

Examining the effects of chieftaincy disputes in Funsii traditional area in the Upper West of Ghana

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Abstract

The study examines the effects of the Chieftaincy Dispute in the Funsii Traditional Area. Methods used included Relative Deprivation theory, Case study design, sample size of 45, purposive and convenience sampling, semi-structured and key informant interviews, and content analysis. Inadequate documentation on succession route, noncompliance with tradition, mistrust, poverty, and politicization fueled the dispute. The socio-cultural effects of the dispute include injuries and deaths, trauma, collapse of social ties, and difficulty to access social services. Moreover, dwindling food production, price hikes in goods, low sales, difficulty in accessing transport to travel, soaring unemployment, loss of labour force, and increase of middlemen in business were the economic and political effects. Lastly, supernatural arbitration, the use of legal system, and dialogue and capacity building were the non-violent conflict resolution mechanisms whilst the use of security forces was a violent mechanism. The study found that non-violent mechanisms were more appropriate for resolving the dispute in the Funsii Traditional area. The study recommends that the Wa East District Assembly, Upper West Regional House of Chiefs and the Ministry of Chieftaincy should synchronize and codify the customary laws with the constitutional and legal instruments on the succession route to the Funsii Chieftaincy Title.

Keywords: Effects, dispute, traditional area.

1. Introduction and the problem

According to Nukunya (2003) the chieftaincy is the oldest political institution in pre-colonial Ghanaian society. The 1992 Constitution of the Fourth Republic of Ghana sees a chief as “a person who hailing from the appropriate family and lineage has been validly nominated, elected or selected and enstooled, en-skinned or installed as a chief or queen mother in accordance with the relevant customary law and usage.” For Arhin, (1985) cited in Asamoah (2012: 90) a chief is a ‘person elected or selected in accordance with customary usage and recognized by the government to wield authority and perform functions derived from tradition or assigned by central government within specified areas’. Thus, for a chief to have legitimate power, his qualifications, selection and installation requires the authentication of the government and the people of the community wherein the chief exercises authority. Salih (2018a: 1) noted that “chieftaincy system in the traditional governance structure is hierarchical in nature. The individual wielding the highest traditional authority is referred to as the paramount chief.”

Asamoah (2010: 16) noted that chieftaincy is “... an organized system of rule in the African traditional society with the chief as the symbolic head (or the first among equals). In most parts of Africa, the first person to have occupied a particular geographical area became chief over the people who later inhabited that territory. These chiefs ruled based on the total consent of the people.”

Nukunya (2003) classified chieftaincy into centralized and acephalous (non-centralised) systems. The centralized system exists in societies that have a chief or king whose authority and control is respected within his jurisdiction. Here, the chief has well-defined boundaries and an administrative machinery, legislative and judicial institutions to help govern his subjects. Notable among the ethnic groups that practice this system is the Sissaala in the Funsu Traditional Area in the Upper West Region of Ghana where the study was undertaken. On the other hand, acephalous (non-centralised) systems are stateless societies without any central authority and without clear boundaries, judicial, legislative and administrative procedures. Such acephalous societies otherwise called egalitarian or non-stratified societies like the Talensi in the Upper East Region of Ghana (Nukunya, 2003) are organized according to lineage such that sectional or clan heads exercise political control. The chief serves as a spokesperson for his community and the outside world and thereby, disseminate information, and adjudicates disputes (Asamoah, 2012). Acheampong (2010, p.16) concluded that “the main functions of the institution includes control of

land, finance, internal and external trade, defense, law and order, maintenance of peace among the people and their allies, and issues relating to social and cultural matters". This positions chiefs in Ghana as development agents who liaise and partner with government to attract desired development to their jurisdiction. Without the chiefs' deep-rooted traditional values and norms of the collective nationalities, the Constitution alone would be unable to sustain the state of Ghana (Institute of Economic Affairs, 2010). Tonah (2012) asserted that chiefs do not only command considerable respect amongst their subjects, they also have access to considerable resources including the labour of their subjects, land, livestock, minerals, water and trees of economic value. Due to this, becoming a chief is not merely a contest between individual members of the royal group but involves the contestants' families, lineages and clans as well as their friends and supporters. As a result, successive governments of Ghana have relied on the chiefs' support and worked hand in hand with them (Tengan, 1989) to mobilize their respective community members for the needed taxes, finances, human resource and natural resources for developmental projects. So, in the words of Lentz (1993), chiefs in contemporary Ghana continue to be an important mediating body between local communities and political authorities.

