished job will attract reward and avoid penalty. According to Berkovich (2016), in the framework of transactional leadership, the interaction between a leader and a follower manifest as a reciprocal exchange wherein both parties' consent to a shared trade-off. A transactional affiliation between leader and follower is governed by contractual stipulations rather than by agreements based on trust (Fiedler & Leadership, 2015).

Empirical Review

Conflict Resolution Mechanisms in Ghana

As Tweneboah (2021) argued, that conflict is normal, but the normalcy of conflict should not destroy lives and property. The destructive nature of conflict must be managed or prevented at all costs. Ghanaian societies, like other human societies, experience conflict in one form or another. Researchers have conducted several studies to determine the conflict resolution mechanisms used by Ghanaian communities in resolving conflicts.

In a study on conflict in northern Ghana, Osei-Kyei, Chan, Yu, Chen, and Dansoh (2019) conducted qualitative research with over 150 respondents from the North, Upper West, and Upper East regions. The study found that Ghana employs a variety of conflict management mechanisms, including national security agencies like the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) and the National Intelligence Agency (BNI), which gather information on disputes that could escalate into violence. The police and military are also frequently deployed to protect lives and property during violent conflicts. Additionally, regional and district security committees address security issues that may threaten peace, and traditional institutions such as the National House of Chiefs and Regional Houses of Chiefs play a role in conflict resolution.

Letsa and Wilfahrt (2020) describe that the National House of Chiefs oversees chieftaincy and related disputes within its jurisdiction. It is made up of five paramount chiefs, each elected by their respective Regional House of Chiefs. Additionally, a Judicial Committee, consisting of five members selected by the chairman of the National House of Chiefs, plays a key role. These members possess extensive experience in conflict resolution and have successfully managed disputes in their regions. This structure is mirrored at the regional level in the Regional Houses of Chiefs.

While Letsa and Wilfahrt (2020) acknowledge that these integrated mechanisms have been effective in resolving conflicts in Ghana, they note that the specific conditions under which an integrated approach would be successful are not explored. The effectiveness of these mechanisms in multicultural settings requires further investigation.

In another study conducted by Ibrahim, Ibrahim, Adjei and Boateng (2019) in Bunkpurugu-Yunyoo to explore the relevance of local conflict management mechanisms in Bunkpurugu-

Yunyoo, they used a multi-case study design, using interviews, focus group discussions and observation methods to collect data from 43 respondents and found that traditional committees were the first point of recourse for any disputes that arose within many communities in the area. When the committee was unable to resolve the dispute, recourse was made to the overlords of Mampruga and then to the District House of Chiefs and the National House of Chiefs, if necessary. They conclude that this indigenous conflict resolution process is immediate, meaningful, accessible and affordable for all parties and that the use of local languages makes the process clear to both parties, that the process meets local needs and brings swift justice to the people. However, the study does not consider how these Indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms can be integrated into Western-centric justice structures to achieve legitimacy in managing outcomes.

Tijani (2019) also conducted a study in the Upper West region aimed at exploring indigenous mechanisms for resolving chieftaincy conflicts among the Warra, and he used a mixed-methods approach involving 154 interviewees. He found that the concept of Lesirii is a very important conflict resolution mechanism that exists among the Waras to explore resolving chieftaincy conflicts among them and should be combined with formal conflict management mechanisms to successfully manage conflicts among the Waras. However, this study has not explored how this mechanism can be used to manage conflicts involving native and non-native people who may not be bound by the Walla culture, such as Fulani pastoralists. This is an area that could be explored further.

In another study, Dansoh, Frimpong, Ampratwum, Dennis Oppong and Osei-Kyei (2020) assessed the role of mediation in conflict management in Africa. They used a case study design involving 85 participants, mainly practitioners of alternative dispute resolution (ADR), academics with expertise in mediation and students from the University of Ghana. The study identified mediation, negotiation, collaborative law and arbitration as conflict resolution mechanisms other than litigation that have been successfully used to resolve conflicts in Ghanaian society. He concludes that these methods can be used to manage conflict between heterogeneous communities in Ghana. The study identified comprehensive mechanisms that can be used to resolve conflict in multicultural communities in Ghana, however, the study did not consider the degree of neutrality in the application of these mediation methods; an area that could be further investigated.

