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Ghana: evidence from Sayegu, Bunkpurugu/Nankpanduri District**



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Leadership Perspective on Traditional Conflict Resolution in Ghana: evidence from Sayegu, Bunkpurugu/Nankpanduri District

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of the study is to explore the leadership role played by traditional leaders in conflict resolution in the Sayegu Traditional Area.

Methodology: Participants were purposively sampled from five (5) communities upon their preparedness to take part in the study. An interview guide and oral recordings were employed to gather the primary data. Data analysis was done qualitatively and where appropriate direct quotations were used to support the main analysis.

Findings: The study suggests that traditional leadership plays a central role in conflict resolution. Political leadership recorded a minimal role in conflict resolution. Chiefs and the Council of elders were the most instrumental in matters of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR). Chiefs presided over conflict cases brought or summoned up to the Palace while the Council of elders offered counselling roles to the chiefs. District Chief Executives with the help of the Regional Security Council provided resources to calm tensions between conflicting factions.

Unique contribution to theory, policy and practice: Some of the recommendations include traditional leaders should be encouraged to develop more affectionate relationships with key actors irrespective of their differences in political, tribal, clan, family, and religious attachment.

Keywords: *Bunkpurugu/Nankpanduri District, Sayegu leadership, conflict resolution, alternative dispute resolutions*

Introduction and Background

The persistence of violent conflicts in Africa has attracted a lot of research interest in academia. While (Heerten, & Moses, 2014) admits that conflict is a necessary part of human society, the extent to which this becomes violent and destructive in African communities cannot be considered normality. From the immediate post-independence period where nascent states became politically divided along ethnic lines and engaged in blood baths and massacres as happened in Congo, Rwanda, Nigeria, Liberia and Sierra Leone through the Military junta and the return of pseudo democracies across Sub-Saharan Africa, African states have witnessed a plethora of internal conflicts of varied scales and magnitudes stemming from heterogeneous causative factors. Although the report from United Nations Secretary General shows that the causes of conflicts and the promotion of long-lasting peace and sustainable development in Africa (2014) points out that some African countries like the Central African Republic, South Sudan, Libya, Egypt, Eritrea, Niger, Senegal have made progress in ensuring peace and security, this is not enough as issues of human insecurity still rage in most of these countries. There is therefore the need for concerted efforts to be directed at addressing communal conflicts in African communities, particularly in the rural areas.

Awedoba, Emmanuel and Esi (2009) describe Ghana as a peaceful country for the reason that it has never fought a civil war, this may not be an adequate indicator of a peaceful country. Although Ghana is yet to fight what could be described as a civil war as it happened in Nigeria from 1967-1970, Rwanda in 1994, Liberia and Sierra Leone from 1989 to 2003 and from 1991 to 2001 respectively. There have been various land and chieftaincy succession conflicts in Ghana, especially within the last two decades such as the ones between the Alavanyo and Tseku in the then Volta region, The Ga Mantse chieftaincy dispute in the Greater Accra Region, the Andani and the Abudu conflict in the Northern Region, the Nanumba and the Konkombas, the Konkombas on one hand and the Dagombas, Nanumbas and the Gonjas on the other hand, the Bimobas and the Konkombas among many others. Awedoba (2010) ties the causative factors of these conflicts to primordial identities like ethnicity, tribe, and clan. Others also argue that these are used as instruments by individuals to pursue their parochial interests. Bannon et al (2003) found that the main causes of these conflicts are resource scarcity and deprivation as group members try to grab the few available resources for their members which often attracts resentment from the other groups. Acemoglu et al (2001) blame the conflicts on colonial legacy as they argued that colonialism distraught traditional political arrangements and merged cephalous and acephalous tribes and so the two are yet to find a melting point. While most of these arguments fall within the ancient hatred, modern hatred, and instrumental and social identity models of conflict, the real issue is how these conflicts could be resolved or at least made less destructive for peaceful human coexistence within African communities. As part of the human and property losses that are the immediate effects of conflicts, the long-term effects of conflicts such as loss of social capital, mental illness and generational hatred could be more destructive.

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union (AU) have made very laudable provisions for peaceful resolutions of conflicts within their remits with much emphasis on the use of Alternative Dispute Resolutions (ADRs). This is a good starting point but the extent in which these are used in respective countries is what cannot be easily ascertained. Yaro *and* Ngmenkpieo (2020) argue that African leaders are yet to use these frameworks to constitute culturally orientated Alternative Dispute Resolution mechanisms which will address African conflicts from an African perspective. While the Westphalian conflict resolution mechanisms may be relevant in some cases, many writers indicate that most of the conflicts in Africa have traditional causes and can be better addressed traditionally and this requires the constant meeting with the traditional leaders who are the custodians of tradition and cultures within their respective communities. This research is set to look at the role played by traditional leaders and central authority in the resolution of the Tanmung-Bauk conflict in the Bunkpurugu/Nankpanduri district in the Northeast Region of Ghana. A report contained in SUIT No. NRHC/BUNG/1/07 of Gbewaa chambers, Tamale indicates the incidence of conflicts in the Bunkpurugu area as far back as 1821 in the then German Territory. The British brought the Bunkpurugu Traditional Area under the Mamprugu Kingdom in 1925 which was characterised by severe resistance from the Bimobas. This started the conflicts within the Mamprugu Kingdom. The Kingdom has experienced several conflicts, the Bimobas were up against the Mamprusi in Yunyoo, and then we had the Konkombas against the Bimobas (Yaro & Ngmenkpieo 2020), and recently the Konkombas and the Chokosis conflict (Suaka, Tobias & Daniel, 2018.). In many instances, these conflicts are started by contestations over land allodial rights. Similarly, in Sayegu, a farming community in the Bunkpurugu/Nankpanduri district occupied by the Tanmung clan (people) and Bauk Clan (people) in Saanbiruk within the Nankpanduri enclave. The Tanmung clan felt they were the custodians of the land and that the Bauk clan pays allegiance to the Tanmung Chief of Sayiegu. But the Bauk clan refused and subsequently, a conflict arose between these two clans (Bimbagu Naaba, 2017). The matter was litigated in court for determination and the ruling favoured the Tanmung clan. The Bauk clan considered the Judgment by the law Courts as erroneous and failed to obey the Court ruling, though they did not initiate any appeal process in the same Court of competent jurisdiction but continued to engage in actions considered provocative by the Tanmung clan. This led to violent attacks from both clans¹.