According to Tonah (2012), most of chieftaincy disputes in Ghana are typically related to matters of succession and, involving two or more factions. Willks (1989, p.199) was of the view that, chieftaincy conflict 'manifests itself most visibly in a succession.' These chieftaincy disputes hamper progress and for that reason most people hold the view that the institution is no more relevant (Asamoah, 2012). There is a perception that northern Ghana is prone to chieftaincy disputes probably because of the violent, protracted and wide nature of these disputes involving several ethnic groups across large geographical areas. These protracted disputes involve members of entire lineages, clans or ethnic groups (Tonah, 2012). Moreover, according to the United Nations Environment Programme (2009) chieftaincy disputes disrupt institutions, initiatives and mechanisms of policy coordination which in turn creates space for poor management, lack of investment and illegality. Chieftaincy disputes are said to erode gains on authority, accountability and transparency in governance. When tensions intensify and the rule of law breaks down, the resulting institutional vacuum can lead to a culture of impunity and corruption as public officials begin to ignore governance norms and structures, focusing instead on their personal interests. Financial resources are diverted away from investments in public infrastructure and essential services towards military

interventions (United Nations Environment Programme, 2009). Willks (1989, p.106) said ‘No contemporary account of the upheaval [of chieftaincy conflict] exist ... All these [chieftaincy conflict] matters are poorly documented. ‘The absence of written procedures and documentation’ (Institute of Economic Affairs 2010: 2) on the succession route in Funsu Chieftaincy dispute, results in intra-gate contention in the Area. Notwithstanding that chieftaincy dispute have been researched and discussed in the traditional chieftaincy literature (Prah and Yeboah, 2011), there is paucity of research on the Funsu Chieftaincy dispute even when it has turned violent since 2003. Therefore, it is imperative to undertake this study to establish the effects of the chieftaincy dispute in the Funsu Traditional Area in the Upper West Region of Ghana.

2. Research design and methods

The study used qualitative approach with a case study design. Creswell (2009) asserted that, case study “is used in a limited way in qualitative research” since the inquiry is not to generalize findings to individuals and sites understudy. The focus is to develop and describe findings in specific context and sites...” (Creswell, 2009) of the study in the Funsu Paramouncy. Research studies on chieftaincy disputes have often adopted quantitative or mixed methods approaches. These were unable to explain the respondents’ in-depth experiences and motives. The use of qualitative approaches are more adequate for the study of the perceptions, emotions, feelings, root causes, implications and context (Nagasawa, 2013). Acheampong (2010) affirmed that case study as a qualitative design in the study of chieftaincy dispute was the way to go. This is because the issues in the disputes were very complex, dynamic, on-going and involved many factions and stakeholders. These result in varying shades of opinions on the dispute’s root causes, effects, future, management and resolution strategies, and more significantly, not having quantitative data on the dispute (Acheampong, 2010). Notwithstanding that chieftaincy disputes are not recent developments, the case of Funsu chieftaincy is an exception because it has not been studied in spite of its renewed clashes in an area that was seen as the food hub of the Upper West Region of Ghana. In the light of the foregoing, case study design was employed for the study of the Funsu Chieftaincy dispute. A sample size of 45 was used for the study since these respondents understood the issues that were understudied. This was necessary for a qualitative study where both semi-structured and key informants interviews used required time per respondent. Thus, this permitted the research to gather detailed and in-depth data on the

Funsi chieftaincy dispute that captured all the salient characteristics of the accessible population.

Purposive sampling technique was used to choose these respondents. According to Creswell (2008) cited in Kusi (2012, pp 81-82) “in purposive sampling, researchers intentionally select individuals and sites to learn or understand the central phenomenon. The standard used in choosing participants and sites is whether they are information rich.” Therefore, these representatives had the requisite expertise and competencies to share their in-depth knowledge, thoughts and opinions on the issues under enquiry.

Also, convenient sampling was used to meet respondents at the District and Regional Security Councils, Regional House of Chiefs and Regional Peace Council meeting grounds. This made members readily available for the study and which allowed the researchers relatively easy way to meet respondents at a particular time (Creswell, 2009; Kusi, 2012). Semi-structured interview and Key informant Interview schedules were used to solicit data where the researchers travelled around to identify the respondents and then booked appointments at the convenience of each of the respondents. Each interview was scheduled to last around 20 minutes. Semi-structured interview and Key informant Interview schedules were used for the data collection which Kusi (2012: 45-46) indicated that these instruments offer “interviewees the opportunity to express their views, feelings and experiences freely, and the interviewers the freedom to divert from the items or questions in schedule to seek clarification.” These instruments allowed the researcher to ask follow-up question(s) or vary the order of questions as a way to clarify answers and for information-rich to be solicited (Babbie, 2010; Kusi, 2012). The next section reviewed theoretical perspective that anchored the study.

3. A brief literature review

Relative Deprivation theory by Gurr (1970) was used to guide the study. Gurr’s (1970) theory posits that people value welfare, power and interpersonal relations and perceive themselves to have value capabilities and are rightfully entitled to the achievement of these values. In the event where others suppress and subvert the achievement of these values, the victims will fight back (Gurr, 1970). Thus, the victims will engage in violent behaviour to voice their dissention, displeasure and deprivation of what they value (Gurr, 1970; Smith and Pettigrew, 2015). Being denied one’s perceived entitlement to chieftaincy titles elicits a sense of victimisation and creates disputes. Interest in chieftaincy titles is owed mainly to benefits that come with the position as well as the

power to engage in nepotist interactions with political leaders. The dispute erupts where one faction feels cheated as regards inheriting the skin.

