



UNDERSTANDING NORTHERN GHANA'S CONTEMPORARY CHIEFTAINCY CONFLICTS: ORIGINS, ACTORS AND DYNAMICS

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Abstract

Despite the countless efforts to address chieftaincy conflicts in Northern Ghana, these conflicts remain protracted, relapsed, and internecine. This paper, examined these kinds of conflicts by illustrating a comprehensive understanding of the contemporary conflicts in Northern Ghana. The research strategy for this study is qualitative research, while the study design is the multiple case study. Interviews and focus groups were used to gather data from 39 respondents who were chosen purposively. The findings from the thematic and cross-site analysis indicated that conflicts were predominantly characterized by a structural condition where both sides not only used history to support their perspectives, but also manipulated history in specific ways. The various iterations of historical accounts often offer a consistent justification for the refusal to accept practical compromises. Furthermore, although the skins were associated with chieftaincy, the underlying motivations and interests were primarily connected to obtaining and managing the land resource. The presence of contextual concerns leads to a syndrome of conflict that has a substantial impact on the conflict management strategies used to address various conflict situations. These qualities are crucial for establishing a tranquil environment as they provide a foundation for managing activities effectively.

Keywords: Conflicts, Protracted, Relapsed, Contemporary, Mechanisms, Ghana

Introduction

Some parts of Northern Ghana are characterised by recurring and prolonged conflicts between different ethnic groups and within the same ethnic group, primarily related to issues of land ownership and chieftaincy succession (Awedoba, 2010; Kendie, 2010). This scenario presents a

significant peril to human security, social justice, and advancement. Despite the widespread use of many conflict resolution and management procedures, disagreements are prolonged and, at most, can be described as a state of “no war, no peace” (Mac Ginty, 2006).

Conflict management efforts in the Northern Ghana have mostly taken the form of Western-centred approaches which relate to the formal methods of conflict management in this context. These efforts, among others, include curfews, peacekeeping operations (Military and Police patrols), mediation efforts, committees of enquiries, and the formal court system (Ibrahim et al., 2019). These approaches prioritise human rights and the rule of law, focusing on formal grievance procedures, arbitration, and litigation. They also address matters of equality, fairness, and justice. The relapsed nature of the conflicts in the region has led to many arguing and advocating a shift to the use of indigenous approaches. For instance, Ibrahim et al. (2019) have argued that, conflicts within communities have their roots in social, political, cultural, and historical factors. which these formal approaches have failed to consider in most of the management processes leading to failed outcomes. For this reason, indigenous approaches are the way to go according to the authors.

In a similar vein, Boege (2006) states that parties to a dispute are urged to choose an integrative (win-win) solution and that indigenous techniques facilitate inclusion and participation. Furthermore, indigenous conflict resolution methods are typically more sensitive to the requirements of local people (Amélie & Mandefro, 2018). This is due to the fact that conflicts are handled using the inquisitorial and restorative methods rather than the adversarial, winner-loser method of litigation. While certain disputes in Northern Ghana have been managed by indigenous ways, not all of these incidents have been successful. The strategies failed with the Nakpanduri land dispute and the Bimbilla intra-chieftaincy struggle (Andani gate and Nakpa Naa gate), despite being successfully used in the Buipe chieftaincy conflict (Godwin, 2015). Regardless of the use of

these local approaches, some conflicts in the region are still relapsed and protracted.

A key element that has been left out in the search for lasting solutions to these relapsed conflicts is what Speakman and Ryals (2010) refer to as the contextual issues of the conflicts. According to the authors, understanding the contextual factors are pre-requisite to successful management processes more than the issues of which management process to adopt. These contextual issues include a comprehensive understanding of the origin (cause), typology, nature, and the intrinsic traits of the actors involved.

The causes of conflicts in the Northern part of Ghana can be viewed in the context of intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic conflicts. The causal factors of intra-ethnic conflicts have to do with issues of struggles for traditional political power alongside chieftaincy successions issues whilst those of inter-ethnic conflicts include minority groups' expressions of desire for emancipation from the majority (centralized) groups for self-rule and ownership of land demarcated by territorial boundaries (Debrah et al., 2016). While most of the conflicts in the region are violent in nature, the typology classifies these conflicts as structural, interest-based, value, or relationship conflicts. In these contemporary times, experience, as well as empirical studies carried out in the Region on conflicts suggest that almost every conflict, either intra-ethnic or inter-ethnic, chieftaincy or land conflicts are tied to national politics (new dynamics) (Ibrahim, 2018). The incidences of prebendal politics by political parties were evident. In the Bimbilla chieftaincy conflict, for instance, the Nakpa Naa gate is perceived as an ally of the New Patriotic Party (NPP) while the Andani Dassana gate is perceived to align with the National Democratic Congress (NDC) (Ibrahim, 2018; Kendie et al., 2012). Also, in the Bimoba chieftaincy succession conflict in

the Bunkpurugu district, the Jamong family is loyal to NPP while the Jafouk family is aligned to NDC (Ibrahim et al., 2019). Adversaries hold a belief that one political party or the other when in power, favours them or their opponents and for that matter will pave way for them or their opponent to carry out their agenda.

Speakman and Ryals (2010) argue that conflict management practices should be based on the understanding of the contextual issues of the conflict in the localities where these conflicts are on-going. In other words, a more nuanced knowledge of these contextual elements is required in a variety of settings. A comprehensive understanding of the emerging modalities of these contextual issues (origins, actors, dynamics) operating within a global context would facilitate significant progress in the field of conflict management, rather than merely expressing support for diverse conflict management systems.

Although there have been various studies on conflicts in Northern Ghana, such as Kendie et al. (2014), Bukari et al. (2017), Ateng et al. (2018), and Ibrahim (2018), not much focus has been placed on a comprehensive understanding of the contextual issues. This gap becomes sharper when viewed against the fact that no focus study has been conducted to comprehensively understand these contextual issues particularly with relapsed and protracted conflicts in Northern Ghana. Accordingly, the desire to examine the contextual issues for a comprehensive understanding of contemporary relapsed and protracted chieftaincy conflicts in Northern Ghana arose, with Nanumba North district (Bimbilla) in the Northern Region and Bunkpurugu district in the North East Region serving as case studies. In the quest to address this, selected chieftaincy conflicts are profiled to trace the origin. The conflict profiles offered a concise portrayal of the environment in which the conflicts took

place. It examined the conflict's history, with a focus on the generic (structural) reasons and key occurrences. The nature (violent or non-violent) of each of the conflicts was described; actor analysis was done, as well as the extent of political involvement. Consequently, the paper's central question is: What are the contextual issues in the Bimbilla and Bunkpurugu chieftaincy conflicts in the Northern and North East Regions of Northern Ghana respectively?

The paper is organized into six different sections. The first section captured the background issues of the phenomenon under study. An overview of the theoretical and conceptual problems with comprehending conflict and conflict analysis comes next. The methodology is covered in the third section, and the findings and discussion are presented in the fourth and fifth sections, respectively. The paper's final portion provides the overall conclusions and policy implications.