All of the empirical studies reviewed identified one or another conflict resolution mechanism, including traditional councils, national and district chiefdoms, local mechanisms, mediation and even litigation. Several of these mechanisms have been effectively used to resolve long-standing conflicts, including the Bimoba-Konkomba conflict in Bunkpurugu Yunyoo and the Dagbon Chieftaincy conflict in the Northern Region. However, none have been successfully applied to manage conflicts between farmers and pastoralists in Ghana. Investigating the potential for using these mechanisms in such disputes would be valuable.

Materials and Methods

Research Design

The study used a cross-sectional design, combining both quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative approach allowed the researcher to analyze data using techniques like correlation and the relative importance index to measure respondents' views on the role of traditional leaders in resolving conflicts. The qualitative approach offered valuable insights into the cooperation between central and traditional authorities, as

well as the existing conflict resolution mechanisms in the Bole Traditional Area, through in-depth interviews. Combining both methods enhanced the study, providing a more thorough understanding than either method could on its own.

Target Population

The study focused on members from the four chieftaincy gates as the target population, Jagape, Dankyeripe and Tokotobiri chieftaincy gates who were eighteen years and above. This is because they are familiar with the succession plans that have been in place since the 1930s. The struggle seems to be among the members of the Sorfope gate but this has since taken a different dynamic as members of the other chieftaincy gates have pitched camps with either the Yagbonwura-installed Mandari or the Bolewura installed Mandari, this has made them a target for the research as well.

Determination of Sample Size

The sample size was calculated using Yamane's (1967) formula for determining sample size when the population is unknown, as follows:

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

Where:

N = Sample frame =4007

e = margin of error = 0.5

n= sample size

Deducing

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

Sampling Techniques

Probability Sampling Techniques

A preliminary study was carried out to determine the members associated with each of the four chieftaincy gates in the Bole Traditional Area. The total number obtained from the pilot study constituted the sampling frame. The list was used to construct four clusters. The Clusters were labelled A, B, C, and D according to the four chieftaincy gates. Cluster A consisted of the members of the Sorfope chieftaincy gate. Cluster B consisted of members of the Jagape chieftaincy gate. Cluster C consisted of members of the Dankyeripe Chieftaincy Gate and Cluster D consisted of members of the Tokotobiri Chieftaincy Gate. A simple random sampling method was employed to select ninety-one respondents from each cluster.

Non-Probability Sampling Techniques

Key informants for focus group discussions and interviews were selected using the snowball sampling technique, with respondents identifying individuals affected by the conflicts and combatants. Additionally, members of the District Security Council, Regional House of Chiefs, and chiefs from the four chieftaincy gates were purposively selected for their expertise in chieftaincy succession and conflict resolution. Three focus group discussions were held, each lasting about one and a half hours.

Validity and Reliability of Research Instruments

The validity of the research instrument ensures it accurately measures perceptions of leaders' roles in managing the succession conflict in Chief Bole, while reliability testing confirms consistent results across populations. The instrument's validity and reliability were evaluated using the Cronbach Alpha coefficient, with thresholds ranging from 0.9 for excellent to

below 0.5 for unacceptable. Reliability statistics were conducted, and the findings are shown in Table 1.

Table 3. 1 Reliability Statistics

Variable	Number of Observed Items	Number of Retained Items	Alpha after Refinery
Impact of leadership on conflict Resolution in Bole Traditional Area	8	7	.86
Collaboration between Central and Traditional Authority	9	7	.85
Factors that limit the functionality of Traditional Authority	6	6	.74
Conflict Resolution Mechanisms	7	7	.77

Source: Filed Data, 2020

As indicated in table 1 above, all items that were used for the analysis were statistically fit for analysis. Items whose deletion had the chance of increasing the value of Cronbach Alpha were deleted. That means they had a value greater than the value of the Cronbach Alpha and their inclusion in the analysis would affect the results of the study. Items which were retained were all fit for the study, thus ensuring the validity and reliability of the study.

