Assessing the Influence of Community- Led Strategies on Conflict Resolution and Peace Building in Selected Communities in the Bole District

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Abstract
This study examined how community-led strategies support conflict resolution and peacebuilding in selected communities in the Bole District. The findings show that local strategies, such as mediation by elders, community meetings, and peace committees, play a central role in resolving disputes, especially those related to land and intergroup relations. These methods are widely trusted because they reflect local customs, encourage participation, and rely on community knowledge. The results also indicate that these strategies have helped improve peace and unity among community members by creating spaces where disagreements can be resolved without violence. However, challenges such as mistrust, unresolved past conflicts, and land-related tensions continue to hinder their full effectiveness. The study recommends a bottom-up approach to conflict management and peacebuilding. This approach should deliberately use existing local systems, structures, and traditional practices to reduce conflict and promote peaceful coexistence. It should also involve the many community members who have previously participated in peace initiatives, strengthen local strategies for conflict resolution, and create stronger links with formal law enforcement and justice institutions.

The study further recommends that widespread availability of small arms is a significant obstacle to community-driven peace-building. Because firearms significantly contribute to insecurity, the government needs to strengthen efforts to identify, recover, and control illicit weapons in the Bole district. Then again, women and youth should be actively encouraged and empowered to participate in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Their involvement is essential in preventing peace efforts from being viewed as the responsibility of only men. Providing them with support and opportunities to serve as peace ambassadors will strengthen community cohesion and long-term stability. Several aspects remain worthy of further investigation despite the important insights this study has provided. First, the current study focused on one specific area. Future studies could include more communities or districts in the Savannah region to allow for comparative analysis and strengthen the generalisation of results.

Then again, since illegal firearms are a significant concern, future research could examine how disarmament programmes influence community safety and peace-building initiatives. Besides the challenges identified, further research could explore additional factors that fuel conflict, such as political influence, climate change, or external interventions. Future researchers could investigate how community-led structures can work more effectively with formal security and justice systems, and what obstacles hinder such collaboration. Further studies could explore how to increase women's and young people's involvement in peace-building efforts and the impact of their participation on conflict resolution.

Keywords: *Influence of Community, Community- Led Strategies, Conflict Resolution and Peace Building*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Recent developments indicate that, although Ghana is often regarded as relatively peaceful compared to some of its neighbouring countries, deeper analysis reveals a growing trend of internal and cross-border conflicts. These conflicts, which frequently emerge in political, land tenure systems, leadership interests and inter-ethnic forms, create uneasy impressions among external observers and raise concerns about sustained national stability. Some selected communities in the Bole District of the Savannah Region have borne much of the brunt of internal conflicts and have put in place interventions to address them, using local communal strategies for conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

In response to these emerging conflict dynamics, peacebuilding has attracted renewed attention, with the Bole District offering a critical setting for examining community-based approaches to conflict resolution. The district's ethnic diversity, land-dependent livelihoods, and history of recurrent disputes have made it particularly vulnerable to tensions that undermine social cohesion. Several researchers have reported that formal state security and legal mechanisms, while important, have often been inadequate in delivering durable peace at the community level. Consequently, affected communities have increasingly relied on indigenous conflict-management practices, including mediation by chiefs, arbitration by elders, and communal dialogue to prevent escalation and restore social order. These community-led strategies underscore the agency of local actors in peace-building processes and highlight the continued relevance of culturally grounded approaches within Ghana's broader peace and development architecture.

Current developments in the Bole District make it increasingly difficult to overlook the role of community-led approaches to conflict resolution. These approaches are grounded in principles such as consensus-building, shared responsibility, and restorative justice, and they differ markedly from formal legal systems that often rely on adversarial procedures. Community-based interventions shape not only how conflicts are resolved, but also how quickly communities recover and how relationships between groups are rebuilt after disputes. Central to these approaches are culturally responsive practices that reflect local histories, everyday experiences, and collective aspirations. Examining how such strategies influence conflict resolution and peace-building outcomes is therefore essential, particularly for informing policy decisions, strengthening local governance, and promoting sustainable development.

This prospective paper critically examines the influence of community-led strategies on conflict resolution and peacebuilding in selected communities in the Bole District. By drawing on local perspectives, practices, and institutional arrangements, the study seeks to understand how communities respond to conflict, the mechanisms they use to manage disputes, and how these mechanisms contribute to the restoration of peace. The findings are expected to advance academic discussions on grassroots peacebuilding and to provide practical insights for development planners, civil society actors, and traditional authorities working to foster peaceful coexistence and development within the district and similar contexts.

1.1 Background to the Study

Kumar (2011) argues that the Global Peace Index (GPI) underscores the importance of countries building conditions that support peace, fairness, and inclusion. Recent reports indicate that global peace continues to decline. In the 2022 GPI, Davies, Pettersson and Oberg (2023) noted that the world became less peaceful for the eleventh time in fourteen years, with the average level of peace among countries dropping by 0.3 per cent over the past year. This pattern suggests a steady weakening of peaceful conditions worldwide and raises concern for policymakers and researchers. It has been conclusively shown that the West African sub-region continues to suffer from a myriad of socioeconomic and political issues that threaten the stability, peace, and security of the sixteen member states.

The region currently faces threats from terrorism from the Sahel region and transnational organised crime in some border communities. In Ghana, particularly in parts of northern and transitional zones, inter-tribal disputes and competition over land have been significant sources of local conflict. Variations in land tenure arrangements, often shaped by customary inheritance, lineage authority, and competing claims over territory, frequently lead to disagreements between ethnic groups. Conflicts over land boundaries, farming rights, access to resources, and traditional leadership roles have sometimes escalated into violent confrontations. In these

contexts, national security actors and formal legal systems may struggle to provide timely and lasting solutions. Communities, therefore, rely heavily on local structures such as chiefs, elders, youth associations, peace committees, and shared cultural values to negotiate disputes and restore relationships. Through dialogue, mediation, arbitration, and cultural sanctions, communities work to settle tensions arising from inter-tribal competition and land ownership.

More recently, the literature indicates that the district has experienced competing land interests and inter-ethnic tensions, making grassroots peace-building approaches particularly relevant. It is within this landscape that assessing the influence of community-led strategies on conflict resolution and peacebuilding in selected communities in the Bole District becomes significant. Community-led strategies for conflict resolution and peacebuilding have emerged as important tools for addressing community-based, national, and regional conflicts and for understanding their causes. Conflicts are as old as human societies themselves. Historically, Individuals, social groups, and societies have disputed and competed over scarce resources, such as land, money, political power, and ideology. They have even fought one another and have bitterly sought the elimination and/or subjugation of rivals in order to control these resources and commodities. However, at the same time, human societies and groups have found their own ways and means to avert and/or resolve conflicts.

Research shows that conflict and its resolution are closely tied to the cultural traditions and social systems of particular societies. Communities often rely on strategies shaped by their own leadership structures, shared values, and participatory processes. While systems such as the Panchayat in India, mediation committees in China, and the Jirga in Afghanistan illustrate culturally grounded conflict-resolution practices, similar community-based approaches are evident in Ghana as well. In the Ghanaian context, conflict has manifested in several forms, including inter- and intra-ethnic disputes, religious tensions, political violence, social unrest, and, particularly, chieftaincy conflicts. These conflicts tend to be protracted due to their deep historical and structural roots. Early examples of research into these conflicts include the Nkonya-Alavanyo and Peki-Tsito conflicts in the Volta Region; the Konkomba-Nanumba and Abudu-Andani conflicts in Dagbon; and the Mamprusi-Kusasi conflict in Bawku (Mahama, 2003). Similar conflicts have also emerged in areas such as Anlo, Adoagyiri, Princess Town, Aketekyi, and Tuobodom, as well as among the Ga people (Prah & Yeboah, 2011).

Among these diverse conflict types, chieftaincy conflicts appear to be the most recurrent and often the most violent. Anamzoya (2010) estimates that Ghana has recorded up to 300 chieftaincy-related conflicts, underscoring their widespread nature. Chieftaincy conflict typically arises from competing claims over traditional authority, usually between rival lineages within the same ethnic group, making it predominantly intra-ethnic. These conflicts are deeply influenced by historical narratives, socio-economic competition, and political interests, which initially shape factional motivations and subsequently drive escalation when disputes remain unresolved. This demonstrates that cultural systems of authority, identity, and land ownership heavily influence Ghana's conflict landscape. Consequently, community-led approaches, rooted in traditional structures and local participation, remain essential in resolving disputes and restoring peace.