Literature Review

Theoretical perspective

This study's theoretical framework comprised of the realist theory, the multi-causal role model, and the human needs theory. The realists' definitions of realism differ, but they all believe that human nature, which is considered as essentially forceful and hostile, is the primary source of insecurity (Glaser, 2010). A realist might point to inherency as evidence that conflict stems from inherent weaknesses in human nature (Cozette, 2008; Donnelly, 2000; Williams, 2007). According to these arguments, humans are seen to be selfish and are engaged in the pursuit of personalized self-interest (Behr, 2010). Furthermore, such interests will clash with those of others, resulting in unavoidable conflict (Behr & Amelia, 2009). According to this theory, rather than wishing there were no conflict, actors should get ready to deal with its inevitable result and consequences. This theory provided the basis for tracing the

origins of the conflicts with emphasis on the generic and/or the structural causes.

The protracted and recurrent nature of conflicts in Northern Ghana is related to various causes, as this study suggests. As a result, the multi-causal model fits into this study. By combining system and actor methods, the model distinguishes structural from actor-oriented elements (Lederach, 2005). Disagreements are rooted in psychosocial, socioeconomic, political, and international circumstances. According to Mason and Rychard (2005), violence usually results from a conglomeration of causes. When applying the model to the study of conflict, it is necessary to differentiate between the following aspects:

Reasons – The reasons for the conflict are the fundamental issues that the actor views as having their roots in the past.

Targets- The conflict sides' goals are referred to as targets.

Channels- These are dividing lines that pull people together to develop a group identity, whether they are political, social, economic, or national. The channels are frequently unrelated to the conflict's core cause.

Triggers – These bring the fight to a new level. A trigger, for example, in violent disputes causes an actor who previously favoured nonviolent solutions to favour aggressive actions. Triggers are difficult to predict in advance and are difficult to affect a third party.

Catalysts – Once a conflict has begun, these factors influence the rate, severity, and duration of the conflict. When catalysts and channels work together, they can change the reasons for conflict over time, for as when two groups battle over resources and then fight over ethnicity (Mason & Rychard, 2005).

Following the identification of the various components, the following step is to plot the reasons, triggers, channels, catalysts, and targets in a graph and connect them with arrows. Finally, highlight which conflict transformation efforts are addressing which elements on separate cards, as well as where changes or further efforts are needed. Figure 1 depicts this. The multi-causal model aided this study to extricate structural from actor-oriented origins of the purposively selected conflicts.

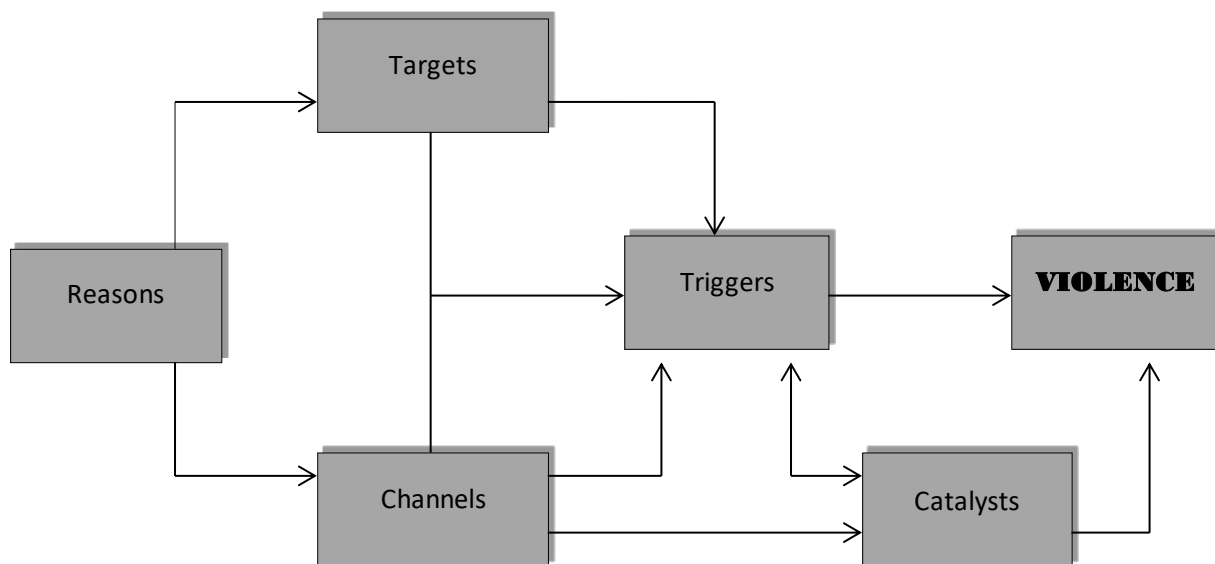


Figure 1: The Multi-Causal Role Model for Conflict Analysis

Source: Adapted from Mason and Rychard (2005, p.11).

The human needs theory is another key paradigm in understanding conflict and conflict management (Burton, 1990). This conflict theory states that groups struggle because they are denied not just their biological but also psychological requirements related to growth and development. People's needs for identification, acknowledgment, participation, and autonomy are among the issues captured by the human needs theory. The theory emphasizes that there are basic needs (food, water, shelter, etc) that all human beings have in common and if desecrated, may result in conflict. This theory was employed in the study to aid the discussion on how the critical events related to human requirements influenced the relapsed nature of the conflicts. This idea explains why conflicts occur in Northern Ghana, where such requirements are frequently met by major oppositions.

While the realist theory of conflict lays the foundation for the discussion of conflict and conflict management in human society by arguing that, the inherency of conflict calls for human readiness to dealing with the outcomes of conflict instead of wishing they never occurred, the multi-causal model and the human needs theories require that, conflicts are understood to occur from varying factors of which stakeholders must take into consideration if sustainable outcomes are to be achieved from management efforts. The complementarity of these theories and model therefore aided the explanation of the contextual issues in the Bimbilla and Bunkpurugu chieftaincy conflicts as the study sought to examine.

Conceptual perspectives

Contextual Issues of Conflicts

Opposing groups in a society have diverse demands, interests, values, power and resource access, and are defined differently by factors such as gender, class, religion,

ethnicity, or ideology. Conflict has several fundamental aspects that must be considered in order to achieve good conflict resolution. These encompass the factors that contribute to conflict within its specific circumstances, the elements that amplify and escalate it, and the conditions that transform a conflict into one characterised by violence and devastation. Practitioners must also be aware of the most effective methods for dealing with conflict and the right processes for resolving it (Rogers, et al., 2013).

Researchers and practitioners can utilise specific core aspects of every dispute to develop a general roadmap. Initially, the mapper acquires data regarding the historical background of the conflict, as well as its physical and organisational contexts. The parties involved in the conflict are analysed during the second phase. The level of party involvement in a conflict and the importance of the outcome differs (Rogers et al., 2013). The contextual issues of conflicts encompass the origin, nature, and inner traits of the actors involved (Schulze et al., 2014; Yang & Chuang, 2015).