Data Collection Procedures

Three research assistants were recruited, trained on the study's objectives and data collection procedures, and conducted practical demonstrations to confirm their readiness. They helped ensure that students understood the questions and used techniques to assist respondents in recalling information about conflict management in the Bole Traditional Area.

Data was collected by visiting participants at their schools and homes in four conflict-affected communities. The researcher introduced the study and obtained consent before distributing questionnaires at convenient times. The questionnaires, which took 20 to 25 minutes to complete, were explained to participants throughout the process.

To ensure a high response rate, the researcher followed up with respondents to collect completed questionnaires and remind others to finish. This approach built a good rapport with participants and ensured all targets were reached. The study concluded with letters of appreciation sent to stakeholders and participants who contributed.

Data Analysis

Two levels of analysis were carried out. Firstly, inferential analysis was done using correlation and relative importance index to determine the factors that affect the functionality of traditional authority in the Bole Traditional Area. Secondly, descriptive analysis using mean and variance was done to identify the conflict resolution mechanisms that were available in the 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 analysis.

Ethical Consideration

Data are facts or information that are used to make calculations or decisions (Dougherty et al., 2019). To obtain these facts, the researchers followed the ethical and other integrated procedures in the data collection process. Ethical clearance and letters of introduction were obtained from the Counselling Department to seek permission for the research from the Municipal Director of Education of Kasena-Nankana as well as the respective Head teachers whose schools were selected for the study.

A researcher must show respect not only for the participants but also for the location of the research (Sounders, 2019). Obtaining necessary permissions before accessing the site is crucial (Creswell, 2016). To this end, the researcher provided introductory letters from their department to key stakeholders, including chiefs, security personnel, and Gonjaland Youth Association officials in the Bole Traditional Area, to gain permission for data collection.

Participants gave their informed consent after being thoroughly briefed on the objectives of the study, the questionnaire's purpose, and how their information would be used. Participants were assured of their rights and privacy, with the option to disclose or withhold information and to participate voluntarily. This approach encouraged candid responses, while privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality were carefully maintained.

Results and Discussions

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Sex

As shown in Table 2, a total of 364 respondents were selected for the study. Out of this group, 221 were males, making up 60.7% of the participants, while 143 were females, accounting for 39.3% of the total.

Table 4. 1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable		Count	%	STD
Gender	Male	221	60.7	
	Female	143	39.3	.4983
	Total	364	100	
Age	20-29	27	7.4	
	30-39	123	33.8	
	40-49	118	32.4	.5577
	50+	96	26.4	
	Total	364	100	
Highest attained level of education	SHS	123	33.8	
	Diploma	98	26.9	
	Bachelor's Degree	96	26.4	
	Master's Degree	47	12.9	.5577
	Total	138	100	
Years of Stay in Bole Traditional Area	1-5	8	2.2	
	6-10	27	7.4	
	11-15	95	26.1	.7412
	15-20	111	30.5	
	21+	123	33.8	
	Total	364	100	
Occupation of Respondents	Farmers	125	34.3	0.671
	Civil Servants	119	32.7	
	Business	97	26.6	
	Politician	23	6.3	
	Total	364	100	

Source: Field Data, 2020

Age

All respondents were above twenty years of age. This indicates that they were matured enough and capable of objective analysis of issues and spoke objectively about the issues of traditional leadership and conflict management in Bole Traditional

Level of Formal Education

All respondents had had contact with formal education. None stopped at the Basic level. A hundred and twenty-three of them, representing 33.8% of the total participants had completed Senior High Schools. Ninety-eight of them, representing 26.9% of the total respondents had graduated with Diploma certificates in various tertiary institutions. Ninety-six of them, constituting 26.4% of the total participants held a Bachelor degree in an

accredited University within the country. Forty-seven of them, representing 12.9% of the total respondents had had their Master degrees. The high level of education among respondents is indicative of the fact that respondent was well informed about the issues raised in the questionnaires and provided reliable responses that help in realizing the objectives of the study.