Numerous studies have shown that chieftaincy conflicts are often associated with ethnicity, which plays a significant role and, at times, becomes the main factor in these internal conflicts (Gati & Tal, 2008). These chieftaincy conflicts caused a lot of havoc to life and property. For example, the Konkomba, and Nanumba/Dagomba chieftaincy conflict as the dominant ethnic group in 1994/95 resulted in the loss of 2000 human lives and 18,900 animals lives, 60,000 acres of crops set on fire, over 50,000 tubers of yam destroyed, 144 farming villages burnt, 78,000 people displaced and millions of properties belonging to the state and indigenes destroyed (Mahama, 2003). Likewise, in the Effutu chieftaincy conflict, it has resulted in several antisocial conduct, such as the destruction of lives and property (Ayensah, 2013). The Effutu chieftaincy conflict has also divided the Effutus, and this division could persist for generations. This could affect grassroots democracy and overall development.

The Bole District presents a compelling case for examining the influence of community-led strategies on conflict resolution and peacebuilding. The district has experienced persistent interethnic tensions, particularly between the Birifor and Gonja communities, primarily linked to land ownership, land allocation, and traditional authority. Competing historical claims over land, differing interpretations of customary tenure, and the expanding demand for residential

and agricultural land have intensified disputes. In some instances, practices such as multiple land sales

and contested land rights have deepened mistrust and contributed to recurring conflicts. Despite the prevalence of these disputes, community-led peace-building mechanisms, such as mediation by chiefs and elders, community meetings, peace committees, and youth engagement, remain central to conflict management in the district. These strategies are often perceived as more accessible and culturally relevant than formal legal processes. However, recurring tensions raise critical questions about the extent to which these community-led approaches are practical, inclusive, and sustainable in addressing the underlying causes of conflict.

Existing studies on conflict resolution in Ghana have focused mainly on high-profile conflicts such as those in Dagbon, Bawku, and the Volta Region, with limited empirical attention given to more minor but persistent conflicts in districts like Bole. While community-led strategies are frequently acknowledged as important, there is insufficient empirical evidence on how they operate in practice, how different community groups perceive them, and the extent to which they contribute to lasting peace in inter-ethnic and land-related conflicts. This knowledge gap justifies the need for a systematic assessment of community-led strategies for conflict resolution and peacebuilding in selected communities within the Bole District. Understanding how these strategies function, the challenges they face, and their influence on peace outcomes is essential for strengthening grassroots peace-building efforts and informing policy interventions to promote sustainable peace in multi-ethnic settings.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Community-led approaches to conflict resolution and peacebuilding have gained increasing recognition for their role in managing local disputes and fostering social cohesion in many parts of Ghana. In light of recent events in Ghana, it is becoming challenging to ignore the existence of traditional mechanisms such as mediation by chiefs and elders, communal dialogue, and the involvement of youth and opinion leaders, which have often been effective in restoring relationships and preventing the escalation of conflicts. These approaches are critical in rural and multi-ethnic settings where formal state institutions may be less accessible or culturally distant. Despite this recognition, there is limited empirical evidence on how effective, inclusive, and sustainable these community-led strategies are within specific local contexts.

Abdulai (2014) argues that the outcomes of community-based mediation and alternative dispute resolution (ADR) mechanisms are uneven. On the one hand, the successful resolution of the Abudu-Andani chieftaincy conflict in Dagbon, culminating in the installation of a new Yaa Naa in 2009, illustrates the potential of dialogue-based, culturally grounded approaches to transform protracted conflicts. On the other hand, the persistence of conflicts such as the Konkomba. The Nanumba dispute in Northern Ghana and the Nkonya-Alavanyo conflict in the Volta Region highlight the limitations of mediation when confronted with entrenched interests, power asymmetries, weak institutional support, and limited stakeholder commitment. These contrasting outcomes point to the need for context-sensitive analysis of the conditions under which community-led peace-building mechanisms succeed or fail.

Evidence suggests that persistent conflicts between the Birifor and Gonja communities in the Bole District pose a significant challenge to development and peace-building. These disputes are largely inter-tribal and are closely linked to land tenure arrangements shaped by historical claims, customary authority, and competing interests over land ownership and use. According to Tonah (2007), tensions frequently arise over land allocation, farming rights, boundary demarcation, and traditional leadership authority. Although state-led mechanisms exist to address such disputes, they have often failed to deliver lasting solutions, leading to recurring conflicts that undermine trust, social harmony, and local development. In response to these challenges, communities in the Bole District continue to rely heavily on local peace-building mechanisms, including traditional authorities, elders' councils, community committees, and youth groups, to manage and resolve conflicts.

However, there is insufficient scholarly understanding of how these community-led strategies operate in practice, the extent to which they address the root causes of conflict, and how they are perceived by different social groups within the communities. Issues of inclusiveness, legitimacy, and the long-term effectiveness of these mechanisms remain underexplored, particularly in relation to Birifor-Gonja relations. The lack of systematic, context-

specific research on community-led conflict resolution and peacebuilding in the Bole District constitutes a significant gap in both the academic literature and policy practice. Without rigorous analysis of the dynamics, outcomes, and limitations of these grassroots strategies, efforts to strengthen local peace infrastructures risk remaining fragmented and poorly aligned with community realities. If unaddressed, this gap may contribute to the persistence of cyclical conflicts, with far-reaching implications for social cohesion, livelihood security, and sustainable development. This study, therefore, seeks to assess the influence of community-led strategies on conflict resolution and peace-building in selected communities in the Bole District, to generate empirically grounded and theoretically informed insights to advance scholarly understanding and inform culturally responsive peace-building interventions in Ghana's multi-ethnic contexts.

2.0 MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1 Overview

This section provides a comprehensive review of the existing literature relevant to the study. Its purpose is to position the current research within the broader academic context by examining what is already known, the theoretical frameworks developed, and the gaps that remain. This chapter highlights how the present study builds on previous work and contributes to the ongoing scholarly discourse. This review also demonstrates the researcher's understanding of key concepts, debates, and findings on community-led strategies for conflict resolution and peacebuilding. This review is centred on the following thematic issues: factors contributing to conflicts in the Bole district, strategies for conflict resolution and peacebuilding, and determinants of the choice of community-led strategies for conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

2.2 Review of Literature

Early studies on conflict resolution positioned the state as the leading actor responsible for peace enforcement. According to Galtung (1969), conflict was seen as a structural breakdown that needed external intervention, often through legal sanctions or state-led peace enforcement. Peace was therefore defined as the absence of direct violence and the restoration of social order. Recent scholarship, however, shows that reliance on state institutions alone often fails to produce sustainable peace, especially in communities with long-standing historical disputes or traditional governance structures (Lederach, 1997). Researchers now argue that peace-building is more lasting when communities themselves design and implement conflict-resolution measures. This shift reflects a broader movement away from top-down approaches toward bottom-up, participatory, culturally grounded approaches. It has been widely acknowledged that communities across Africa possess established conflict resolution systems that predate modern judicial processes. Murithi (2006) explains that indigenous mediation is often rooted in communal values such as reconciliation, social respect, compensation and truth-telling. These systems rely heavily on respected figures such as chiefs, lineage heads, and elders who hold symbolic authority.

Dialogue is central to indigenous peace-building. In many communities, conflict resolution begins with convening disputing parties in a communal setting. Elders, often individuals who command moral authority due to age, wisdom, and neutrality, facilitate the dialogue. According to Murithi (2006), elders serve as custodians of community norms and historical precedents; thus, their interpretations of disputes are widely accepted. The dialogue process is grounded in consensus-building. Parties are encouraged to narrate their grievances openly, and interruptions are discouraged until each side has been fully heard. The aim is not merely to determine guilt, but also to unpack root causes such as mistrust, disrespect, or violated customs. When consensus emerges, elders articulate a settlement that reflects community values, thereby ensuring compliance. This form of mediation is particularly effective because it emphasises relational harmony rather than adversarial victory. Unlike courtroom procedures, communication is informal, culturally relevant, and rooted in shared belief systems.

Again, African conflict resolution prioritises restoration over punitive judgment. Compensation, sometimes called restitution, serves to repair emotional or physical damage and reinstate dignity. Compensation may take the form of livestock, money, labour assistance, or symbolic gifts. The purpose is not transactional settlement but emotional restoration. In cases involving physical or property harm, appeasement prevents retaliation or escalation. In marital disputes, compensation may accompany apologies; in land disputes, rituals of reconciliation

follow compensation to reaffirm boundaries. What distinguishes these approaches from formal systems is that outcomes are based on restoring broken relationships rather than simply determining guilt or imposing punishment. Studies further show that community-based strategies also ensure compliance because decisions are socially binding and embedded in shared norms.

Factors contributing to conflicts in the Bole District

According to the Bole District Development Plan (2022–2027), security remains a significant challenge for development in the district. The report notes that multiple factors continue to heighten the risk of violent conflicts among farming communities in the area (Bole District Assembly, 2022). Some of the factors contributing to conflicts in the district are discussed below. The Bole District is facing a growing challenge with land use due to increasing competition over land for farming, residential development, and chieftaincy-related territorial claims. Rapid population growth and the rising demand for residential plots have intensified disputes, particularly as instances of double land sales and illegal land allocation have become more common. These practices create mistrust among community members and frequently result in confrontations between individuals and families claiming ownership of the same parcels of land.