Origins of conflicts

Conflict type or nature is strongly tied to the origins of conflicts. Competition for limited resources, like land or territories, jobs and money, and housing are some of the contributing reasons (Mahama, 2003; Sulemana, 2009). Conflicts may also occur as a result of reprehensible or tyrannical leadership, political and religious convictions, and ethnic divisions (Ghana Statistical Service [GSS], 2014). In a study conducted by Kendie et al. (2012), it was shown that conflicts often stem from issues related to property ownership, feelings of superiority or inferiority, pride, and prejudice against groups that are perceived as ethnic minorities. In addition, Awedoba (2010) notes that boundary and land conflicts are additional frequent drivers of conflict in

Ghana's Northern region. They take place over the right of ownership to land where a shared resource is or will be located (Carscious, 2013).

Competition for chieftaincy posts is another factor in Ghanaian disputes (Tonah, 2005). One example of a prolonged dispute over leadership is the misunderstanding between the Abudu and Andani royal families in the Dagbon Kingdom (Kendie et al., 2012). Tonah (2005) argues that the violence in Northern Ghana has emerged as a result of the quest for self-rule and the need for sufficient representation in both local and national government bodies. In his study, Brukum (2007) has classified the struggle between the Konkombas and other traditional kingdoms of Northern Ghana as conflicts of emancipation. One side of the conflict is actively working to maintain the current state of affairs, while the other is resolute in their efforts to overturn it.

The root cause of a dispute must be known before it can be handled or managed (Fisher, 2000; Garrett & Piccinni, 2012; Hammill & Bescançon, 2010). The origin of the conflict might sometimes point to the management methods to apply and the actors to engage in order to reduce the dispute's harmful potential. Conflict can originate from one stage of a disagreement and serve as a trigger for the subsequent one. Determining the conflict's source or underlying reasons is essential to the management process.

Nature of conflicts

Conflicts in nature can be divided into violent and nonviolent conflicts (Bercovitch et al., 2008; O'Rourke & Collins, 2008). Acts, words, attitudes, institutions, or systems that cause physical, psychological, social, or environmental harm which prohibit people from attaining their full human potential are referred to as violence (Ayivor et al., 2013). Northern Ghana presents a picture of violent conflicts. To cite few instances, there were

confrontations between the Gonjas and the Nawuris and Nchumurus in 1991, 1992, and 1994, intra-ethnic clashes among the Dagombas in Voggu and Zabzugu, as well as fights against the Konkombas in 1995 (Carscious, 2013), Mamprusis against Kusasis on countless occasions in Bawku Between 1980 and 1986, Bimoba against the Konkombas between 1999 and 2001, on three occasions, among others. Weapons were used in all of these battles, which led to casualties, fatalities, and property damage.

Actors in conflicts

When it comes to conflict analysis, people are at the centre. All those who are involved in, or affected by, conflict are referred to as "actors" (Zeender, 2005 cited in Ibrahim et al., 2019). People, organizations, and groups that either fuel conflict or suffer its detrimental effects are encompassed. The objectives and interests of actors vary, as do their positions, abilities to achieve their objectives, and interactions with other actors (United States Institute of Peace, 2007). Some approaches identify actors based on their amount of involvement; grassroots, middle level, top-level (Ibrahim, 2018).

Aside the individuals and families who are directly involved in the conflicts in Northern Ghana, two sets of actors are also identified: state and non-state actors (Kendie et al., 2014). Kendie et al. (2014) suggests that both state and non-state actors can work together to effectively address the underlying factors that contribute to conflicts. Largely, the state's response to conflicts in Northern Ghana takes the form of military and a police task force to maintain security, law, and order while the non-state actors which comprises of Organisations such as the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) and West Africa Civil Society Institute (WACSI) offer advocacy campaigns and training programmes for handling and resolving conflicts.

Spoilers or conflict entrepreneurs are also identified as actors - those with an interest in maintaining the bad status quo - of which stakeholders are advised to give special attention (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004). They may become an impediment to peace endeavours if not properly handled within the context of preventative measures. Equally important is the identification of current institutional capabilities for promoting peace, as this is crucial for finding strategic opportunities to address the underlying causes of violent conflict (Lewis, 2004). Institutions, organizations, systems, and procedures for coping with conflict and societal divisions of interest are commonly referred to as “capabilities for peace”. The assessment of these actors should take into account their capacity for handling conflict, their credibility, the probability of their involvement, and the potential roles they may fulfil. Since the current study argues that, origin, nature, and actors of a conflict affect the relapse nature of the conflict if management procedures do not comprehensively understand them, literature on the discussion on what they constitute was relevant for this study.

If there are no markers to measure progress in conflict management process, understanding the background of a conflict will be incomplete (Kendie et al. 2014). Conflict-sensitive indicators must therefore be monitored and measured using conflict-sensitive methodologies. These indicators are context-specific and may change over time as a result of the context's interaction with the intervention. Conflict analysis is merely a moment in time view of an always changing situation. It is imperative to integrate comprehensive research with more dynamic and ongoing monitoring methods in order to furnish up-to-date data that can be utilized to evaluate the interplay between the intervention and the setting. In this sense, indicators are helpful because they help distil

complex reality into a few key characteristics and work well as effective cues for tracking changes (Chou & Yeh, 2007; Córdova 2014; Bayeh & Muchie, 2014).

Methodology

The research was carried out in the Northern Region's Nanumba North district and the North East Region's Bunkpurugu district (Figure 2). High prevalence of conflicts in a given area and the lengthy, deeply ingrained, violent, and recurrent nature of those conflicts are the selection criteria utilized to choose the research areas. The chieftaincy conflicts in Nanumba North and Bunkpurugu districts emerged per the criteria (Kendie et al., 2014). Geographically, these areas are located in the Northern part of Ghana characterized with complex chieftaincy conflicts shaped by different causes and actors. Politically, Northern Ghana has different ethnic groups (centralized and acephalous) with conflicts involving rival groups over succession to traditional political power. These purposively selected districts are hotspots for long-running and easily recurrent conflicts.

The research was of a qualitative nature. Because the study is about behavioural features and approaches, qualitative methodologies allowed us to get closer to the phenomena we were studying and gain a deeper understanding and exposure to its underlying structure. The multiple case study method was used to create extensive descriptions of disputes and their characteristics, with constructs employed to organize the data and connect it to previous research. The results are strengthened by more cases since the patterns are replicated, strengthening the robustness of the conclusions (Yin, 2003). Replication logic offered external confirmation to the conclusions because case studies rely on analytical rather than statistical generalizations (Yin, 2003).