Years of Stay in Bole Traditional Area

Many respondents indicated that they were within the traditional area and have remained there ever since. As indicated in Table 2, of the three hundred and sixty-four respondents, a hundred and twenty-three of them, representing 33.8% of the entire participants indicated that they have been staying in Bole for over 21 years. A hundred and eleven of them, constituting 30.5% of the entire participants indicated that they had lived in Bole Traditional Area within 15 to 20 years. Ninety-five of them, representing 26.1% of the total participants indicated that they had lived within Bole Traditional Area between 11 and 15 years. Twenty-seven of them, constituting 7.4% of the respondents had lived in Bole Traditional Area within 6-10 years and only eight participants had lived in Bole Traditional Area between 1-5 years. The long stay of respondents in Bole Traditional Area meant that they were well equipped with historical facts about the events that surrounded the succession conflicts as well as the measures that have been taken by various stakeholders to address the conflict and so provided highly reliable information that helped in the realization of the objectives of the study.

Occupation

Respondents were engaged in various activities to earn a living. A hundred and twenty-five participants, representing 34.3% of the total respondents indicated that they farm to earn a living. A hundred and nineteen others, representing 32.3% of the total respondents indicated that they were civil servants such as teachers, nurses, administrators and clerks. Ninety-seven participants, representing 26.6% of the total respondents were business people who sold various articles and rendered services for a profit or a fee. Politicians constituted 6.3% of the total participants and were numbered 23. That respondents engaged in various forms of occupation to earn a living meant that they were interested in peace and stability of the area so that they could go about their businesses. This means that they took great interest in the events that surrounded the management of the conflict and what roles traditional leaders played and so provided reliable information about the issues that were raised in the questionnaire.

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

This objective aimed to examine the relationship between the roles of traditional leadership and the management of chieftaincy succession conflicts in the Bole Traditional Area. A correlational analysis was conducted to assess this relationship. At a 99% confidence level, the Pearson correlation results are presented in Table 4.2 below.

Table 4. 2 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)

Source: Field Data, 2020

As indicated in Table 4.2, the level of significance in 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 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 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 the lack of resources. A lot is expected of traditional rulers, apart from immediate family demands, the entire subjects expect 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 where 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 to their people so they lose their confidence and support”.

Yet another one also says:

“In this kingdom, leaders are highly respected. Remember we are a centralised society. When they speak we listen. They have been very influential in managing these conflicts”

Conflict Resolution Mechanisms in Bole Traditional Area

This objective sought to identify the conflict resolution mechanisms that have been used in managing the chieftaincy succession dispute in Bole Traditional Area. Respondents were required to select any options from a range of Likert Scale options from 1-5 indicating their levels of agreement or disagreement. Their responses were collated using a Relative Importance Index and presented as shown in Table 4.4.

The formula for calculating RII is:
$$\frac{5n_5+4n_4+3n_3+2n_2+1n_1}{A*N}$$

Where:

n_5 = Number of respondents for Strongly Agree

n_4 = Number of respondents for Agree

n_3 = Number of respondents for Neutral

n_2 = Number of respondents for Disagree

n_1 = Number of respondents for Strongly Disagree.

A= (Highest Weight), N=Number of Respondents

Table 4. 3 Conflict Resolution Mechanisms in Bole Traditional Area

Statement	F	f(n5)	F	f(n4)	F	f(n3)	F	n(n2)	F	f(n1)
Bole Traditional Council is one of the mechanisms for resolving chieftaincy conflict	161	805	39	156	0	0	98	196	66	66
Gonja Traditional Council is one of the Mechanisms used in resolving chieftaincy succession conflicts in Bole Traditional Area	147	735	93	372	0	0	119	238	5	5
Conflicts in this Traditional area are often Resolved by the Regional House of Chiefs	109	554	98	392	0	0	115	230	42	42
The National House of Chiefs Resolve the conflicts in this Traditional Area	118	590	10 5	420	0	0	77	154	64	64
Police and Military are the ones that resolve conflicts in this traditional Area	113	565	14 3	572	0	0	98	196	10	10
Cases are Sent to the District Courts	111	555	78	312	0	0	89	178	86	86

Source: Field Data, 20

Haven determined the weight of each response, the study continued to calculate the relative importance index as shown in table 4.