Again, disputes over the rightful custodians of the land, especially between Gonja chiefs, who traditionally hold land administration authority, and Birifor families, who assert long-term occupancy rights, further deepen tensions. In many parts of northern Ghana, land traditionally rests with chiefs, who act as custodians on behalf of the community. This system gives chiefs the statutory mandate to allocate land, settle disputes, and oversee transactions. However, local families who have occupied and farmed specific land parcels for generations often claim customary ownership based on inheritance, labour investment, and lineage settlement rights. This duality creates overlapping systems of claim, leading to conflicting interpretations of who legitimately owns or controls land. In the Bole District, the Gonja stools historically exercise authority over vast land areas.

Birifor settlers, on the other hand, have lived in and farmed the area for decades and thus perceive themselves as rightful landowners through continuous use and ancestral settlement. In situations where Birifor families assert generational attachment to land, this clashes with the Gonja chiefs' assertion of allodial rights, fueling confrontation. Such differing perceptions of ownership have made land transactions highly contentious, especially when chiefs allocate land that has already been cultivated or inherited by Birifor families. This fuels perceptions of marginalisation, dispossession, and exclusion. This tension has grown into a broader socio-cultural issue, with identity becoming intertwined with land rights. Land is not only viewed as a livelihood asset but also as a symbol of belonging and community legitimacy. When groups feel alienated or unfairly treated, inter-ethnic harmony is weakened. Disputes that begin as disagreements over land boundaries eventually escalate into wider conflict, affecting social relationships within and across communities. Accusations of biased allocations, unfair evictions, and selective land rights enforcement increase hostility and mistrust between the groups.

It was during such instances of double allocation and sale of residential plots in Gbiniyiri that one of the most recent conflicts in the region emerged. In this case, a piece of land was sold to two different buyers, each of whom believed they had legitimate ownership backed by different traditional authorities. When both parties attempted to develop the land, confrontation ensued, drawing in family members, community leaders, and supporters from both ethnic groups. What began as a land transaction dispute escalated into a broader confrontation between sections of the Gonja and Birifor communities, resulting in heightened tensions, loss of human lives, destruction of property, and temporary displacement of some households. As a result, land disputes are gradually eroding social cohesion. Community members who previously exchanged labour, shared market spaces, and intermarried now interact cautiously, leading to segregation and suspicion. In some instances, disputes disrupt farming activities, limit access to fertile farmland, and cause displacement. These conditions threaten peaceful coexistence, undermine local development initiatives, and compel households to divert their time and resources to conflict mitigation rather than to productive activities. Ultimately, land conflict not only affects economic security but also weakens community structures and challenges collective peace-building efforts in the district.

2.3 Theoretical Review

Several theories of conflict have been developed to explain the emergence and nature of conflicts within society. Effective and lasting conflict resolution depends on a clear, systematic understanding of the underlying or remote causes of conflict, as this forms the basis for designing appropriate resolution strategies. Therefore, to appreciate mechanisms for resolving conflicts, it is important to examine theoretical perspectives that explain why conflicts arise and how they can be addressed. These theories are crucial for guiding the analysis of conflict causes and providing a foundation for effective interventions. The study adopted a theoretical framework based on Karl Marx's conflict theory and Frustration-Aggression Conflict Theory to understand the impact of community-led strategies on conflict resolution and peacebuilding among farming communities in the Bole district.

Frustration-Aggression Conflict Theory

This theory says that frustration causes aggression, but when the source of the frustration cannot be challenged, the aggression gets displaced onto another target. When an individual is prevented from attaining his/her goal, he/she becomes frustrated. This frustration can then turn into aggression when something triggers it. The frustration-aggression theory is an attempt to describe a relationship believed to be vital across many areas of study. It is intended to propose to the individual of human nature that when he/she sees aggression he/she should turn a suspicious eye on possibilities that the organism or group is confronted with frustration; and that when he/she views interference with individual group habits, he/she should be on the look-out for, among other things, aggression (Miller, 1941).

The frustration-aggression theory, which John Dollard and his research associates initially developed in 1939, has been expanded and modified by Berkowitz (1962) and Yates (1962), and appears to be the most common explanation for violent behaviour stemming from an inability to fulfil needs. Theorists who rely on this explanation draw on psychological theories of motivation and behaviour, as well as on frustration and aggression, to explain aggression. Scholars point to the difference between what people feel, want, or deserve and what they get, thus the 'want-get-ration' and the difference between 'expected need satisfaction' and 'actual need satisfaction' (Pastore, 1952; Arthur, 1955; Kregaraman & Worchel, 1961; Arnold, 1963). When expectations are not met, people tend to confront those they hold responsible for frustrating their ambitions. According to Gurr (2009), the higher the discrepancy, however marginal, between what is sought and what seems attainable, the greater the chances that anger and violence will result. In the case of the inter-tribal and chieftaincy-related conflict in the Bole District, the frustration-aggression theory offers a relevant interpretive lens, as it helps explain how unmet expectations, perceived injustice, and unfulfilled needs escalate into aggression, reinforce inter-group mistrust, and ultimately trigger violence within the Bole area.

Conflict Theory

Karl Marx's conflict theory starts with the idea that society is divided into two basic groups: the wealthy and the poor. This theory examines what happens when one group attempts to rebel against another, and the various roles a group (or an individual) has over another group. The theory analyses the social control the rich exercise over the masses. Marx believed that a society or organisation functions solely to improve its social situation, which can lead to social upheaval. Marx's theory highlights different types of conflict, including class, race and ethnicity, gender, religion, and regions (Marx, Karl. 1971). Marxian conflict theory can be applied to several social disputes, including how one group controls the rest, struggles within the oppressed group, and how the controlling group maintains power.

According to Marx, the existence of different social classes in human society is a continuous source of inevitable conflict, and changes in the social structure occur through violent upheavals that affect class composition (Abrahams, 2004, p. 107). Marx emphasises the importance of interests over norms and values, and how the pursuit of interests generates various types of conflict as normal aspects of social life, rather than abnormal or dysfunctional occurrences. He sees human society as a collection of competing interest groups and individuals, each with its own motives and expectations. The principal assumption underlying Marx's theory

is that members of society do not have the same values, interests, or expectations. Values, interests or expectations vary according to one's position, privileges, ability, class, and wealth. Agreement tends to exist among those groups of people in society who share similar privileges. As a result, this is likely to encourage an unequal distribution of scarce but valuable resources and opportunities, leading to divisions in society that foster hostility and opposition.

This theory would aptly explain the nature of relations among communities living in the Bole district and the occasional inter-ethnic conflicts that they experience. The inter-ethnic conflicts, characterised by clashes over land, would be viewed as part of the struggle by the have-nots (poor, landless, and marginalised Birifor farmers) to gain access to the district's resources, which the landowners, the Gonjas, hold. The theory would also explain conflict in Bole in light of the population composition in the larger Bole district, which is cosmopolitan, consisting of a mixture of people in terms of demographic characteristics such as ethnic group and race, as well as socioeconomic differentials, for example, social class, wealth, political interests, and ability. In light of these differences, Marx's conflict theory would predict that people in the Bole district are likely to experience interethnic conflicts and hostilities. Although Karl Marx claims that growth and development occur through the conflict between opposing parties, cooperation is also a source of healthy growth. It needs to be determined under which situations, if any, conflict is necessary to produce change as compared to those that use cooperation and harmony, for example, the use of community-led strategies, which bring about positive change in the face of conflict.

2.4 Empirical Review

The world has experienced the consequences of the First and Second World Wars and would not want to experience another war, which would be even more devastating. Therefore, conflict-resolution mechanisms can serve as checks or preventive measures against conflict, enabling peace to be maintained without resorting to violence. According to Behfar, Peterson, Mannix, and Trochim (2008), conflict resolution is the most effective means of minimising conflict. It can be said that conflict resolution is the best mechanism towards social justice, peace, harmony, cooperation and world brotherhood. It is the best slogan for peacekeeping, peacemaking, and peacebuilding among conflicted parties and in war zones. Conflict resolution, as a discipline, hinges on the assumption that conflicts ought to be resolved only through peaceful means, not through violent destruction (Behfar et al., 2008). The following paragraphs will review some empirical work in the field of conflict resolution.