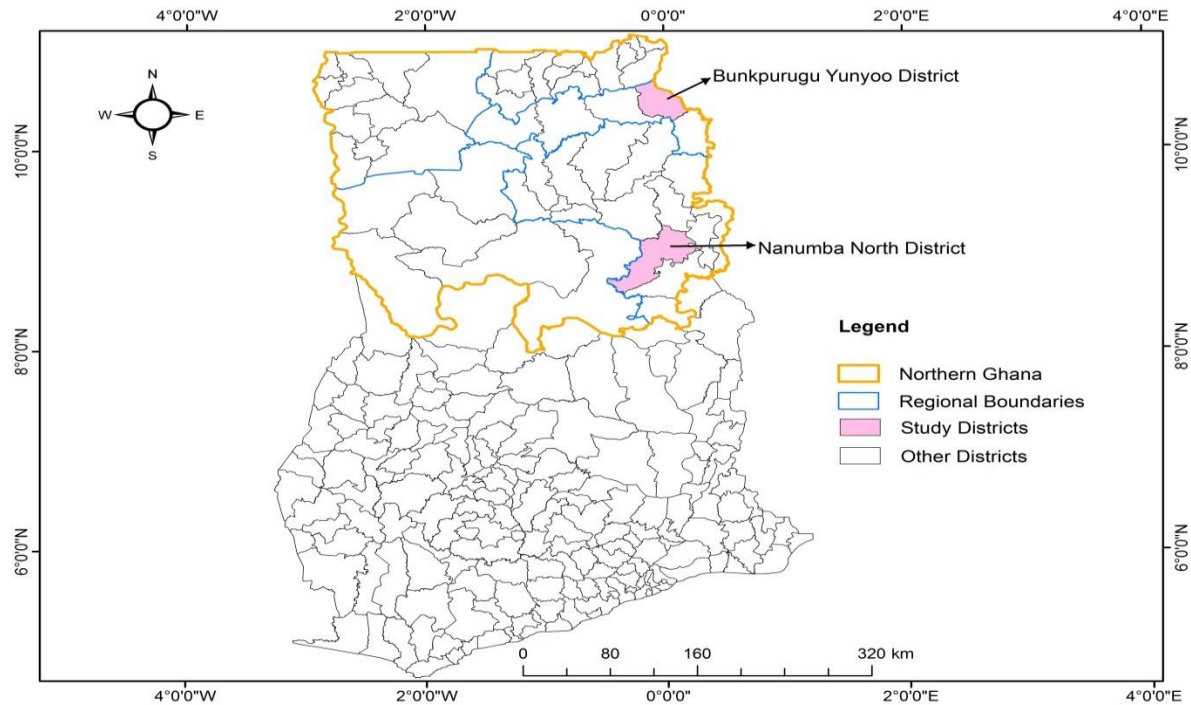


Figure 2: Map of Ghana showing Nanumba North and Bunkpurugu districts.

Source: Authors' Construct (2022).

Conflicting parties, WANEP, officials from District Assemblies, the Catholic Diocese of Yendi and Tamale, the House of Chiefs, and District Security Council, were among the participants in this study. The participants were purposively chosen. These individuals are major players in the conflict resolution process and are thus in a better position to provide in-depth and detailed information on the conflict dynamics. The total number of participants in the study was 39. The breakdown of this is shown in Table 1.

This study collected data through in-depth interviews and focus groups. Participants chose where to conduct in-depth interviews. Each interview lasted 75–120 minutes. The researchers used probing to explore into detail some of the responses provided by the participants. The in-depth interviews were recorded using an audio recorder with the consent of the interviewees. There was no compensation for the participants, except for the chiefs where traditional protocols were observed.

Table 1 - Sample Size

Response Unit	Bunkpurugu	Nanumba North	Regional officers	Total
<i>Traditional leaders/Adversaries</i>				
Jamong leader	2			2
Jafouk leader	2			2
Nakpa Naa		2		2
Andani		2		2
<i>Key informants</i>				
DA officials	1	1		2
Regional Security Council			1	1
District Security Council	1	1		2
WANEP			1	1
Catholic Diocese	1			1
Male FGD	6	6		12
Female FGD	6	6		12
Total	19	18	2	39

Source: Fieldwork (2022).

In addition, to explore the phenomenon under research, two focus group discussions—one for men and one for women—were held in the districts that were chosen. Each focus group had eight participants. This number gave us the space to have a better and more controlled discussion on the topic. The average time frame for the focus group discussion was between 120 to 180 minutes. The focus group discussions were recorded with consent of the participants. The researchers moderated the focus group discussions and deployed probing to elicit detailed data on the issues raised by the participants. There was compensation for the focus group participants for their time and travel expenses.

With the use of Nvivo 12 software, the data was analysed utilizing inductive and deductive thematic cross-site analysis. “A standard format for using many instances is to first provide a full explanation of each case and themes within the case, known as a within-case analysis,” (2015:1998, p.63). The data and literature were used to generate the topics. The within-case analysis is followed by a cross-case analysis or cross-site

synthesis. As a result, each study area's information was grouped into its own case file.

Results

Nanumba North District Conflict (Case One)

The unrest in Nanumba North district stems from a succession issue for the chieftaincy between the families of Andani Dasana Abdulai and Alhaji Salifu Dawuni. After Naa Abarika Attah, the King of the Nanumba Traditional Area, passed away on September 22, 1999, the war broke out. Since then, it has been difficult find a suitable chief to take over the important skin.

Two main gates lead to the paramountcy of the Nanumba Traditional Area. These are the house of the lions (Gbugmayili) and the house of the ring (Bangyili), which alternately occupy the skin. The deceased King, Naa Abarika Attah, was from the house of the ring (Bangyili), implying that the Nanumba Traditional Area's next ruler must be from the house of the lions (Gbugmayili). The royal gate of Nanum was divided into Gbugmayili and Bangyili during the reign of

Naa Azuma (the 14th chief of Bimbilla), and there has not been any conflict within this well-structured palace until the reign of Naa Abarika Attah (the 31st chief of Bimbilla). The in-depth interviews reveal that no royal can become the paramount chief without first rising to the top via a hierarchy of chieftaincy titles (Figure 3).

The hierarchy of chieftaincy titles that a king from the Nanumba Traditional Area needs to climb in order to become the king at Bimbilla

is shown in Figure 3. The path to paramouncy, for instance, requires a royal from the Gbugmayili gate to rise through the ranks from Suhu (Kapulya), the lowest skin title on their side, to Nakpa, the greatest skin title on their side. In a similar vein, a Bangyili royal has to pass through several titles in order to get from Lugni to Dakpam. With these measures in place, one would expect a smooth transition, but that was not the case.