Table 4. 4 Calculating for 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 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

Source: Field Data, 202

As indicated in Table 4.5, respondents identified the Police and Military as the most used mechanism for conflict management in 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 five 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 the 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 back in Mandari after the death of the then-Mandariwura. The Mandari skin is particularly important because per the succession arrangements in Bole Traditional Area, the Mandariwura succeeds the Bolewura by default. So when the Mandari skin became vacant, it was the turn of the Sorfope 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 amongst 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 Yagbowura as the custom demands. Yagbonwura, subsequently investigated and nullified the appointment of Abdalai Issahaku Kant and installed Abubakari Abudu instead. Supporters of both parties rose up against one another. 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 Council of the Regional House of Chiefs upheld the appointment of Abdalai Issahaku Kant in January 2018. Per the succession arrangement in 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; 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”.

Discussion of Findings

Effects of Traditional Leaders on Chieftaincy Succession

Conflict Resolution

A Pearson correlational analysis of this construct revealed that there is a close association between the role of traditional leaders and conflict management in the Bole Traditional Area. This is to say traditional leaders are very essential in the management of chieftaincy succession disputes in Bole. While this study corroborates the findings of Granderson and Society (2017) and [Paalo, Issifu, and Statebuilding \(2021\)](#) but it is in sharp contradiction to the findings of Mawuko-Yevugah and Attipoe (2021) and Owusu_Mensah (2013) when they found that traditional leaders' roles in chieftaincy conflict resolution are minimal as most of them often take sides with one of the parties and so their neutrality as required of any mediators becomes questionable. Museveni et al (2021) in a longitudinal study of traditional authority and conflict resolution employed a qualitative design involving thirty-seven chiefs from five different chiefdoms in Kivu land of Kenya. He observed the succession arrangements in these Kingdoms and how they have been effectively used for eight years. At the end of their study, they found that many of the succession arrangements which were made for smooth succession in the case of the death of a King were tampered with in three of the five Kingdoms they surveyed. But of the two other kingdoms, succession arrangements were still intact and strictly adhered to and whenever there was succession disputes, higher traditional authorities stepped in to get it resolved using laid down succession arrangements which have been in use for so many years. They concluded that while the institution of chieftaincy is very relevant and effective in resolving traditional conflicts, its effectiveness is being continually eroded because of the attitudes of some of the leaders. Boakye and Béland (2019) in his study of the relevance of chieftaincy institution in conflict management within the context of modern states made findings that appear to take a middle position between the two extremes of traditional leadership been effective and ineffective in conflict management. They found that in conflicts that emanates from customary arrangements such as chieftaincy successions, traditional leaders play very important role because they understand the customs better but in other cases, particularly those that are criminal in nature, traditional leaders mostly lack the appropriate punishment for such crimes and either end up abusing the rights of the accuse or abating crimes. The fact that their study was conducted in just five chiefdoms of KIVULAND may limit the generalizability of their findings.

In another study by Makinta et al. (2017) in Nigeria involving a hundred and ten participants chosen from three Kingdoms of Oshogbo, Benin and Oyo, they found that traditional leaders play a very important roles in conflict management especially where it involved struggle over land, inheritance and succession to the thrones of a demised king. They, however, admitted that the vitality of traditional leaders continues to erode over the years as people are becoming increasingly appreciative of the judicial system.

Kurebwa (2020) argues that traditional leaders play a key role in resolving social disputes in rural Zimbabwe, acting as guardians of customary law and handling most cases of violence, whether political, familial, or anti-social. However, the article concludes that these leaders lack the authority and expertise to effectively address violence, a finding supported by Musevein (2021) in Kenya. The research highlights that the primary aim of Zimbabwe's traditional justice system, led by traditional leaders, is to restore peace and harmony through reconciliation between conflicting parties. Issifu (2015) emphasizes that reconciliation is central to the African traditional justice system, with many Africans relying on these informal mechanisms due to limited access to formal judicial systems, especially in rural areas. Furthermore, the justice provided by formal courts may not adequately address the complexities of disputes, potentially worsening community tensions.