Fleetwood (1987), in examining the conflict management styles, described and analysed the conflict management behaviours of secondary school administrators. Specifically, the study examined conflict management styles and strategies used by educational administrators. The researcher interviewed and observed five secondary school administrators over a period of more than a year. Their responses to the interview questions served as a guide to determine their personal perceptions of conflict management styles and strategies. The study confirmed Pace's (1983) assertion that individuals develop a single conflict management style and use it regardless of the specific situation. The study also agreed with Hocker and Wilmot's (1985) view that individuals vary their conflict management styles depending upon the particular conflict interaction. The research also found that the use of conflict management styles and strategies depended on a variety of variables, such as sex, race, and students' prior records.

Regan (1996) assessed the historical patterns of intervention strategies and their relative success rates. Based on an intra-state conflict in 1994, 138 intra-state conflicts were identified, of which 85 had at least one third-party intervention. Regan (1996) asserted in his study that the characteristics of conflict do not largely determine the success of third-party intervention. Instead, the components of an intervention strategy largely determine its success. The study found that nearly 40 per cent (76 cases) of all interventions within that period were carried out by a significant power, while 5 per cent (10 cases) were under the auspices of the United Nations. The study also revealed that economic intervention strategies are rarely undertaken, but a strict strategy is the most common form of intervention (military: 70%; economic: 7%). However, the success rates of each intervention type, regardless of target, are mixed, with the mixed strategy being the most successful (35% of the time).

In sum, the study suggests that a mixed strategy would be more likely to succeed than either a military or economic intervention alone. In designing a strategy to intervene in civil

conflict, the study postulates that policymakers would be well-advised to weigh in on behalf of the government rather than the opposition. The study shows that a suitable intervention strategy, along with the factors associated with it, will contribute to the intervention's success. Bukari (2013) examined the peace process in the Bawku conflict in Ghana, the challenges and prospects. The study employed mixed-methods (quantitative and qualitative), a descriptive case study, and purposive sampling, with 220 respondents. The study revealed that various approaches had been used to resolve the conflict, including peacekeeping (the deployment of security agencies), the imposition of curfews to mitigate its effects, mediation (including civil society organisations), the involvement of opinion leaders and traditional leaders, and arbitration. The study also suggested that, going forward, the Bawku conflict should be addressed with greater participation to resolve it. Despite these approaches to address the conflict, the Bawku conflict remains unresolved. The study seeks to explain why the conflict persists, noting that the mechanisms employed to address it have not addressed its root cause: the Bawku Skin. The analysis suggests that the mechanism has sought to reduce escalation and violence rather than resolve the conflict entirely.

Also, according to Midodzi and Imoro (2011), conflict resolution in Ghana has taken centre stage in the last decade, with efforts geared towards developing alternative and acceptable mechanisms to address the country's numerous conflicts. Therefore, one of the mechanisms that has been given prominence is alternative dispute resolution. The study shows that Alternative Dispute Resolution programs can play a positive role in resolving conflicts in Africa, particularly in Ghana, by providing alternatives to traditional grievance and complaint processes. The study, therefore, set out to add its voice to this advocacy by investigating the effectiveness of alternative dispute resolution in Ghana using the Alavanyo-Nkonya peace mediation as a case study. Specifically, the research aimed to ascertain the reasons for the use of alternative dispute resolution in the Alavanyo-Nkonya protracted conflict and to examine its strengths and weaknesses.

Finally, Anumel (2017) also conducted a study to assess the effectiveness of the conflict resolution mechanisms used by the National Peace Council in resolving the Alavanyo/Nkonya and the Hohoe conflicts. The study used 15 purposively selected respondents. Using an exploratory design, the study revealed that the National Peace Council primarily used mediation to resolve conflicts. Mediation was chosen because the parties had reached a stalemate over the issues. Mediation also enabled opposing parties to own the decision-making process. Lastly, the mediation mechanism has not been effective because the mediators failed to identify the needs of unrepresented parties. The mediation committee was unable to consider the structure of society. The study recommended that the mediation committee (NPC) should consider the structure of the society when using mediation, so that they can identify the individuals involved in the conflict and help select representatives to represent their interests on the committee.

Chieftaincy Conflicts in Ghana

Chieftaincy could be defined as the office and institution in which the chief is the principal operator and stakeholder. It comprises, among other things, personnel holding offices such as chiefs, queen mothers, counsellors, and staff; rituals, symbols, and other paraphernalia (Awedoba, 2010). The 1992 constitution of Ghana defines a chief as a person who, hailing from the appropriate family and lineage, has been validly nominated, elected or selected, and enstooled, enskinned or installed as a chief or queen mother under the relevant customary law and usage. Chieftaincy is the oldest social and political system in Ghana (Republic of Ghana, 1992). Dankwa III (2004, p.1) argues that "chieftaincy in Ghana emerged from the social fabric of the land. It is no person's creation and cannot be easily destroyed." The institution has played, and continues to play, a significant role in Ghana's governance system. The institution of chieftaincy in Ghana existed long before the advent of colonialism and has survived through pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial regimes. As a centralised system of administration, the chieftaincy institution has been the embodiment of political power in these times. Some of the ethnic groups in this system include the Akan, Ga, Guan, Ewe, and many others (Nukunya, 2003). The importance of the chieftaincy institution cannot be overemphasised. In traditional Ghanaian societies, chiefs play multiple roles as military leaders, chief priests who perform rituals on behalf of their people, agents of development, symbols of identity, change agents, and

custodians of stool lands. In performing these multiple roles, the Ghanaian chief is seen as an embodiment of the people's beliefs, hopes, fears, and aspirations (Abotchie, 2006).

As a result of modernity and change, new systems of administration have emerged, and Ghanaian chiefs have lost most of their functions to the modern state. This notwithstanding, chiefs continue to play essential roles in Ghanaian societies. It is essential to recognise that their mandate is even enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Ghana. The chieftaincy institution has been bedevilled with numerous conflicts. These conflicts are experienced in almost all traditional areas in the country. Some of such conflicts recorded in recent times include the Peki and Tsito; Nkunya and Alavanyo in the Volta Region; Mamprusi and Kusasi conflict in Bawku, in the Upper East Region; Konkomba and Nanumba conflict; and the Abudu and Andani conflict in Dagbon, in the Northern Region of the country (Mahama, 2003). Others include the Anlo chieftaincy conflict, the Adoagyiri crisis, the troubles in Princess and Aketekyi towns, the eruption of the Tuobodom chieftaincy conflict, and the Ga chieftaincy conflict in 2004, among others (Prah & Yeboah, 2011). Although some of these conflicts, such as the Konkomba-Nanumba and Abudu-Andani conflicts, have been effectively resolved, others remain protracted. Larbi (2009) posited that chieftaincy is associated with political power, which also translates into control over economic wealth in the form of stool properties, such as mineral deposits, land, regalia, and servants who work for the chief. The pageantry and pomp that accompany the position of the chief make the institution so attractive that both non-royals and royals seek every means to ascend the throne, leading to conflict. Larbi (2009) also cites misappropriation of public resources, such as royalties paid to the royal house, by incumbents as a cause of these chieftaincy disputes.

Again, in Ghana, most chieftaincy conflicts occur due to the lack of codification of the mode of selecting chiefs. Carscious (2013) argues that the wealth and dignity associated with the chieftaincy institution in Ghana have attracted many young aspirants to contest for the stool/skin. On the demise, abdication, or destoolment of the incumbent, various competing groups emerge with their candidates for the stool (Larbi, 2009). Finally, Ashahadu (2018) contends that the appointment of non-royals to stools/skins in the country provides the grounds for chieftaincy conflicts. He observes that some of these people are non-royals recognised for their immense contributions to the state's infrastructure development. In the past, enslaved people who rendered dedicated services to their masters were sometimes incorporated into the family. Some of them were rewarded with women in the community with whom they had children. The descendants of these enslaved people, now part of the royal lineage, could one day emerge as candidates to contest the vacant stool. Problems occur when some members of the royal family try to discriminate against this crop of people, sometimes referring to them as 'intruders' or 'foreigners.

Based on the literature reviewed above on the causes and prolongation of conflicts, key among the causes of these conflicts include succession to stools or skins, control over stool lands and land litigation, political interference, and the lack of accountability and transparency by some traditional rulers (Tsikata & Seini, 2004). Most of these protracted disputes have resulted in violent conflicts. Such conflicts have always led to undesirable developments in affected areas and across the nation. These devastating effects of conflict include loss of lives, loss of property and the displacement of people and lawlessness. These conditions create an atmosphere of anxiety, insecurity, and distrust, thereby threatening the peace and stability of the entire nation. To control such conflicts, security personnel are deployed to the affected areas at a massive cost, to the neglect of relevant national or local development issues.