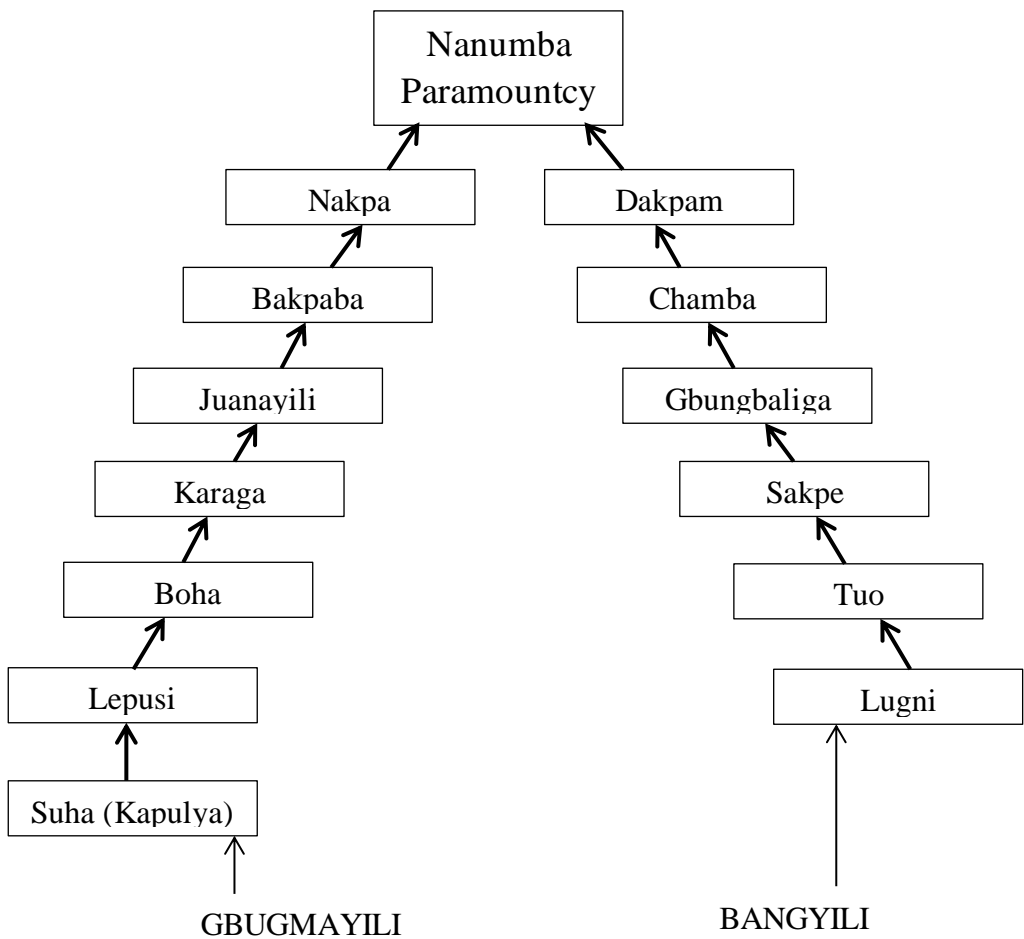


Figure 3: Hierarchical titles to the Nanumba Paramouncy
 Source: Fieldwork (2022).

Following the death of Naa Abarika, nine Kingmakers convened to elect the next King,

as it is customary. Wulensi Naa, Chichege Naa, Kpatihi Naa, Dibsi Naa, Gambugu Naa,

Jilo Naa, Joli Naa, Langiri Naa, and Juo Naa (chief of the Kingmakers) were the nine Kingmakers. Andani Dasana Abdulai was chosen by six of the nine kingmakers to succeed the throne, claiming that the current Nakpa Naa, Alhaji Salifu Dawuni, is not a son of a previous King. The other three (3) members of the kingmakers' council, led by Juo Naa, contended that it was generally incorrect to give someone without a sub-title a higher status title, let alone the paramount skin. Andani Dasana Abdulai, they claim, has never served as a sub-chief and hence is unqualified for the role. Of course, Alhaji Salifu Dawuni's Nakpa title is the last step in a Gbugmayili royal's ascension to the throne. According to a key source:

We do not have a hierarchy for nothing, we have a well-structured succession mechanism. Even a teenager in Nanun can determine who will succeed a sitting Bimbilla Naa in the case of his death because of the hierarchy. It is not enough to be crowned a king by virtue of being a son of a previous Bimbilla Naa. This is unjust, and contrary to our succession culture (Traditional leader in Bimbilla, 12 April, 2022).

Andani Dasana Abdulai cannot be a Bimbilla King, according to the preceding quote. It also means that if he is enskinned as the paramount chief, the traditional area's hierarchy and succession culture will be tainted.

Inductively, a candidate must meet two qualifications in order to be enskinned a King. The person must be the son of a former King and must ascend through a succession system to the top position. Both of these conditions are equally important. On this basis, it is not irrational to suggest that both Andani Dasana Abdulai and Alhaji Salifu Dawuni are unfit to rule the traditional region.

In late 2002, Andani's supporters, along with the guardian of the king's regalia, enskinned Andani Dasana as the Bimbilla Naa. An official complaint was filed at the Region's Security Council by Alhaji Salifu Dawuni and his followers in protest of Andani Dasana's enskinment. They proceeded to court and got an injunction against Bimbilla Naa's enskinment and other connected acts. The case was referred to the Traditional Council by the Northern Regional Security Council. They made decisions on two issues:

- That no one could be king of Nanun unless he had previously had a traditional title, and
- That the head kingmaker, Juo Naa, must be involved in the final choice on who should be king.

This meant that Andani Dasana Abdulai's enskinment was illegitimate, thus Alhaji Salifu Dawuni (Nakpa Naa) was enskinned as Bimbilla Naa. The Andani family accused the government at the time (the NPP government) of swaying the Traditional Council's decision in favour of Nakpa Naa through the secretary of Guma. The subject was subsequently taken to the Regional House of Chiefs (RHC), where Andani Dasana was declared the lawful King of the traditional territory. The Regional House of Chiefs' decision further bolstered their already strong suspicions that the government influenced Guma's committee's decision. The RHC recognizes Andani Dasana Abdulai as the rightful King, whereas the Traditional Council recognizes Alhaji Salifu Dawuni as the genuine King. The customary territory became politicized, resulting in attacks and counter-attacks between the two.

On March 5, 2014, Salifu Dawuni died of a "natural death," exacerbating the issue. On the day of the funeral, gunmen opened fire on the gathering, killing one person and injuring numerous others. In-depth interviews indicated that he would have been buried as a

Paramount Chief of the Nanumba traditional territory if he had been buried at the royal cemetery. This will allow his ancestors to advance to the supreme skin in the future. A curfew was imposed by the District Security and Regional Security Councils from dawn to nightfall. Salifu Dawuni's family also accused the previous government (NDC government) of assisting the Andani family in preventing the father's funeral as King of Bimbilla from taking place.