Libanus Susan, Baaberihin Suler, Gyader and Development (2020) also found that in the traditional areas of Funsu in the Upper West region, many communities prefer to turn to traditional leaders to resolve their conflicts rather than to the Western justice system, as traditional leaders emphasise reconciliation and harmony as a way of ensuring that farmers have a bountiful harvest, fishermen have a good harvest and hunters have their prey. The researchers concluded that when there is ample sustenance for everyone, families, clans, and tribes coexist peacefully, with no envy driving conflict. Neighboring communities can live harmoniously, engage in social visits, and participate in significant life events such as weddings and funerals. Studies in Somalia and Burundi support this view, showing that traditional leaders play a crucial role in peace-making and conflict resolution in African societies (Kurebwa, 2020). These studies also highlight that traditional leaders' decisions emphasize values like responsibility, reciprocity, integrity, and loyalty. [Paalo et al. \(2021\)](#) add that in pre-colonial Africa, traditional chiefs often served as judicial authorities for serious crimes, including homicide and witchcraft, sometimes considering capital punishment. In other cases, chiefs acted as mediators, bringing disputing parties together to resolve conflicts, thus underscoring the role of traditional leaders as key mediators in conflict resolution.

It is therefore sufficient to state that in most African societies, traditional authorities play a major role as mediators in violent conflicts. In this regard, the punishments imposed are usually intended to compensate or restore. While this study confirms the findings of many studies on the same subject, it extends the general discussion on the role of traditional leaders in conflict management, including their role in managing conflicts related to chiefly succession in the Bole traditional area: a typical traditional conflict that should be resolved using traditional African conflict resolution mechanisms.

Conflict Resolution Mechanisms in Bole Traditional Area

The data analysis uncovered various conflict resolution mechanisms, including the Bole Traditional Council, the Gonja Traditional Council, the Regional and National Houses of Chiefs, the Police, the Military, and the judicial system. Respondents

indicated that the most frequently used are the police and the Military and the least frequently used is the court.

Discussions at the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) held in Bole and Sawla involving five discussants corroborate this finding. All discussants at the two separate locations mentioned that the Gonja Traditional Council and the Regional House of Chiefs were the most utilized institutions in resolving the chieftaincy succession conflicts. The Gonja Traditional Council is the highest decision-making body in Gonjaland. It consists of the Paramount Chief and some selected elders who assist the chief in managing the Gonja Kingdom. The elders are drawn from the various divisions that confederate to form the Gonja Kingdom. The various divisions also have divisional chiefs. These divisional chiefs also have sub-chiefs under them. Each division forms a council which resolves matters of interest within the divisions. If parties are not satisfied, they have the right to appeal to the Yagbonwura who may void or uphold such decisions by the divisional chiefs.

Participants also noted that the Regional and National Houses of Chiefs are additional bodies that can be utilized for resolving chieftaincy-related conflicts. The members of the Northern Regional House of Chiefs were identified as (i) the Nayiri of Mamprugu; (ii) the Ya-Na of Dagbon; (iii) the Yagbonwura of Gonja; (iv) the Bimbila-Na of Nanumba; and (v) the Bamboi Koro of North Mo. Paramount chiefs from each Traditional Area are included in the membership as outlined in Legislative Instrument 2207. The Regional House of Chiefs has five Committees; a standing committee which consists of paramount chiefs from each Kingdom within the region, the Research and Tradition Affair Committee which investigates customs and traditions of communities and identifies those that are harmful and should be abolished, a Lands and Natural Resource Committee which handles land related matters, a Finance Committee which handles financial matters, and a Judicial Committee which handles unresolved cases from each Kingdom. Decisions made by the Regional Houses of Chiefs can be appealed to the Supreme Court with permission from the National House of Chiefs. Issifu (2015) also highlights that the Regional Security Council, the Regional House of Chiefs, and the Traditional Councils have historically handled chieftaincy succession disputes in the Ga Traditional Area.

However, these institutions have often been ineffective in resolving conflicts due to their top-down approach to conflict resolution. The research further suggests that the approval of the Ga chieftaincy constitution by relevant government authorities, in collaboration with the four chieftaincy gates, to clearly define the succession lineage would greatly help in addressing the Ga chieftaincy disputes.

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