Rationale for the Selection of Conflict Resolution Mechanisms

The conditions under which conflict-resolution mechanisms are chosen have received less study. Previous research has tended to focus on the motivations and rational calculations of the parties involved. Little attention has been given to examining the effect of the context on the choice (Moore, 2012). A significant amount of research on conflict has emphasised the processes of conflict resolution and their general effectiveness. The question one keeps asking is, before a mechanism becomes effective, how does conflict resolution begin, and why do parties choose one method or the other? These questions have been relatively ignored. While institutionalised mechanisms exist for dealing with some types of conflict, providing directions

on the process and how to initiate it (e.g., arbitration for labour-management disputes), conflicts in the international arena generally lack such procedural guidelines (Kriesberg, 1998).

Moore (2012) maintains that very often states apply conflict resolution procedures on an ad hoc basis, choosing (implicitly or explicitly) from a broad range of techniques, including negotiation, mediation, arbitration, inquiry, conciliation, or referral to international organisations. It is also essential to state that, before one uses conflict resolution mechanisms, certain preconditions must exist for conflict resolution to be considered, and these preconditions often form part of the selection context. According to Bercovitch and Jackson (2001), mediation is likely to be used when a dispute is long, drawn-out, or complex. It presupposes that, for mediation to be used as a resolution mechanism, the conflict must have become complex.

Second, mediation often comes into play when the parties' conflict-resolution efforts have reached an impasse (Bercovitch, 1992; Kleiboer & T'Hart, 1995), or when antagonism prevents conflict.

management from even getting underway. Touval and Zartman (1989), for example, argue that once the parties reach a hurting stalemate, they are likely to call for mediation. Third, a mediator must be available and willing to intervene (Bercovitch & Jackson, 2001), and there must exist some opportunity for the mediator to intervene (Rubin, 1992). If the parties wish to avoid any outside intervention, then mediation will not take place. Fourth, mediation is likely to be used when the parties calculate that it will help them reach a better settlement than they can achieve on their own; that the mediator will provide them with a face-saving way out of the conflict or a means of influencing their opponent or when rejecting mediation will result in greater harm than accepting it (Bercovitch, 1992; Kleiboer, 1996; Zartman & Touval, 1996). Lastly, intangible issues involving ideology, security, or ethnic identities are less likely to be effectively addressed through bilateral negotiations. When intangible issues are at the heart of a dispute, mediation is the preferred method of conflict resolution (Bercovitch & Jackson, 2001).

On the contrary, disputing parties choose negotiation or another method based on their levels of concern for their own and their opponent's outcomes (Bercovitch & Jackson, 2001). This is what is called the Dual Concern Model. At the international level, this is expressed as a competitive versus cooperative orientation (Fisher, 2007). Second, Moore (2012) posits that disputing parties will choose a mechanism (negotiation) if it is feasible and will, in all likelihood, allow them to realise their conflict goals (the Perceived Feasibility Model). Negotiating actors thus undertake a cost-benefit analysis of the viability of negotiations and unilateral actions. Third, the study by Bercovitch and Jackson (2001) found that when parties are contesting relatively straightforward, tangible issues (e.g., terms of independence for former colonies, access to or control over resources), negotiation is the primary procedural choice. After identifying the preconditions that necessitate the use of a particular mechanism, Bercovitch and Jackson (2001) argue that it is also significant to understand the nature of the dispute, as this can inform your selection of a resolution mechanism. In their empirical study, the researchers examined conflict intensity using the number of fatalities in a conflict and the relationship between conflict management and fatalities. The study posited that one of the most important factors determining the choice of a conflict resolution mechanism is the level of conflict intensity. The data supported the notion that in conflicts that are not too intense, parties prefer to resolve their differences through negotiation. When disputants can resolve their differences bilaterally without interference from outside parties, they usually do so (Bercovitch & Jackson, 2001).

However, when hostility between the parties is so high that they cannot negotiate face-to-face, mediation becomes necessary. Many studies have shown that when a conflict is not too intense, disputants prefer to resolve it without third-party assistance (Bercovitch & Houston, 1996; Bercovitch & Jackson, 2001; Moore, 2012). In other words, when a conflict is low-intensity or narrow in scope, the parties feel they can manage it effectively on their own and do not seek a mediator's assistance (Wall & Lynn, 1993). Realistically, in such circumstances, many parties perceive third-party intervention as an unwanted intrusion (Pruitt & Kim, 2004). High levels of fatalities are indicative of high levels of hostility. In such cases, a mediator may have to shuttle between the parties as a go-between or communicator to achieve any amelioration in the conflict. There is some suggestion in the literature that the choice of a strategy is not affected by the nature or identity of parties. It is generally agreed that when parties to a conflict differ in terms of identity and power, direct negotiations may not be possible (Bercovitch & Houston, 1996; Kleiboer, 1996; Pruitt & Carnevale, 1993). More specifically, when parties to a conflict do not

share the same political system or cultural norms and values, negotiation becomes very difficult. This is because "shared norms and sociopolitical similarity minimise misperception and facilitate a successful conclusion to the conflict".

2.5 Conceptual Framework

This section defines and discusses the concepts that drive the study. The central concepts reviewed include contextual issues in peacebuilding. The term **conflict**, derived from the Latin word *conflictus*, is used to describe situations such as 'to clash or engage in a fight'. In other words, it describes a situation in which individuals or groups engage in a confrontation when pursuing incompatible or competitive means or ends. Johan Galtung (1969) defined conflict as 'a dynamic process in which structure, attitudes, and behaviours are constantly changing and influencing one another'. In his contribution, Wall (1985) defines conflict as a process in which two or more parties attempt to frustrate each other's goal attainment.

According to Wallensteen (2002), conflict may be either manifest, recognisable through actions or behaviours, or latent, in which case it remains dormant for some time, as incompatibilities are unarticulated or built into systems or institutional arrangements such as governments, corporations, or even civil society. Wallensteen (2002) identifies three general forms of conflict: interstate, internal, and state-formation conflicts. Explaining the terminology, he indicated that 'interstate conflicts are disputes between nation-states. Some of the conflicts that are internally driven and engage the attention of the NPC include ethnic and chieftaincy conflicts, land-related conflicts, secessionist movements, conflicts regarding community boundaries, and political and related disputes.

The Concept of Violent Conflict

Violence is the use of unlawful physical force towards a person, group of people, or property with the intention of hurting, killing, or injuring a person or damaging property (Sisk, 2008). According to Olusola (2018), a violent conflict involves at least two parties using physical force to resolve competing claims or interests. Violent conflict is a common feature of the developing world today. Most of the world's poorest countries have experienced violent conflict during the past decade (World Bank, 2011). These conflicts have become increasingly concentrated in Africa and South Central Asia. Building sustainable peace is a complicated, time-consuming, and often very expensive process (Brukum, 2007; Kendie, 2010). One factor that strongly complicates this process is that these countries are frequently confronted with multiple transitions: from war to peace; from authoritarian to more democratic government; and from a state-directed to a market-directed economy (Orji, 2013).

Transforming conflict-torn, politically unstable, and socially and economically disintegrated countries into more politically and economically stable, equal, and prosperous ones requires not only an explicit and legitimate vision of the "peace" or future one wants to achieve, but also a clear understanding of how to get there (Sisk, 2008). One-dimensional approaches proposing magical solutions to ensure the peaceful coexistence of the different peoples in one country obviously do not exist. Moreover, the question of why specific peace processes are more successful in establishing or transforming societies into more politically stable and peaceful ones is as important and urgent as ever.

Conflict Management

Tanner (2000) defined conflict management as 'the limitation, mitigation, and/or containment of a conflict without necessarily solving it'. To him, conflict management, then, does not seek to resolve but to manage it to prevent escalation. Preventing the escalation and adverse effects of conflict is the goal of conflict management processes. It is to ensure that conflicts and disputes are downgraded or contained to avoid their spread. It is often followed by a reorientation of the issues creating the conflict situation. Conflict management should therefore be a process that is subject to regular review for redress. A variety of techniques have been identified and employed by the NPC in its conflict management efforts across all regions of the country, in accordance with Act 818, depending on the context of each conflict. The NPC manages conflicts at the national and local levels through facilitative dialogues, peace education, and peace messaging, as well as by developing mechanisms, including training manuals, guidelines, and a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

Conflict Resolution

Tanner (2000) described conflict resolution as 'approaches aimed at resolving conflicts through the constructive solving of problems distinct from the management or transformation of conflict'. Conflict resolution involves the disputing parties recognising one another's interests, needs, perspectives, and continued existence. To effectively resolve conflicts, the underlying causes of the conflict must be addressed through solutions that are mutually satisfactory, self-perpetuating, and sustaining for the parties in conflict. Conflict resolution can also be practised with a variety of emphases, including but not limited to cooperation, non-confrontation, and non-competition. In such cases, the role of external parties can be critical in balancing power, enacting sanctions or incentives, or acting as neutral mediators or invested facilitators. Not all conflicts lend themselves to resolution.