On July 19, 2014, gunmen stormed Andani Dasana's palace, murdering him and numerous others. Confrontations erupted in the township and numerous people were killed. On July 9th, 2015, another terrible incident occurred. Supporters of Andani Dasana attacked Alhaji Salifu Dawuni's people in what has been described as a beef fight, killing over forty (40) persons, with homes and properties destroyed. Twelve persons from both sides were arrested and held for about six months in Tamale prisons. Except for two suspects, one from each side, who were found guilty of murder, all of the suspects have been released. Naa Yakubu Dasana Andani "illicitly" enskinned two Warrior Chiefs from the Giino and Pusugu villages on February 9, 2017. After the opposing group arrived at the site, there was a flurry of shooting which led to the death of ten people while 18 others were severely injured.

The Bunkpurugu District Conflict (Case Two)

The Bunkpurugu feud is a chieftaincy succession dispute between the Jafouk and Jamong lineages of the Bimoba tribe's Louk clan. Bimobas of the Bunkpurugu traditional territory traveled from Togo to settle in the area due to the enormous amount of land available to support their farming interests. Originally, Konkombas occupied the area, but they continued to spread outward since they were not comfortable cohabiting with various people, according to legend. Both the

Konkombas and the Bimobas were acephalous tribes that owed their allegiance to the Nayiri (King of the Mamprugu Traditional Area). People were initially designated as "caretakers" of the land by the Nayiri, rather than chiefs. However, through time, these titles evolved into chieftaincy titles for these acephalous communities. Although there are other clans in the Bimoba ethnic group, such as the Buuk, Temong, and Bawk, the Louk clan was the first to establish in Bunkpurugu and hence are the skin's descendants. This clan consists of Jafouk and Jamong descendants from the same grandparents.

The Jamong family was the first to accede to the position and governed for three consecutive regimes, from Bait (chief) Najonk through Bait Jamong to Bait Mong, according to the interviewees. They said that the Bunkpurugu skin was only available to members of the Jamong family and had nothing to do with the Jamong family's succession. According to the legends, their father was the first Bimoba to settle in Bunkpurugu and the first to rise to the throne. This implies that no one outside of the Bunkpurugu family is eligible to be enskinned as Bunkpurugu chief.

The Jafouk family, in contrast to the Jamong family's claims, claimed that they were equally eligible to be enskinned as Bunkpurugu chiefs. Since they are Bimbobas and from the Louk tribe, nothing prevents them from competing for a vacant Bunkpurugu skin, according to the family. "All we need to do is present a candidate to the Nayiri and based on his requirement, he can either approve or reject that person" (Key informant from Bunkpurugu, 9th June 2022).

Validation at the Nayiri's palace provided more intriguing details about Bunkpurugu's chieftaincy succession. Because there is no written or verbal succession plan in the traditional territory, Nayiri has the right to

choose from either side (Jafouk or Jamong) or even any other clan other than the Louk clan to occupy the skin, according to a key informant. Individuals from all clans are eligible to propose applicants to Nayiri for consideration whenever a Bunkpurugu skin becomes available. The Nayiri chooses one of these candidates after consultations and background checks, but does not reveal who it is until the day of the enskinment.

Following the death of Bait Mong, a member of the Jamong family, in 1998, the Nayiri appointed Bait Nong from the Jafouk family as the new leader of Bunkpurugu. After the Jamong family had governed the traditional region for three successive reigns, they were displeased with the situation. Consequently, the Jamong family resorted to legal action by bringing the matter before the Northern RHC in order to seek clarification. Bait Nong continued to rule during the adjudication process and passed away in 2006, having held the position for eight years. To succeed Bait Nong, the Nayiri enskinned Alhaji Abuba, a second member of the Jafouk dynasty. At the moment, he serves as Bunkpurugu's chief. The Jamong family maintained their legal battle at the RHC because they continue to believe they are the victims of "injustice", as they put it. The case is still pending in court after 17 years. The Jamong family accused the then NDC government of frustrating the efforts to pass judgment on the matter.

This period has been marked by friction between the two families in all aspects of their lives, particularly after they return from court. On the 18th of October 2014, for example, a member of the Jafouk family was discovered dead at a community located about three (3) kilometres from Bunkpurugu. This resulted in riots and people setting fire to each other's homes. Security personnel apprehended members of the Jamong family and retrieved sophisticated firearms from them before transporting them to Tamale for

prosecution. In retaliation, Jafouk's family set fire to several Jamong family homes, killing one person. Because no one was caught or prosecuted in this incident, the then-NDC administration was accused of assisting the Jafouk family once again.

In April, May, and November of 2015, the two families exchanged attacks and counter-attacks. Many members of the Jamong family, including men, women, and children, fled to Togo and were cared for by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), while others were distributed throughout Ghana. It is worth noting that the Jamong family was no longer able to bury their dead at the community cemetery. Tradition dictates that the chief be notified before the burial, but they were unwilling to do so because the current chief was not a true Bunkpurugu chief. Any attempt to bury bodies at the cemetery resulted in a brawl. Tradition dictates that the chief be notified before any burial, but they were unwilling to do so because the current chief was not recognised by them. Any attempt to bury bodies at the cemetery resulted in a brawl. As a result, all of the Jamong family's deceased bodies were transported to Nakpanduri for burial.

The Catholic Church initially engaged by organising discourse sessions and seminars with the two families. The Catholic Diocese of Navrongo-Bolgatanga organised a peace workshop, extending invitations to fifteen representatives from each family. As a consequence of the session, the two parties reached an agreement by signing a memorandum, in which they committed to uphold each other's rights and coexist peacefully while awaiting the court's verdict. As a result, a number of Jamong refugees from Togo were permitted to repatriate. Furthermore, both parties have the opportunity to inter their deceased at the communal burial ground.

Based on the in-depth interviews, certain organised factions, such as the Bimoba youth association in the diaspora, the media, and certain political figures, exploited the quiet circumstances to arrange a blood burial ritual symbolising the resolution of the conflict between the two families. The District Security Council recognised that the exchange of peace messages led to a symbolic burial of blood, which represented the togetherness between the rivals. Conversely, detailed interviews uncovered evidence that undermined the apparently achieved concept of unity. As one significant source put it:

Let me inform you that on the night before the blood burial, the Jafouk family's house was attacked and set on fire. Despite being aware of this incident, the media and the other organizers chose to ignore it and insisted on proceeding with the blood burial, arguing that some individuals in the community are against peace. Additionally, I have reliable information that the Jamong family is not willing to withdraw the case from court and even plans to appeal if the verdict is not in their favour (Key informant in Bunkpurugu, 9th June, 2022).

This narration implies that wounds are simply wrapped rather than treated, and that they will quickly fester. People in the community still believe that the blood burial had no effect because justice had not been served. A conversation with a Jamong family spokesman verified the data provided by the participant, stating that the matter will be pursued to a far extent until justice is delivered.