The main research questions that informed the study are:

1. What are the causes of the conflict in the Bunkpurugu/Nankpanduri District?
2. What is the Leadership role in the conflict in the district?
3. What are the conflict resolution strategies adopted in conflict situations in the district?

Theoretical Perspective

As Schriesheim opined, shared leadership predominantly focuses on groups whilst LMX theory directs attention to the relationship that exists between the leader and the followers. Basu (1997) added to the debate on how leaders develop different exchange relationship with their followers in which the quality of the relationship changes the impact of leader and member outcomes. Taylor further examined leader and follower levels of agreement on leader-member mutual obligations and the psychological contract with each other. They observed that a higher-quality LMX relationship did not only predict higher levels of performance, but also organizational citizenship behaviours. Other areas of focus in terms of high-quality versus low-quality LMX relationships have been the context in which these relationships occur. Kacmaret et al (2007) used control theory and explain how perceptions of supervisor competence, centralization, and organizational politics influenced employee willingness to put up their best on the job beyond what would be typically expected in a less effective exchange relationship.

Application of the Theory

The Vertical Dyad Linkage or LMX theory operates in a dyadic relationship which bonds the leader and each subordinate together. The subordinate is considered as an individual, rather than between the superior and the group (team). In effect, it poses the tendency of each linkage to differ in quality.

In some cases, the same leader may have a frail interpersonal relationship with some subordinates on one hand, and on the other hand, practice open and trusting relations with other subordinates. These relationships bring the development of in-groups and out-groups in the organization. A leader begins either an in group or an out-group exchange/s with member/s of the organization at the early stages of the dual relationship. To this end, members of the in-group get open communications and more opportunities to participate in decision-making. The contrary is out-group members who have limited access to the leader beyond their formal work engagement. In the case of an out-group relationship, the authority exercised by the leader is sanctioned by the implicit contract between the member and the organization. Findings supporting the LMX theory indicate that leaders in the LMX theory differentiate among followers and those followers who portray higher levels of self-efficacy and similar personality traits as the leaders, tend to form in-group relationships with leaders (Murphy & Ensher, 1999a).

McClane (1991) and Yukl (2010), however, raised concerns about the sharp distinction between the in-group and the out-group which bother on the possibility of generating undesirability. The perceived 'superiority' or 'inferiority' relationship comes with its associated stress. The subordinates in the out-group might resent their perceived inferior status and differential treatment because members of the in-group assume greater responsibility and contribute more to the organization, therefore, are graded higher in performance than members of the out-group (Schreisheim, Neider, & Scandura, 1998).

Leadership as a Concept

Brungardt and Maughan (2005) maintained leadership was not used until the late 19th Century. Although, the words lead and leader have a much longer history, which usually referred to an authority figure and giving a vivid definition of leadership appears to have challenged even the most scholarly thinkers. Perhaps DuPree (1989) puts it best when he said, “Leadership is an art and to be teamed over time. Contemporary schools of thought on leadership observed the basic nature of leadership to be in terms of interaction among the people (leaders and followers) who are involved in a process. Brungardt and Maughan (2005) concluded that leadership is a collaborative endeavour among group members and not the single effort of an individual. Northouse (2007) moved the definition of leadership from the concept of personality to the concept of a process of interaction. In this sense, the inputs into the leadership process are the leaders and followers and the interactions are the activity which translates into influences which produce commitment towards achievements of collective and individual goals. Thus, the effectiveness of leadership would depend largely on the inputs (behaviour of both the leader and followers).

Rost (1991) defined leadership as an influence of relationships among leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes. As the main thrust of the study was to explore the role of leadership in conflict resolution in the Bunkpurugu/Nankpanduri District, the wisdom of Brungardt’s observation of leadership being interactional (leaders and followers) and a collaborative endeavour among group members can be brought to bear in the study. Considering the end effect of the LMX relationship, a leader may interact with different quality relationships between subordinates and supervisors to determine the choice for conflict resolution style. Also, the dynamism of the LMX relationship may be utilised by leadership in the organization for differing degrees of resources and social capital that can probably influence the choice of conflict resolution approach.

Conflict Intensity Levels

Flanagan and Runde (2007) postulated that, conflicts intensify at different levels. They note the resolution of conflicts depends on the level of the conflict.

Figure 1 shows how conflict intensifies at different levels as postulated by Runde and Flanagan (2007).