The Concept of Peace

The term peace is derived from the Latin word *pax*. Peace is a condition that ensures justice and social stability through formal and informal institutions, practices, and norms. Several conditions must be met for peace to be attained and sustained, including justice, equality, and accountability. In his book 'What is Peace Research?' Galtung gave two scenarios for the conditions of peace, which he describes as positive or negative peace. He says negative peace is the absence of human violence and war, and positive peace is the absence of structural violence (Galtung, 1964, pp. 1- 4). It is impossible to live in a world without conflict. Peace, therefore, means more than the absence of war. A comprehensive understanding of peace must be approached beyond negative conceptions, such as the mere absence of war or violent conflict. The NPC Act 818 (2011), in Section 3, indicates the aspiration of 'sustainable peace for the country'. The NPC, per its constituting act (Act 8180), aspires for Ghana not only to have peace, but for the peace it attains to be sustainable in line with the SDGs.

The Concept of Peace-building

The term "peace-building" was first introduced in the scholarly discipline in the 1970s by the Norwegian professor Johan Galtung. In his work, he called for the creation of peace-building structures to promote sustainable peace by addressing the root causes of violent conflict and supporting indigenous capacities for peace management and conflict resolution (Lederach, 1997). Although the concept of peace-building is generally defined as interventions designed to prevent the outbreak or relapse of violent conflict, there are divergent views among actors regarding its conceptualisation and operationalisation (Barnett, Kim, O'Donnell, & Sitea, 2007). For instance, as cited by Hearn, Bujones, and Kugel (2014, p. 3), the UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali in 1992 defined the concept of peace-building as "action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict". Barnett et al. (2007, p.38) also indicate in their article a definition of post-conflict peace-building offered by the UNDPA as "all external efforts to assist countries and regions in their transitions from war to peace, including all activities and programmes designed to support and strengthen these transitions". While these definitions are more aligned with societies that have recovered from violent conflict, it is important to emphasise that the peace-building process is also necessary in societies that have not experienced major violent conflict.

Such societies, as in Ghana, need to establish mechanisms and structures to prevent war and build sustainable peace. So, peace-building is not just a mechanism used in rebuilding devastated societies resulting from war. However, as Lederach (1997, p. 20) clarifies, it is more concerned with "a comprehensive concept that encompasses, generates, and sustains the full array of processes, approaches, and stages needed to transform conflict toward more sustainable, peaceful relationships". Lederach uses his multi-track peace-building approach to emphasise that, for such peace to succeed, all levels of society must cooperate and work together (1997, p. 60). In support of this assumption, Galtung (1993) offers a more extensive explanation of the term. He introduces the concepts of positive and negative peace to explain further what peace-building should achieve. Negative peace is the absence of direct or armed violence; it is needed in a peace-building process that tends to rebuild postconflict societies.

Dialogue

The ancient meaning of the word **dialogue** (dia lagos) is a "flow of meaning", which stands in stark contrast to the word "debate", which means to "beat down" (Dowd & Raleigh, 2012). Dialogue is an inclusive process. As the climate change talks demonstrate, dialogue brings together diverse voices to create a microcosm of the larger society (Shamir, 2003). To bring about sustainable change, people must develop a sense of joint ownership of the process and become stakeholders in identifying new approaches to address common challenges. Dialogue entails learning, not just talking (El-Bushra & Sahl, 2005). The process is not just about sitting around a table; it is about changing the way people talk, think, and communicate with one another. Unlike other forms of discussion, dialogue requires self-reflection, a spirit of inquiry, and personal change. Participants must be willing to address the root causes of a crisis, not just its surface symptoms. For instance, the 1979 Camp David Accords between Egypt and Israel may have ended the armed conflict but arguably created no qualitative "below-the-waterline" difference in the relationship between their people (Van Tongeren, 2013). That is, there was peace (understood as the absence of violence), but no personal change (which would lead to genuine and sustainable peace).

Dialogue recognises each other's humanity. Participants must be willing to show empathy toward one another, recognise differences as well as areas of common ground, and demonstrate a capacity for change (Shamir, 2003). To foster this kind of human interaction, a respectful and neutral setting, or "safe space", is preferred. The dialogue stresses a long-term perspective. Other forms of conversation tend to focus on the symptoms rather than the root causes of problems. Finding sustainable solutions requires time and patience (Touval & Zartman, 1989). The process can be painstakingly slow and incremental, lasting from 10 minutes to 10 years. Dialogue is not a one-size-fits-all strategy. It is not a panacea for resolving all the world's crises, particularly those marked by deep political paralysis or a long history of violence. Instead, it is just one tool in the toolbox of policymakers; a process that is flexible and adaptable across different contexts and countries, and that is especially useful when the parties to a conflict are not yet ready for formal negotiations (Touval & Zartman, 1989).

Dialogue requires that basic conditions be present first. When violence, hate, and mistrust outweigh the will to forge a consensus, or when there is a significant imbalance of power or a lack of political will among the participants, the situation might not be ripe for dialogue. Moreover, participants must feel free to speak their minds without fear of retribution or rejection (Shamir, 2003). The NPC has been using dialogue in addressing key petitions brought to its attention, such as the vigilante malaise that threatened the peace of the country ahead of the 2020 elections, and the complaint regarding the wearing of the hijab by Muslim students in schools.

Negotiation

Negotiation is a method by which people settle differences. It is a process by which a compromise or agreement is reached without argument or dispute. In any disagreement, individuals understandably aim to achieve the best possible outcome for their position (or for the organisation they represent). However, the principles of fairness, mutual benefit, and relationship maintenance are the keys to a successful outcome (Fischer, 2012). Specific forms of negotiation are used in many situations, such as international affairs, the legal system, government, industrial disputes, and domestic relationships. However, general negotiation skills can be learned and applied in a wide range of activities. Negotiation skills can be highly beneficial for resolving differences with others. To achieve a desirable outcome, it may be helpful to follow a structured negotiation approach. For example, in a work situation, a meeting may need to be arranged so all parties can come together. According to Heise (2010), the negotiation process includes the following stages: preparation, discussion, and goal clarification. Before any negotiation takes place, a decision needs to be made on when and where a meeting will be held to discuss the problem, and who will attend. Setting a limited timescale can also help prevent the disagreement from continuing (Lopez, 2006). This stage involves ensuring that all pertinent facts of the situation are known to clarify your own position. Undertaking preparation before discussing the disagreement will help to avoid further conflict and unnecessary time-wasting during the meeting (Friedman, 2008).

During this stage, individuals or members of each side put forward the case as they see it, thus their understanding of the situation. Key skills during this stage include questioning, listening, and clarifying. Sometimes it is helpful to take notes during the discussion stage to record all points raised, in case further clarification is needed. It is essential to listen, as when disagreement takes place, it is easy to make the mistake of saying too much and listening too little (Hensler, 2004). Each side should have an equal opportunity to present its case. From the discussion, the goals, interests, and viewpoints of both sides of the disagreement need to be clarified. It is helpful to list these factors in order of priority. Through this clarification, it is often possible to identify or establish some common ground. Clarification is an essential part of the negotiation process. Without it, misunderstandings are likely to occur, which may create problems and prevent a beneficial outcome (Lopez, 2006). This stage focuses on what is termed a "win-win" outcome, where both sides feel they have gained something positive from the negotiation process and that their point of view has been taken into consideration. A win-win outcome is usually the best result. Negotiations have been one of the key mechanisms the NPC has been using to build consensus among political actors in the country when issues of conflict of interest arise.

2.6 Research Gaps

Existing studies on conflict and peace-building in Ghana have mainly focused on well-known conflict areas such as Dagbon, Bawku, and parts of the Northern Region. However, there is very little research specifically on conflicts in the Bole District, especially regarding how local communities themselves handle disputes. This means there is limited knowledge about how community-led strategies contribute to peace in this area. Most previous studies also highlight the roles of government agencies, peace councils, and formal institutions, but pay little attention to grassroots actors such as chiefs, elders, family heads, youth groups, and local mediators. As a result, we do not fully understand how communities independently manage conflicts using their own systems. Additionally, earlier works lack a comprehensive theoretical grounding that connects conflict causes to applied resolution strategies within local contexts. Some studies describe interventions but do not situate them within relevant theoretical models such as conflict theory, frustration–aggression theory, or participatory development frameworks. Another gap is that many existing studies are descriptive, that is, they discuss what happened but do not assess how effective these interventions have been or whether they lead to lasting peace. The present study fills these gaps by focusing on selected communities in the Bole District, examining strategies initiated by community actors, connecting conflict causes to local solutions using relevant theories, and providing evidence of how these strategies influence peace-building and social cohesion. This makes the study relevant because it adds new knowledge on how local initiatives can support sustainable peace at the community level.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Overview

This chapter presents the methodological approach adopted to conduct the study. It provides a detailed explanation of the research design, target population, sampling procedures, data collection instruments, and analytical methods. It further highlights the procedures followed during data gathering and the measures taken to ensure ethical and scientific standards. By explaining and justifying the methodological choices, this chapter demonstrates how the research objectives will be addressed logically and systematically. A transparent methodology enhances transparency and allows other researchers to replicate the study if required.