Discussion

Within-case Analysis (Case One)

It is instructive to consider how history has shaped the goals pursued in this struggle. Every side creates a different historical story to fit their own interests, despite the Nanumba traditional territory having a well-designed chieftaincy succession scheme. The Andani Dasana Abdulai faction's view of history is crucial in this case. It tends to offer a persistent justification for rejecting reasonable compromises, even when not everyone in the community holds this view. It is a structural factor that makes it difficult for any group to give up since peace seems to bring less value than what has to be sacrificed for it, especially when weak and uncertain gains are weighed against the potential advantages of reconstructing history. Inductively, the prevalence of high levels of mistrust is another structural problem that is extending this conflict. Because of the ongoing complaints, there is distrust and animosity between the parties. The current relationship between the two families as well as their surrogates, has been marked by a climate of mistrust and suspicion. There is always a danger when attempting cooperation.

One of the main reasons for this conflict is that it is a conflict of interest rather than just one involving the chieftaincy title. The conflict's emotional depth, as well as the degree of distrust, animosity, and disdain that have grown stronger over time, have not yet been quantified. Nonetheless, this emotion could be so strong that some of the conflict's opponents would rather hurt the other side than benefit from it. According to Speakman and Ryals (2010), interest in a conflict arises when there are perceived or real resource shortages, procedural problems, and psychological problems. This is consistent with their theory of the fundamental components of conflict.

The passing of Naa Abarika served as both the conflict's immediate cause and/or catalyst. The hunt for a new king to replace Naa Abarika following his death is the reason behind all the hardships and horrors documented. The attempt by Salifu Dawuni's family to bury his remains in the royal cemetery was the second direct cause. These attempts had been met with resistance from the opposing group on multiple times, resulting in numerous conflicts. This is congruent with the views of the human needs theorists as it contends that, groups struggle because they are denied not just their biological needs but also psychological requirements related to their growth and development. Due to celebrations by a faction, court verdicts have also occasionally led to conflicts. There are rumours that the Regent has been enskinning new chiefs in some of the traditional area's villages recently. A key informant stated that this conduct resulted in the deaths of 10 individuals and the injuries of 18.

Following Ibrahim's (2018) classification of actors into grassroots, medium, and top levels, an analysis of the actors in this conflict reveals three key findings. First, the two families, who are related in the Gbugmayili lineage, are the grassroots actors. This group of individuals is engaging in combative behaviour because they directly benefit from the resolution of the disagreement. This implies that the opponents' total separation will not be sufficient to handle the conflict. The fundamental actor's goal is to control the community in order to claim the skin and reap the benefits that come with it. Second, the middle-level actors in this struggle are the nine kingmakers. They have a tangential interest in the result and are the two families' allies or supporters. Because of their connections to both the top and the bottom, these actors must be given prominence in order to achieve sustainable results. The actor's goal in choosing the appropriate

candidate to fill the void was to avoid going against customs and cultural norms. Lastly, the top-level actors in the dispute are the military, the RHC, and civil society. Their goal is to mediate between the opposing parties with the intention of fostering peace as a necessary condition for progress.

Political interferences were perceived by both factions to the conflict as recounted. The general suspicion that the NPP and the NDC are supporting Nakpa Naa's family and Andani Dasana's family respectively was to some extent justified. Just when NPP took over governance in 2017, Nakpa Naa's family was allowed to bury their father. This, to some, buttressed the long-held belief of the government supporting the family. The family therefore feel identified and secured by the NPP government. This observation aligns with the human needs theory, as it suggests that identity and security are significant group needs. The worries and concerns related to survival that arise from these needs often play a crucial role as causal factors.

A first look at this battle paints a concerning image because it is clearly quite harmful. It is typified by tense situations and extreme violence, which includes destroying homes and farms and killing or seriously hurting opponents. Access to and availability of firearms encourage attacks and counterattacks that have harmed individuals in the area physically, psychologically, and socially and have kept them from realizing their full potential. Investor interest has been hampered by the social fabric's weakening, the economy's slowdown, and the polarization of society toward harmful behaviours. The struggle seems never-ending, which is troubling.

On May 23, 2018, the Supreme Court deemed the enskinning of Andani Dasana to be valid in evaluating the present state of the conflict. There is still a lot of security monitoring the area. The family of the late

Nakpa Naa Salifu Dawuni says the ruling by the Supreme Court has no bearing on them according to the spokesperson of the family. Due to the disagreement among Kingmakers, the society has become more polarized over a variety of subjects that have the potential to incite violence by igniting people's territorial tendencies. Funerals for the departed chiefs have also not yet been held. The community is mistrustful and fearful. The curfews, RHC, and Supreme Court have provided short-term stability but have not addressed the root basis of the conflict.

Within-case Analysis (Case Two)

The initial structural reason for the conflicts in the Bunkpurugu District is the acephalous ethnic group's progressive centralization without a succession plan. Ethnic groups that were formerly decentralized and had no leaders are now centralizing and confronting the issue of power dynamics. The establishment of the National and Regional House of Chiefs [RHC] (Chieftaincy Act 1971 (Act 370)) in Ghana has attached some importance to centralized ethnic groups since they always would have representatives at the apex making decisions in their favour. Ethnic groups without centrality realised the importance and have begun processes to organise themselves and seek for paramountcies. The Bimoba ethnic group is a clear example. They did not have any chiefs or succession arrangements in the past. The place lacks primary issues that specify the qualifications for the position of superintendent. The chieftaincy institution is of paramount significance to the two families (Jamong and Jafouk), who are all members of the same clan (Louk). Consequently, they are experiencing difficulty in achieving this status. Conflicts associated with the Bunkpurugu title will persist in the absence of a succession plan. According to Moore (2003), power, authority, ownership, control, and geographical separation are all structural inequities that lead to structural conflicts.

Concerning the chieftaincy issues, this is the exact scenario in the Bunkpurugu District.

Another structural cause is the manner in which parties interpret history to align with their positions. In reality, the actions of each party were justified by their respective histories, which made it challenging to reach a compromise. This is consistent with the realist theory of conflict. The theory contends that decision-makers are morally justified in utilizing any means necessary to protect their fundamental interests and ensure their self-preservation (Molley, 2003). It is for this reason parties are quick to construe history in a way that will suit their interest.

The grassroots actors are the Jamong and Jafouk families of within the same clan, as per the actor analysis. This does not apply to all Bimobas, as this ethnic group is divided into distinct lineages. The two family members are the primary protagonists and were directly impacted by the misunderstanding's consequence. Their objective is to establish themselves as the dominant and governing family in relation to the Bunkpurugu skin. Thus, the goal is to take on the role, obtain authority and power, and gain respect and status within the community. The Nayiri is the middle-level actor in the chieftaincy succession conflict in the district. He is the landlord of the traditional area, and his decisions regarding who receives what are of the utmost importance. His significance as an actor necessitates his consideration at every stage of the decision-making process in order to achieve success. His motivation is to preserve his authority in the traditional region, with a desire to preserve ties that minority ethnic groups have with the Nayiri complexion.

The Navrongo-Bolgatanga Catholic Diocese, West African Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), District Security Council, and the RHC served as the top-level actors in this conflict. All of the mediators were making an effort to encourage long-term dispute

management. Another category of actors is known as “spoilers”. This is composed of the diverse ethnic associations within the diaspora. It is purported that this group of individuals had either conscious or subliminal interest in keeping things the way they are. They are significant actors that must be taken into account during the conflict management process.