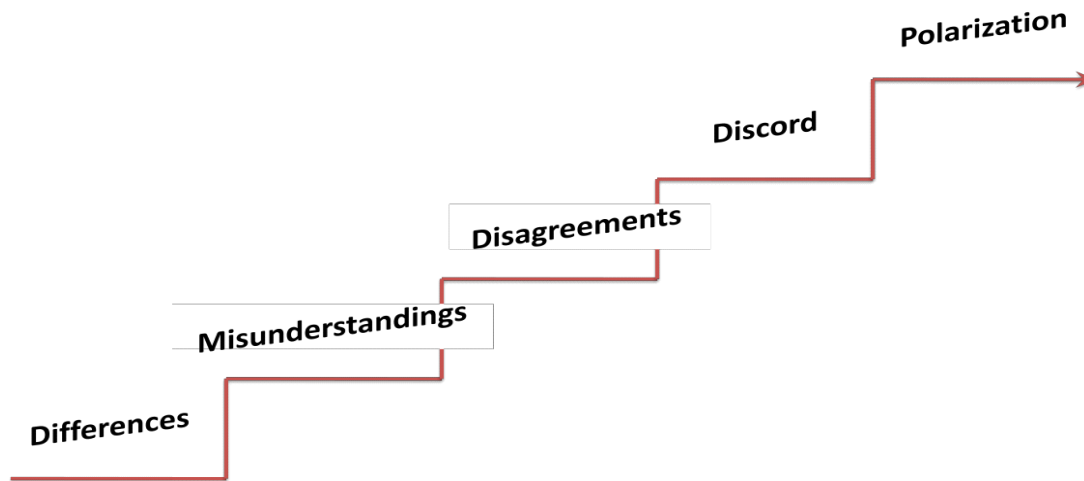


Figure 1 shows how intensity levels conflict

Source: Runde and Flanagan (2007)

Stage one

In figure 1. The parties in a conflict look at a situation from different perspectives but are conscious of the other party's mindset and interest (Runde and Flanagan, 2007). It is very rare for this kind of conflict to bring negative effects on relationships and productivity.

Stage two

Runde and Flanagan (2007) opined misunderstandings are created when two or more parties interpret a situation differently. It is important to check for misunderstandings early in the process to avoid escalation.

Stage three

Runde and Flanagan (2007) defined disagreement as when two people see a situation differently, and regardless of how well they understand the other's position and interests feel discomfort the other party disagrees".

Stage four

Here, conflict is starting to have negative effects on the relationship between the parties. Runde and Flanagan (2007) indicated the signs of discord to be when parties start to criticize, avoid, and block each other.

Stage five

At this stage, the conflict has reached a critical level that almost every case leads to uncertain conflicts and this severely damages relationships. Runde and Flanagan (2007) observed that at this stage the parties to a conflict start to recruit others to join their course and in the worst scenario,

the parties involved start to use destructive behaviour where the war is one example of extreme polarization.

Conflict Escalation

Different responses to conflicts have effects on how the conflict process unfolds. In line with this assertion, the dynamic conflict model was developed in 2007 by Rude and Flanagan. The model focuses on helping people to become aware of how their responses affect conflict resolution, either in positive or negative ways. It further explained that the model separates cognitive and affective conflicts. Whereas cognitive conflicts are task-based and the parties involved put their concentration solving problems and, therefore, less likely to escalate into dysfunctional conflicts, affection conflicts are more of emotions and focus is on the individual which increases the potential of conflict escalation (Runde and Flanagan, 2007) as indicated in **figure 2**

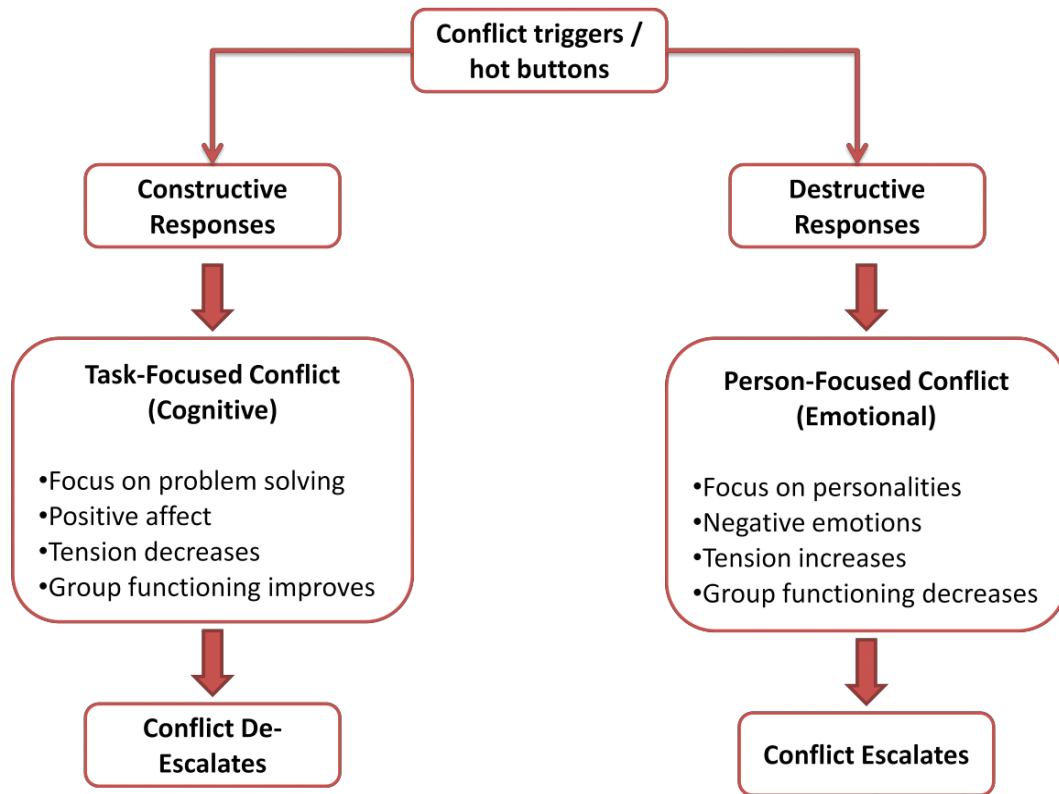


Figure 2 A Dynamic Model of Conflict Escalation

Source: Runde and Flanagan (2007)