3.2 Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive case study design, which allows for an in-depth understanding of how community-led strategies influence conflict resolution and peacebuilding within selected communities in the Bole District. According to Kombo and Tromp (2006), a descriptive survey is a method of collecting information by interviewing individuals or administering a questionnaire to a sample. It can be used to collect information about people's attitudes, opinions, habits, and a variety of educational or social issues. A descriptive approach is suitable when the aim is to document existing conditions, behaviours, and perceptions without

manipulating variables. In contrast, the case study approach enables an intensive investigation within a specific geographical context. This design is relevant because the study seeks to explore real-life situations involving inter-tribal relations, land-related disputes, and community peace-building efforts. It provides the flexibility to capture rich qualitative and quantitative data from local respondents, traditional authorities, and opinion leaders.

3.3 Study Population

The population refers to the entire group of individuals with characteristics relevant to the study's focus. For this study, the target population comprises community members and stakeholders directly engaged in conflict resolution and peace-building activities within selected communities in the Bole District. This includes traditional authorities such as chiefs and elders, opinion leaders, members of local peace committees, youth representatives, women leaders, and households affected by land-related conflicts. These groups are important because they either influence or are directly affected by conflict situations and community-based peace initiatives. The sampling frame for this study was generated from the 2021 Population and Housing Census. The 2021 Population and Housing Census provided the basis for determining the number of households to be interviewed due to its reliability and because the Population and Housing Census Survey report provides a national listing of households within administrative areas across the country.

3.4 Setting

The study was conducted in selected communities in the Bole District of the Savannah Region of Ghana. These areas were chosen because they are known for recurring land disputes and inter tribal tensions, particularly between the Gonja and Birifor groups. Conflicts in these communities often relate to land ownership, sales of plots for settlement, and traditional authority over land. The setting includes traditional institutions such as chiefs, elders, and clan heads, who play central roles in conflict resolution and peace-building. This setting is appropriate because it offers real

situations where community-led strategies are actively used to manage conflicts. Studying these communities, therefore, provides valuable insights into how local actors contribute to peacebuilding, the challenges they face, and how these strategies can be strengthened.

3.5 Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

Purposive sampling was used to select the Bole district as the study site because it has been experiencing rising inter-ethnic conflict between the Gonjas and Birifors, and because farming communities in the district are the worst affected by these conflicts. The Birifor communities experience more insecurity and persistent violence when compared to the other communities in the district. Probability sampling was used to select heads of households for personal interviews. In contrast, non-probability sampling was used to select village elders, opinion leaders, and chiefs who served as key informants.

3.6 Data Collection Instruments

The study used a set of instruments to collect precise and reliable data. A structured questionnaire was given to household heads to gather direct information from community members. An interview guide was used to conduct in-depth discussions with key informants, including traditional leaders, to obtain detailed insights. A Focus Group Discussion (FGD) guide also helped organise group discussions with selected community leaders to capture shared experiences. Finally, an observation checklist was used during field visits to document observations in the community systematically. These instruments, together, ensured that both personal views and observable information were collected to support the study.

3.7 Validity and Reliability

Measures were taken to ensure that the study produced accurate and reliable results. In this regard, validity was strengthened by ensuring that all items in the questionnaires and interview guides were directly linked to the study objectives. Research specialists reviewed the instruments to confirm their appropriateness and their ability to measure the intended concepts. In addition, the tools were pre-tested in the Gbiniyiri community, which has similar

characteristics—this allowed corrections, including clarifying questions and removing ambiguous items. Reliability was ensured by using structured instruments and applying them consistently across all respondents. The same questions were asked in the same manner to reduce variation in responses.

3.8 Data Collection Procedure

Data for this study were drawn from primary and secondary sources. Primary data was obtained from key informants and Focus Group Discussions (FGD). The secondary sources included a literature review of books, journals, non-governmental organisation reports, and policy documents. The study followed a structured procedure to collect accurate and reliable data. First, a structured questionnaire was administered to household heads to obtain direct information from community members. In-depth interviews were then conducted using an interview guide to gather detailed insights from key informants, including traditional leaders. In addition, a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) guide was used to facilitate group discussions with selected community leaders, allowing shared experiences and group perspectives to emerge. Lastly, an observation checklist was used during field visits to systematically record relevant events and conditions within the communities. Together, these procedures ensured that both individual opinions and observable realities were captured to support the study.

3.9 Data Analysis Techniques

After data collection, all questionnaires were cleaned and coded. The data were then fed into the computer, where they were organised into cases and variables before analysis. Using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software, the collected data were analysed using statistical techniques to compute quantitative measures for the sample surveyed. This was then presented in terms of descriptive frequencies (percentages and frequency tables), after which inferential analysis was conducted. Qualitative data were analysed by extracting key merging
themes based on the objectives of the study. Descriptive analysis was conducted for qualitative information, presented in frequency tables. The report was written based on the objectives and emerging themes from the collected data.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

Prior to commencing field data collection, the researcher sought clearance from the administrative offices on the ground, including the District Chief Executive (DCE) and the area chiefs. The researcher also ensured that respondents had the right to comment before the interview. Participation in the study was voluntary, and consenting participants were informed about the nature of the questions and the purpose of the interview. All respondents' information was kept confidential.

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Overview

This chapter presents and interprets the findings from the collected data. The results are discussed in relation to the study's objectives and research questions to show what the evidence reveals about the issues under investigation. The chapter not only displays the analysed data but also explains its meaning and relevance, highlighting key trends, patterns, and implications. Through this interpretation, the chapter provides a clearer understanding of how the findings contribute to addressing the research problem.

4.2 Demographic characteristics of respondents

Analysis of the study's findings shows that more males (70%) were interviewed than females (30%). This was particularly due to the study's focus on heads of households, most of whom were male. The few women who were interviewed responded to questions after obtaining their husbands' consent.

The analysis presents a summary of the respondents' age distribution. Analysis of the study findings shows that the majority of the respondents were in the age group 46-55, which accounted for 30%, and the age group 36 - 45 years, which accounted for 40% of the respondents. 18% of the respondents were in the 26-35 age group, 10% in the 18-25 age group,

and 2% in the 56-65 age group. These findings show that most respondents are in their youthful, economically active age group. At this stage in life, many young men are expected to marry and secure land or plots for residential purposes. Because they often lack the necessary resources or inheritance to meet these obligations, they become more vulnerable to conflict, especially when competition over land and related pressures intensifies tensions within the community.

It shows that respondents from the Birifor ethnic group were the majority, with 60%, followed by the Gonja with 18%. This shows that Birifor is the district's dominant ethnic group. Members of these ethnic communities have lived in the same district for a long time and have sometimes conflicted with one another. The Dagara represent 10% of the respondents, while 12% fall under the "Others" category, showing that the study area is also home to smaller ethnic groups. Although these groups are in the minority, their inclusion demonstrates the community's multi-ethnic nature. It suggests that conflict or peace-building interventions must take into account diverse perspectives and interests.

This illustrates respondents' level of education. The table shows that the respondents' educational levels were low. The study's findings indicate that 50% of respondents had no education. Furthermore, 30% of respondents had primary education, 20% had secondary education, and none had tertiary or university education. The low educational standards contribute to the large number of the idle population in the district, who, despite being productive, in the absence of worthwhile economic activities, engage in societal evils, including conflicts.

It shows the primary occupations of respondents in the study area. The majority (60%) are engaged in farming, indicating that agriculture is the primary source of livelihood for most households. About 20% of respondents are self-employed in small-scale trade, indicating that petty trading also contributes to household income, though to a lesser extent than farming. Only 6% are employed by others, indicating that formal or wage employment is limited in the area. Students make up 4% of the group, the smallest group.

Meaning of peace to respondents

Shows how people in the community understand the concept of peace. A majority of respondents (60%) associate peace with the absence of violence, indicating that safety and security are their primary concerns. Another 20% indicated that peace is living together in unity and harmony, showing that social cohesion is also important to many community members. Additionally, 12% believed that peace means fairness in resource sharing, suggesting that equal access to land, water, and other essentials is key to preventing conflict. A smaller group (8%) links peace to freedom of movement and association, highlighting the desire to go about daily activities without restrictions or fear.