The nature of the conflict can be said to be destructive. Every argument has resulted in consequences, including injuries, the destruction of houses, and loss of life. If, indeed, an entire community’s supplies of drinking water (boreholes and wells) were poisoned, it demonstrates the extent of the divisions and the fact that opponents are not only striving to achieve their desired goals, but also to harm and eradicate their rivals. This finding concurs with Bercovitch et al. (2008) classification of conflict as destructive.

In considering the current status of the conflicts, despite the blood burial ceremony being hailed as a sign of the battles coming to a conclusion, the Jamong and Jafouk families are still awaiting a court ruling, showing that their disputes are ongoing. This recipe nevertheless has the potential to lead to confrontations. Until the fundamental question of who rightfully occupies the skin is resolved, the district cannot be characterized as a harmonious society.

Cross-case Analysis (Case One Versus Case Two)

Applying the multi-causal model of conflict analysis, it was observed that the conflicts in the Nanumba North and Bunkpurugu Districts, the two chosen research locations, had significant differences across various aspects. For instance, the causal patterns, levels of growth, motivations, and interests, as well as the extent of participation of high-level players, were not exactly the same. Each case possesses distinct components that rendered the task of comparison challenging,

if not potentially deceptive. However, the cross-site analysis diverges from the factors that appear to distinguish each individual case. The distinctions among the examples are crucial, and it would be imprudent to disregard them. The research reveals comparable structural and procedural circumstances in both instances. These characteristics provide not just the possibility but also the potential for significant value in the comparison. This will facilitate the generation of valuable insights that can enhance and fortify the management methods utilized in handling these conflicts.

When analysing the several elements that contribute to the disputes, the multi-causal model highlights the significant role played by a structural condition. This condition involves not only the employment of historical narratives by each side to support their perspectives, but also the specific ways in which history is manipulated and misinterpreted. Essentially, both parties create a fictional narrative that combines certain factual aspects of the past. Indeed, various interpretations of history, although not universally accepted within the community, sometimes serve as a persistent justification for refusing to make practical compromises. This discovery aligns with Hauss’ (2003) perspective on the fundamental origins of conflicts in modern times. Hauss argues that individuals often exaggerate the significance of past hostilities in order to benefit themselves. By exploiting deep-seated concerns and grievances among their supporters, leaders can enhance their authority and credibility.

The discovery also corroborates Sulemana’s (2009) research on the factors contributing to conflicts in Northern Ghana. Sulemana (2009) argues that the practice of preserving one’s identity through the ongoing and deliberate interpretation of historical events is a significant factor contributing to conflicts. By associating ideological

disparities with certain interpretations, they are reinforced to the extent of being seen as indisputable facts. Of particular significance is the observation that younger generations tend to have a discerning comprehension of history, which they then internalize, hence creating challenges in effectively handling divergent viewpoints. The realists' theory of conflict argues that decision-makers are morally justified in protecting their fundamental interests and ensuring self-preservation by employing any means required (Morgenthau, 1973; Waltz, 1959; Williams, 2007). This discovery provides evidence to support the theorists' claim.

One of the fundamental causes of conflict is disagreement over who gets to use the land and what kinds of resources are available on it. Despite being associated to the chieftaincy, the underlying motivations and interest in the skins were tied to control and access to the land resource. This lends credence to the views expressed by Mahama (2003), Brukum (2007), Sulemana (2009), Awedoba (2010), and Kendie et al. (2012) about land-related chieftaincy conflicts.

Both situations analysed were characterized by significant levels of distrust. This represents the third structural condition of the conflicts. The enduring nature of the grievances that gave rise to the conflicts, the animosity resulting from the unavoidable atrocities, and the limited understanding of each other's motives foster a sense of distrust among the parties involved. Adversaries were compelled to make worse than ideal choices due to their limited access to information, lack of trust, and absence of a long-term outlook. For instance, the measures taken by each party to safeguard themselves from deception by the other side may also heighten suspicion and provoke responses that exacerbate worries and uneasiness. This discovery also demonstrates the presence of the realist theory. It implies that individuals are willing to accept the

repercussions of disputes, recognizing their inevitability, rather than desiring their absence.

Finally, the conflicts in Bunkpurugu and Bimbilla are perpetuating and fostering a culture of violence. An inescapable loop is initiated when a brutal occurrence incites retaliation and reciprocal assaults. The intensity of this emotion is so high that certain adversaries would rather cause harm to the opposing party than seek personal gain. This finding aligns with the notion that perceived aims and incompatibility of interests may be the fundamental underlying factor contributing to social disputes (Rugumamu, 2002).

The individuals vying for power and authority in the discussed disputes were their immediate family members, who acted as grassroots actors. These were the principal players in the disputes. Peace building procedures need to take these people's motivations and interests into account for sustainable management outcomes, since they were directly impacted by the conflicts' outcomes. The leaders possessing great conventional capacity to influence traditional matters were considered middle-level actors. This group included the Nayiri and the nine kingmakers in Nanumba North. They have an indirect impact on the disputes' results; thus, management procedures need to take their opinions into account. The main goal of the top-level actors was to help these impoverished communities grow. However, some powerful players only aimed to maintain the unfavourable state of affairs around the disputes. These "spoilers" can be identified by the way they handle the dispute. The media, diaspora communities, and politicians comprised this category in the aforementioned examples. On the issue of political interferences, accusations on political parties in governance were meagre since they lack evidence to prove their stands.

Conclusion and Policy Implication

The contextual factors that are presented have a substantial impact on the conflict management strategies used to address the various conflict situations because they give rise to a conflict syndrome in Northern Ghana. Contextualizing management processes requires an understanding of contextual issues. It is also true that contextual factors could present chances for advancement or roadblocks for it during the management process. The identification of contextual concerns is seen significant in fostering an atmosphere of calmness since it establishes a framework for future management endeavours. The development of an appropriate platform guided by genuine purpose is necessary for the Regional and District Peace Councils, as well as District Assemblies, to help stakeholders in these management processes comprehend contextual concerns leading to sustainable solutions. This paper therefore adds up to knowledge on how pre-requisite it is in understanding the contextual issues (origins, actors, dynamics) of conflicts in order to achieve acceptable and sustainable management outcomes especially for stakeholders handling conflicts issues in Northern Ghana.

According to Nkabahona (2007), understanding the contextual concerns surrounding a conflict is not the only challenge in trying to manage or resolve it. While essential, it is insufficient to achieve sustained managerial results. For this reason, the limitation of the study is that, the study could have measured the acceptable level of management outcomes with cases where the contextual issues are viewed vis-à-vis the management strategies and the vice versa so as to ascertain the impact of understanding contextual issues in the resolution process.

Declaration of conflicting of interests:

The Authors declare that there is no conflict of interest

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