Conflict Retaliatory Cycle

The conflict retaliatory cycle demonstrates the stages/steps in conflict escalation. It indicates how conflict goes through different steps. The retaliatory cycle model gives an overview of the way conflict escalates. This is postulated by Flanagan and Rude as presented in **figure 3** below

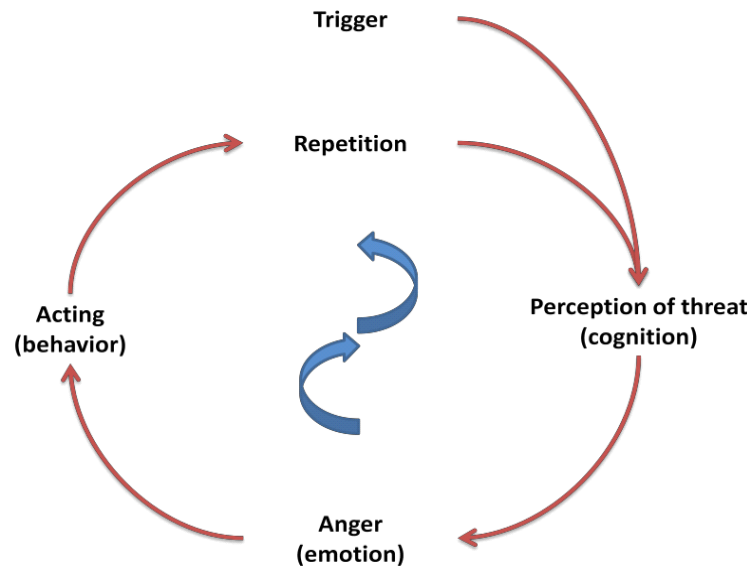


Figure 3 A Conflict Retaliatory Cycle

Source: Runde and Flanagan (2007)

According to Runde and Flanagan (2007) emotions are triggered through our hot buttons. For us to manage our emotions and get back control over our actions some time is needed. They further explained the refractory period and to avoid emotions getting into a retaliatory cycle, we need to manage our triggers and shorten the refractory period.

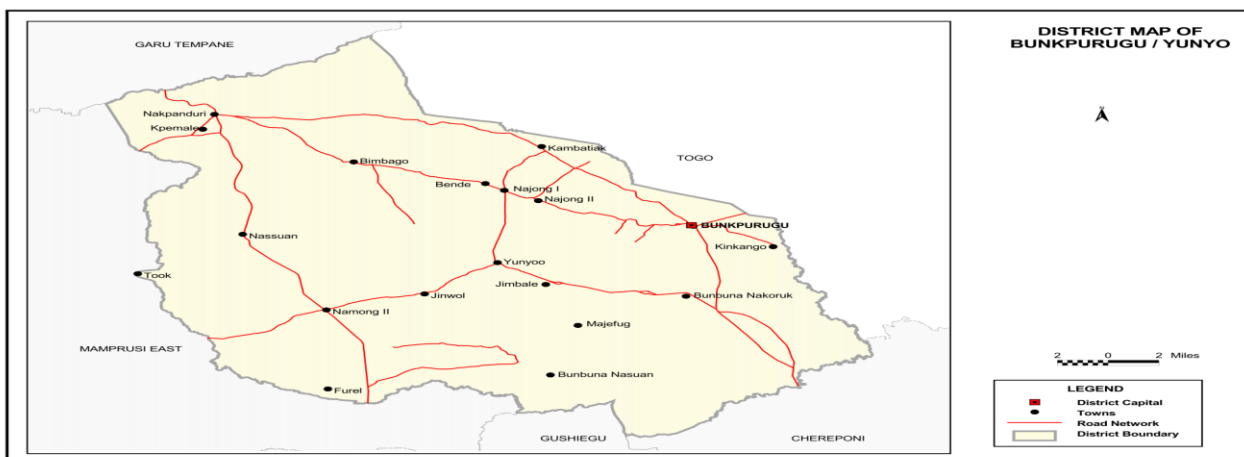
Conflict Resolution

Bloomfield and Reilly (1998) opined that conflict resolution is the positive and constructive handling of differences and divergence instead of advocating methods for removing conflicts. Bloomfield in 1998 addressed most of the real questions of resolving conflicts including; how to deal with them constructively, how to bring opposing sides together in a cooperative process, and how to design a practical, achievable, cooperative system for the constructive resolution of differences. Alabi (2017) in a lecture note that conflict resolution should be seen as a process of preventing, facilitating, mitigating, and resolving conflicts and leaders must plan to be proactive to avoid conflict as much as possible and organize to resolve conflict where it does occur as rapidly and smoothly as possible. Alabi further portrays a strong conviction about conflict resolution entails preventing conflicts, spotting the conflicts, facilitating peace, resolving conflicts, and following through.

Methodology

The study was conducted in Bunkpurugu/Nankpanduri Traditional Area which is dominated by the Bimobas, Konkombas and Mamprusi. The Traditional Area is dominated by Christians, followed by Traditional worshipers and a few Islamic worshipers in Bunkpurugu. The two languages widely spoken are Bimoba language and Konkomba. According to the 2021 Population and Housing Census, the population of the district is 82384 (male 49% and females 51%). The Bimobas are the majority in the Traditional Area followed by Konkombas and Mamprusi (Ghana Statistical Service (GSS), 2021). Among the ethnic groups, there are more women than men. Bunkpurugu Township is a commercial hub, the majority of the people within the area who reside in and outside the township depend on rain-fed subsistent farming. Overall, 74.2% of the people of the traditional area depend on agriculture, 15% on trading, 10% on service provision and 4.8% work in various state departments within the traditional area.