Meaning of conflict to respondents

shows the meaning of conflict as respondents understood it, with 50% indicating it was a dispute over chieftaincy. In comparison, 30% said the dispute over territorial boundaries was the main reason. However, 20% of respondents said conflicts lead to misunderstandings. An understanding of respondents' perceptions of conflict would be important for ensuring local participation in the analysis of violent conflicts in the region and for identifying applicable solutions for conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

Strategies for conflict resolution and peace building in Bole district

shows the activities respondents undertook in peace-building groups, committees, or associations. 20% of the respondents stated that, as members of peace-building groups, committees, or associations, they participated in organising peace meetings, while 30% stated that they carried out arbitration and dispute resolution. 50% said they were engaged in dialogue and peace discussions.

shows the people who help resolve conflicts in the district; 60% of respondents said community elders helped resolve conflicts, while 8% said members of peace committees did. Another 12% of respondents said that chiefs resolved the conflicts.

The study found that the most preferred method of conflict resolution among communities in the district was arbitration by community elders, chosen by 70% of respondents. It was further established that 20% of the study participants said disarmament was the most

preferred method. Another 10% of respondents preferred the use of ethnic groups' alliances. The findings show that arbitration by community elders was the preferred method for resolving conflicts.

Impacts of community-led strategies for conflict resolution and peace building in Bole district

shows benefits that respondents indicated had been realised as a result of the use of community-led strategies for conflict resolution and peace building. 50% of respondents reported a reduction in the number of conflict cases reported in the selected communities in the Bole district. In comparison, 30% said they had realised improved relations and cohesion among people of various ethnic groups living in the larger Bole community and catchment areas. Further, 20% of the respondents stated that community participation in peace-building initiatives was an impact resulting from the use of community-led strategies for conflict resolution and peace building in the region.

4.5 Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study provide key insights into the influence of community-led strategies on conflict resolution and peace-building in the Bole District. In line with previous literature, local initiatives such as community peace committees, public dialogue forums, and peace awareness campaigns were found to play a crucial role in reducing conflicts and fostering social cohesion (Bole District Assembly, 2022). The high level of confidence reported by community members in these strategies aligns with studies emphasising the effectiveness of participatory and culturally grounded approaches to conflict resolution (Mwaniki et al., 2007; Galtung, 1969). The involvement of traditional leaders, the use of local knowledge, and participatory decision-making processes underscore the importance of indigenous mechanisms in sustaining peace within communities.

Despite these positive outcomes, challenges such as the proliferation of small arms, lingering mistrust between ethnic groups, and unresolved historical disputes were identified. These findings indicate that while community-led strategies are effective, their success is limited without addressing structural and security issues that exacerbate tensions (Davies et al., 2023). The findings also support the frustration-aggression theory, which explains that unmet needs and perceived injustices can trigger conflict (Dollard et al., 1939; Gurr, 2009). In the Bole District, disputes over land ownership, double sales of plots, and contestations over chieftaincy rights have generated frustrations among both the Birifor and Gonja communities. Community-led mechanisms such as elder mediation, dialogue forums, and peace caravans serve as crucial channels for managing these frustrations and preventing violent escalation.

In closing, this study contributes to the academic discourse by showing that community-led strategies are effective in promoting peace and reconciliation. However, their long-term success depends on addressing broader structural issues, fostering trust among ethnic groups, and integrating formal state support with local initiatives. These findings highlight the need for a holistic approach that combines community-driven and institutional mechanisms to achieve sustainable peace in conflict-prone areas.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Overview

This chapter brings the study to a close by summarising the main findings and drawing conclusions from the results. It also provides recommendations that can guide policy, practice, and further academic inquiry. Finally, the chapter identifies areas where additional research is needed to strengthen the understanding of the issues explored in the study.

5.2 Summary of Key Findings

This study report assessed the impacts of community-led strategies in resolving conflicts and promoting peace among farming communities in the Bole District The objectives of the study were to explore the strategies used by communities in the Bole district to resolve conflicts and promote peace, to assess the level of recognition and acceptance of the strategies used for conflict resolution and peace building among communities in the Bole district and to evaluate the impact of community-led strategies on conflict resolution and peace building in the Bole district. To achieve these objectives, the study used both primary and secondary data sources.

The findings revealed that conflict situations in the district largely stem from disputes over land ownership, illegal sale of residential plots, double land allocation, and disagreements relating to chieftaincy and territorial claims. These issues often create tensions between ethnic groups, especially between Gonjas and Birifors, and threaten peaceful coexistence within the district. The study found that local communities rely heavily on indigenous structures and cultural authority in managing conflicts. Community elders, chiefs, family heads, and peace committees play central roles in conflict mediation. Peace meetings, arbitration by traditional leaders, and community dialogues emerged as the most widely used approaches for resolving disputes. These mechanisms were considered adequate because they incorporate traditional norms, promote transparency, and enable inclusive community participation. The results further revealed that communities rely heavily on traditional leaders and locally accepted processes to resolve conflicts. Chiefs, elders, opinion leaders, and peace committees act as mediators, and this approach was found to be the most preferred in addressing disputes.

Methods such as community meetings, direct negotiation, and arbitration by elders were commonly used because they are seen as fair, familiar, and grounded in shared cultural values. In terms of impact, the study found noticeable improvements in security, unity among community members, and availability of structured channels for conflict resolution. Respondents reported reduced tension within communities and increased cooperation among households involved in land disputes. These outcomes suggest that the strategies used have contributed meaningfully to stabilising relationships among conflicting parties.

Despite the achievements, the study also identified key challenges that undermine the sustainability of community-led peace initiatives. These include longstanding unresolved disputes, mistrust between ethnic groups, and continued illegal land transactions. The persistence of such issues undermines the gains made and occasionally rekindles conflict situations. The study concludes that community-led approaches remain central to conflict resolution in the Bole District. However, their long-term effectiveness requires stronger institutional support, improved land governance, and continuous engagement with community stakeholders to address underlying structural tensions.

5.3 Contributions

The study report provides meaningful contributions at academic, practical, and social levels. Academically, the study would enrich the existing literature on conflict resolution by demonstrating how community-led structures address disputes. It offers empirical evidence from the Bole District, an area with limited prior research on local peace-building practices, thereby filling a gap in geographical knowledge. In addition, the study supports the value of mixed-methods research, household surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions in understanding conflict issues within rural communities. These contributions strengthen academic discussions on indigenous conflict management systems.

The findings provide practical guidance for policymakers and institutions involved in local governance and peace-building. The study highlights the importance of strengthening traditional leadership systems and improving transparency in land administration to minimise disputes. The results also show that integrating community-led initiatives into formal conflict resolution systems could enhance effectiveness. Stakeholders such as district assemblies, land management authorities, and peace councils may apply these insights when designing community-level interventions. Socially, the study demonstrates that community-driven peace efforts help build trust, foster unity, and promote coexistence among ethnic groups in the district. By improving communication, promoting fairness, and creating trusted avenues for dispute resolution, these strategies contribute to a more peaceful environment. Such stability supports broader development outcomes, as peaceful communities are more likely to attract investment, sustain livelihoods, and engage in collective development activities.

5.4 Conclusion

This study examined how community-led strategies support conflict resolution and peacebuilding in selected communities in the Bole District. The findings show that local strategies, such as mediation by elders, community meetings, and peace committees, play a central role in resolving disputes, especially those related to land and intergroup relations. These methods are widely trusted because they reflect local customs, encourage participation, and rely

on community knowledge. The results also indicate that these strategies have helped improve peace and unity among community members by creating spaces where disagreements can be resolved without violence. However, challenges such as mistrust, unresolved past conflicts, and land-related tensions continue to hinder their full effectiveness.

5.5 Recommendation

The study recommends a bottom-up approach to conflict management and peacebuilding. This approach should deliberately use existing local systems, structures, and traditional practices to reduce conflict and promote peaceful coexistence. It should also involve the many community members who have previously participated in peace initiatives, strengthen local strategies for conflict resolution, and create stronger links with formal law enforcement and justice institutions. The study further recommends that widespread availability of small arms is a significant obstacle to community-driven peace-building. Because firearms significantly contribute to insecurity, the government needs to strengthen efforts to identify, recover, and control illicit weapons in the Bole district. Then again, women and youth should be actively encouraged and empowered to participate in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Their involvement is essential in preventing peace efforts from being viewed as the responsibility of only men. Providing them with support and opportunities to serve as peace ambassadors will strengthen community cohesion and long-term stability.

5.6 Suggestions for Further Research

Several aspects remain worthy of further investigation despite the important insights this study has provided. First, the current study focused on one specific area. Future studies could include more communities or districts in the Savannah region to allow for comparative analysis and strengthen the generalisation of results. Then again, since illegal firearms are a significant concern, future research could examine how disarmament programmes influence community safety and peace-building initiatives. Besides the challenges identified, further research could explore additional factors that fuel conflict, such as political influence, climate change, or external interventions. Future researchers could investigate how community-led structures can work more effectively with formal security and justice systems, and what obstacles hinder such collaboration. Further studies could explore how to increase women's and young people's involvement in peace-building efforts and the impact of their participation on conflict resolution.

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