MAP OF BUNKPURUGU/NANKPANDURI DISTRICT



Source: Ghana Statistical Service, GIS

Research Design and Sampling Method

The study was conducted using a qualitative approach and exploratory design to examine the Leadership Perspective on Traditional Conflict Resolution in Ghana: evidence from Sayiegu conflict. Traditional Conflict Resolution cannot be determined by quantitative measurement since it has no defined ways. The Leadership Perspective can fully be understood through Traditional Conflict Resolution exclusively along ethnic contours that requires a deep interaction with participants. The qualitative approach, provide an opportunity for the researchers to conduct interviews and probe for further details that revealed all the dimensions of the Leadership Perspective on Traditional Conflict Resolution and manipulation processes (Saunders & Bezzina, 2015). The study participants include chiefs and opinion leaders within the Bunkpurugu

Traditional areas. These participants are of interest to the researchers because they had in-depth knowledge about chieftaincy issues within the traditional area. The participants were selected using the Purposive Sampling technique for personal interviews. The interview guides were constructed to provide a focus on the main issues that answered the research questions. Sixteen (16) participants were selected for the interviews. Thus, the sample size of the study was 16.

Interviews and Data Analysis

The interview with each of the study participants lasted 30 minutes. In addition, the researchers obtained and reviewed archival documents concerning the Bunkpurugu chieftaincy conflict from the Public Records in Gambaga. The results of the interviews were transcribed by two of the authors and shared among all the authors for text familiarization, edits and reviews. After that, each researcher was asked to develop codes, sub-themes and main themes from the transcribed data. Emerging themes from the codes were identified, categorised and named by individual researchers. To ensure consistency, reliability and relevance, after the individual coding and theming process, the identified themes were compared and analysed thematically. Codes from all three researchers were almost the same except for one who had identified two other codes. These codes were then organised into basic themes by the researchers as a team. The results from the data were constructed based on the identified themes about the questions of the study.

Findings and Discussion

The presentation of results on how leadership influenced conflict resolution in the Bunkpurugu - Nankpanduri District. In this analysis, the study illuminates scientific evidence on the underpinning processes of conflict resolution and arbitration as covariate measures and proxy of conflict resolution. Following the presentation of the results, is the discussion of the findings. Here, the results are linked to literature for cross-referencing and validity.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by category and position

Respondent	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Chiefs	3	18.7
Regional Minister	1	6.3
Elders and opinion leaders - Focus Group One	6	37.5
Elders and opinion Leaders- Focus Group Two	6	37.5
Total	16	100.0

Composition of Participants

From Table 1 above, the participants interviewed at various stages of the data gathering process numbered sixteen and they include three chiefs (18.7%), a Regional Minister who doubles as the Member of Parliament for the Bunkpurugu constituency (6.3%) while the remaining 75 per cent represent twelve elders selected from two traditional councils for two separate focus group discussions. By decomposition, the three chiefs selected comprised the Paramount Chief of Bunkpurugu, the paramount Chief of Yunyoo and the Chief of Nankpanduri.

Causes of Conflicts in Bunkpurugu/Nankpanduri District

Apart from the interview results, the researchers also reviewed some relevant literature which indicates that conflict is inevitable, especially where ethnic, economic and historical differences remain a major factor (Fearon, 2006; Piketty *et al.* 2014). Evidence of conflict in Iran, Sudan, Israel, Pakistan, Syria, and more recently the activities of Boko Haram in North-Eastern Nigeria suggest diverse causes of protracted conflicts. To be able to ascertain the underlying causes of conflicts in the Bunkpurugu/Nankpanduri District, participants were asked a series of questions during the interviews in the study area. Table 2 illustrates two main causes of conflicts in the study area (Bunkpurugu/Nankpanduri District). This includes Chieftaincy (43.7%) and land (25%) while other minor factors were identified as politics (6.3%), information asymmetry (6.3%) and others including envy, war contractors, greed and lack of respect for humanity or tolerance of opposing views (18.7%).

Table 2: Causes of Conflicts in Bunkpurugu/Nankpanduri District

Causes	Frequency	Percentage
Chieftaincy	7	43.7
Land	4	25
Politics	1	6.3
Information Asymmetry	1	6.3
Other	3	18.7
Total	16	100.0

Source: Field data

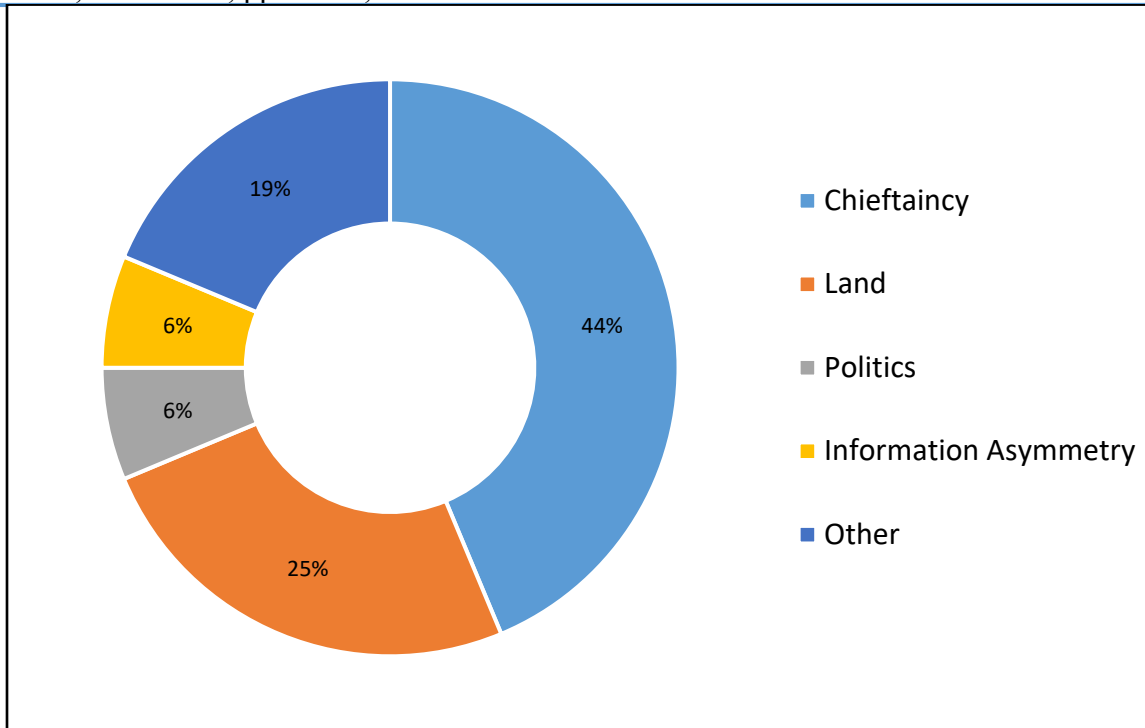


Figure 4: shows the Pie chat distribution of the Causes of Conflicts in Sayegu

Source: Field data

Narrating the account of Chieftaincy conflict, the paramount Chief of Yunyoo in an interview mentioned that power struggle between two families over who rightfully deserves to be enstooled as a Chief, Overlord or Paramount Chief is one thing which often ignites conflict in Yunyoo. He cited the case involving the Gonjas where two separate Kingmakers had a disagreement over the enstoolment of a chief with the Paramountcy having a keen interest in who should be enstooled while the opposing faction disagrees.

His colleague paramount chief from the Bunkpurugu traditional area could not agree less but associated the root causes of conflict with a lack of respect and tolerance for opposing views. He remarked;

I strongly believe that in our part of the land we lack mutual respect for one another. If it were not so, some issues that resulted in conflict in Bimoba in the past could have been settled amicably at the individual or family level without it going to the Chief palace for arbitration.

According to him, respect is reciprocal and therefore irrespective of one's position in society, a leader must always accord his subject with respect and desist from the polarization of matters. These are the views shared by the Paramount Chief of Bunkpurugu during in-depth interviews.

The Chief of Nankpanduri bemoaned the judicial system of Ghana for contributing in part to the Chieftaincy conflicts in Northern Ghana. According to him, the current dispensation of justice by the court system in matters of chieftaincy always leaves one side of the conflicting party aggrieved for lack of insight and injustice. He reiterated that:

Unlike alternative dispute resolution, the court system is always interested in monetary reward by assessing damages and claims rather than seeking to arrive at a win-win situation. Chieftaincy issues are very delicate and sensitive to the people of our land. Therefore, it is prudent that Chieftaincy matters are first brought to the attention of the Paramount Chief to preside over them. For instance, the sharing of cola nuts to conflicting factions summoned to the chief palace signifies peace. For this reason, everyone summoned to the chief palace is given a cola nut to chew before the hearing of the case by the Chief. This usually installs peace from the beginning of the conflict resolution process which is usually not the case in the court system. Another problem with the court system is the harsh judgment which also infuriates the losing faction and compels them to do worse by killing members of the opponents or the accused

The same participant further stated that;

Another cause of the violent conflict in the area is based on the fact that some tribes look down upon others. Some feel they are of a superior tribe to others, and this leads to humiliation. It is only in the Bimoba area that we experience violent conflicts relating to two clans in the same village. When you get to Tunguri as I speak, we have Tunguri, Naasin, and Gbedyi all these chiefs are in one village and they have no issues with one another. The confusion in Sayiegu was actually about two chiefs who did not understand themselves and it brought about the violent conflicts there. I must add that in the case of Sayi egu and Sanbiruk, a misunderstanding over a parcel of land brought about the whole confusion.

Leadership role in Conflict Resolution in Bunkpurugu/Nankpanduri District

One of the objectives of this study was to examine the role of leadership in conflict management in the Bunkpurugu/Nankpanduri District. The participants were, therefore, engaged in critical questions and answers to obtain enough information for this objective. Upon successful interviews, the study revealed interesting results. For instance, all the participants' acknowledged that conflict resolution in Bunkpurugu/Nankpanduri District largely remain the responsibility of traditional leaders, especially the paramount chiefs of the respective traditional areas. However, it was

revealed by about 56 per cent of the participants' representing 9 out of 16 that conflict cases managed by the chiefs do not always yield positive results or end amicably. Their reasons were that some aggrieved individuals who may have ties with either of the conflicting factions always perpetuate acts of criminality, especially when the final ruling over matters brought to the chief for settlement does not go in their favour (Murphy & Ensher, 1999).

Much of the interviews on conflict resolution in the district by leaders were centred on chieftaincy issues. This was because all the respondents believed the major causes of conflicts in the district in particular and the Northern region in general revolved wholly or partially around chieftaincy issues. For example, the paramount Chief of Bunkpurugu narrated:

As I said earlier, Bunkpurugu is a paramountcy in the Bimoba Traditional Area. The Bunkpurugu area cannot be in trouble and I will sit aloof while I have the authority to adjudicate over all conflict matters, especially those related to chieftaincy. As the paramount chief, I must settle every conflict matter brought to my attention to bring peace to my people. Unlike the formal adjudication system through the court, I do not go into conflict resolution to get a reward or an award from anybody. I do it for the sake of peace. What I know is that, if you do things to please men for an award, you get very little reward from God and the worst is that you lose the respect of the very people who enskinned you as a chief

The chief's suggestion shows that traditional leaders like him play their role in conflict resolution with the simple intention of fostering peace and tranquillity. As a Chief, he maintains that:

it is my responsibility to show leadership by example in the manner in which I preside over conflict issues to ensure that people get the justice they deserve by the authority and confidence they have in me.

One of the participants added during the interview session that leadership (Chiefs) in Bunkpurugu/ Nankpanduri District were not only limited to managing conflicts but also preventing them from happening in the first place. His position was about a recent incidence of misunderstanding about sharing of a family land among siblings which nearly degenerated into serious inter-family conflict but for the timely intervention of the Chief of Nankpanduri traditional area.

Further, in responding to the role of leaders in conflict management, the Deputy Minister of the Northern Region mentioned in a recorded interview that politicians like himself have very little to offer in conflicts related to land and chieftaincy without the direction of God. He maintained a cautious statement that politicians in the Northern part of the country should not deceive themselves into thinking they have all the solutions to every conflict-related issue within their jurisdiction because that could be suicidal for their carrier as politicians. Narrating his experience as a political leader in the management of conflict in Sayiegu, the Politician (Deputy Northern Regional Minister) said;

At the time when I was called as a leader to intervene in peaceful settlement of the conflict, I only told God I could not do it alone without His direction. My role was simple. I had to consult the Chiefs and elders with whom the people have entrusted their mandate to deal with land and chieftaincy matters. I must emphasise that the Chiefs in our part of the country command respect of the people and they have crafty ways of dealing with or resolving conflict-related issues compared to politicians. The moment disputing factions sense a political undertone they tend to politicize the whole process and if care is not taken, a matter as small as involving two or three individuals becomes a national security issue. As I have mentioned, a single leader cannot have solutions to every problem the role of a good leader like myself in dealing with conflict is to bring others involved, especially the chiefs

The Chiefs around Nankpanduri Traditional Area shared the sentiments of their colleague from Bunkpurugu. According to the Chief of Bendi, about 95% of the conflicts in Bunkpurugu/Nankpanduri District revolve around chieftaincy and land. He added that, as a chief, I am a custodian of the people and, therefore, obliged to offer good leadership when the need arises”. In conflict situations, the Chief of Bendi narrated:

.....my role is to preside over alternative dispute resolution by thoroughly examining the case brought to the palace following a series of research and consultation into the matter. Upon hearing the case for the first time, I do not assume I have complete knowledge of the matter until I have conducted research with the help of my council of elders. This is because incomplete knowledge of the case could result in injustice so I try as much as possible to resort to all appropriate means to get to the root of the matter. For instance, not long ago the people of Nuangu had an open confrontation over land and as a chief, I issued a warning to them and later investigated the matter before I could resolve it amicably. Sometimes the resolution process last for months and even years depending on the parties involve and access to information required to solve the case. What matters most to me is that in the end peace reigns

A council member of the Bimbagu Chief palace who participated in the focus group discussion recounted his ordeal in the management of conflict between the people of Sambiruk (Bauk clan) and those from Sayiegu (Tanmoung clan) in the Sayegu community. He said in such a sensitive and delicate matter involving the use of sophisticated weapons to commit murder, the Chief of Bimbagu as a sign of leadership and peace quickly called on the District Chief Executive (DCE) of Bunkpurugu/Nankpanduri to come to the rescue of some seven delegates from Najong 1 who came to show appreciation to Bimbagu Chief for releasing three war captives under his (Bimbagu Chief's) custody. The DCE did not hesitate and quickly came with armed military men to resolve the matter. This the Chief of Bimbagu mentioned:

What am trying to insinuate is that there are times when the chiefs and we elders at the palace alone cannot resolve some sensitive issues. Therefore, they need the help of others who command the right resources to deal with such sensitive and complex issues. Simply put, good leaders must sometimes seek counsel and help from others to succeed in matters of conflict resolution and that is exactly what my chief did at the time

Conflicts Resolution Strategies in Bunkpurugu/Nankpanduri District

The premise of conflict management is about negotiating cooperation and peace between two or more factions (Bloomfield and Reilly, 1998). The negotiation strategy often requires some competencies, trust, and leadership. The strategy may also vary depending on the magnitude of the conflict, the leadership style of the negotiator and more importantly past precedence of outcomes. This section of the analysis thus presents the conflict management strategies of the leadership of the Bunkpurugu/Nankpanduri District.

From **Figure 4**. The analysis revealed four key strategies used by traditional authorities for conflict management. Forty-four per cent (44%) of the respondents, representing the majority said the noticeable strategy has been the use of constant deliberations by leadership and the traditional councils on the issues that erupted into conflicts.

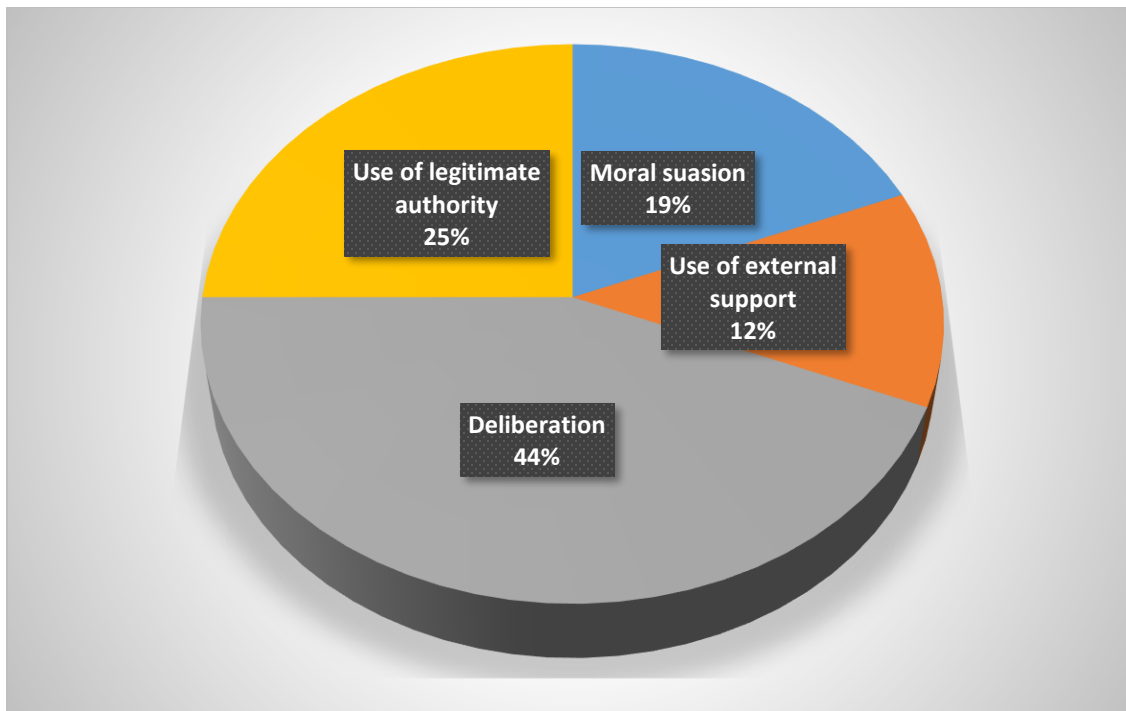


Figure 4: Conflict resolution strategies by the leadership of Bunkpurugu -Yunyo.

Source: Field data, 2018

Twenty-five per cent (25%), on the other hand, was of the firm belief that leadership rather uses their legitimate authority to install peace among conflicting factions. For this group of respondents, the Chiefs and council of elders in the Bunkpurugu/Nankpanduri District wields the loyalty of the people and command respect and authority that make them legible to bring two opposing groups together. One of the participants at Bendi stated;

We have much respect for our Chiefs so we run to them for arbitration in times of conflict. Our strategy as a traditional council is simple, we assist the chief to conduct investigations into conflict matters and make recommendations. Our interest is always to achieve a win-win situation, especially in matters concerning land and chieftaincy. I see our strategy as a good one because, in the end, both factions go home in peace

Another 12 per cent of the respondents mainly Chiefs said there are instances where they relied on external support for the management of conflicts. The Chief of Bendi reiterated the case involving the people of Sambiruk and Bauk in Sayegu where the management of the conflict between the two factions required external resources and, therefore, the need to get the DCE of the district together with the district security council and some armed military men involved.-The Chief of Bendi added;

Sometimes it becomes necessary that external force is applied to achieve the best results. My people know the consequences of getting the military involved in conflict resolution, therefore, they tend to calm tempers upon seeing the military in the community. This strategy is, however, rarely used because lasting peace does not require the use of force but rather amicable settlement of differences. For instance, the military comes and goes but the community residents remain here forever

Another three respondents representing 19 per cent of the sample including the Deputy Northern Regional Minister said over the past decade, the use of moral suasion has been employed by leadership to inculcate the spirit of togetherness and lasting peace in the district. The Deputy Minister maintained;

....at present, no one wants to associate himself/herself with conflict. People are beginning to recognise the benefit of peacebuilding. With support from local and international NGOs including faith-based organisations, our people are getting education on the relevance of peace and why disputing parties must always seek arbitration through alternative dispute resolution mechanisms

Conclusions

The researchers may have their expectations. However, that could not have had any influence on the validity and reliability of the final data or the study results.

The lead researcher growing up as a young child in the study area, at a point spent some years in neighbouring Togo's refugee camp which was established by the United Nations through the efforts of then President Foure Anyasingbe Ayedema to accommodate the refugees who have crossed the border as a result of the violent conflicts in the Bunkpurugu /Nankpanduri Area. I expected that politicians in leadership positions could play a very crucial role in resolving the long-standing conflicts in the Bunkpurugu/Nankpanduri area with a solution.

The research has revealed that leadership plays an active role in conflict resolution. It has shown, however, that not all conflict cases are manageable by traditional leaders and, therefore, the need for collaboration with key actors including District Chief Executives and other security agencies like the Police and in some cases the Armed forces. The use of sophisticated weapons and small firearms in some conflict situations in the Bunkpurugu/Nankpanduri area also suggests that the fight against small arms in Ghana was yet to achieve positive results in the Bunkpurugu/Nankpanduri District although participants expressed hope and firm belief that conflict in the district will be a thing of the past. Simply one cannot determine when the unexpected will happen again, therefore, those with possession of small firearms must do away with them. Future research on the conflict situations in the region should be done on war contractors, arms dealers and the role they play in the recurrent violent conflicts in the Bunkpurugu/Nankpanduri District.

Way Forward

The study commends the use of traditional leaders in conflict resolution and wishes that they continue to do good works through the alternative dispute resolution methods in their quest to resolve conflicts in the Bunkpurugu/Nankpanduri district. The traditional leaders are further encouraged to develop more cordial relationships with key actors irrespective of differences in political, tribal, clan, family and religious affiliation. This could help calm tempers in serious but least expected conflicts.

In addition, there should be a well-developed guideline document on the chieftaincy succession plan in the study area and collaboratively executed to prevent fallouts from chieftaincy enskinment. The research findings also show that there was some level of collaboration between traditional and central authorities in resolving the Sayiegu land crisis. This means that such efforts can be maintained through the constant engagement of the leaders by the state and its agencies during the resolution of the conflict.

The research further show that little efforts were made by both authorities in assessing the impact of implemented resolutions. This means that the National Security need to work with the Traditional Chiefs to put machineries in place that may check the implemented resolutions and determine what actions need to be taken to ensure that the conflict is completely resolved.

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