Issifu and Asante (2015) using deprivation theory suggested that being deprived of the chieftaincy which would be experienced as an unmet need which each of the contending gates is bent on satisfying, explains intractable nature of the dispute. Asante (2015) noted the need to properly manage dominance, power struggle and political and economic opportunities for contending gates. This suggests that it is important to manage the dominance in the intra gate power struggle among the Kunkongbuni, Balonosi and Muliabee gates in the Traditional Area to reduce the negative impact of conflict

According to Awedoba (2009), the era of 17 paramountcies in the Upper West Region suffered 17 chieftaincy disputes pending before the Judicial Committee of the Upper West Regional House of chiefs. The chieftaincy succession of the Funsu Traditional area used to occur in a peaceful rotational manner between Balonosi and Kunkongbuni gates. This subsequently degenerated into a dispute when the Muliabee side began advocating for inclusion as the third gate. This was after the passing of the then chief who was from the Kunkongbuni gate in 2003. The claim of the Muliabee gate led to intermittent clashes among the contending gates Funsu resulting in the death of 3 persons and several other injured (Upper West Regional House of Chief, 2014).

4. Findings and discussions

4.1. Factors impeding the lawful installation of the Funsu chief

The study revealed that the contributing factors to the Funsu dispute were varied as shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1: CONTRIBUTING TO THE FUNSU CONFLICT

Contributing factors	Factors	Percent	Rank
Inadequate documentation on succession route	13	28.8	1st
Noncomplying with tradition	10	22.2	2nd
Mistrust	8	17.8	3rd
Unemployment	6	13.3	4th
Politics	5	11.1	5th
Ascribed nature	2	4.4	6th
Self-aggrandizement	1	2.2	7th

Source: Fieldwork, 2018

From Table 1 inadequate documentation on succession route was identified and ranked as the first contributing factor in the Funsu Chieftaincy dispute. A representative of the Kingmakers said:

There is nothing showing how the skin rotates including those gates that are qualified. In the past, chieftaincy matters in the Funsu Traditional Area were kept in secrecy and the generation did not anticipate that misunderstanding would arise in the succession route to the Funsu Chieftaincy Title. So the wealthy persons who wield the influence are capitalizing on the lack of documentation on the succession route to change the succession tradition (Interview with Kingmakers, 3rd March, 2019).

Balonosi gate representative noted that:

due to the lack of documentation on the succession route, the contending gates twist the tradition to their favors since there is no document on the succession guidelines on who to become the next chief. Also, high illiteracy rate has prevented the older generation from documenting down the succession guidelines (Interview with Balonosi gate representative, 3rd March, 2019).

The finding implied that records are not kept for reference on the succession routes and the one to succeed the sitting chief may be unknown. As such, this leaves no clear succession lineage on written document, and other gates though unqualified infiltrate. Once there is no watertight records as to the one who succeeds a sitting chief or the next gate to succeed, it would be very difficult to select a successor smoothly devoid of disagreement. Even the gates that would use the legal system in contending for the title would twist the tradition on the succession since there may not be documents to prove their claim. So, getting the next chief is subjected to falsification, conjecturing, manipulation and misinterpretation, opened to a lot of biases. Therefore, the feuding gates would continue to compete to undo one another and the gate that overpowers the others would impose itself on the area as the true royal to ascend the high skin as the overlord. But should the gate be blamed when there are no laid down documentary guidelines for filling in the vacant position? This is in support of Salih (2018a) assertion that there are no documentary evidence to guide the chieftaincy succession route.

Also, in Table 1, noncompliance with tradition of the traditional area had 22.2% endorsement from the respondents and ranked as second influential contributing factor of the Funsu Chieftaincy dispute. It is evidently clear that the feuding gates often circumvent and violate the tradition in their bid for the

Funsu Chieftaincy title. Each of the feuding factions denounces other contenders by arguing that they are subverting the tradition but never admits to doing the same. Each gate fights for its identity. The wealth of some gates enables them to, overlook the fact that traditionally kingmakers have the right to enstool a chief. The late chief contravened tradition by proposing two successors thereby showcasing the ways that customs are decreasingly upheld by elders.

Chieftaincy as an institution wields authority and is highly considered among subjects through whom the occupant of the skin gets to lobby and attract development and resources to his area of control. Chiefs these days attract a lot of attention from political authorities and development agents which helps feuding gates eschew tradition in favour of more practical opportunistic means to ascend to Funsu chieftaincy. Nachinaab and Azumah (2017) attribute the prevalence of such chieftaincy disputes to the failure of royal gates to follow laid-down traditions.

Mistrust had 17.8% endorsement of the respondents and ranked as the third most important contributing factor of the Funsu chieftaincy dispute. Mistrust has polarize the feuding gates and sections in Funsu with respect to which gate is the true royal and eligible to the skin. Each of the gates believes that its gate would be victimized should the opponent occupies the skin. So the contenders suspect one another. The uncertainty about what may happen to their gate(s) if a different gate occupies the position is very real since none of the gates can predict what the other could do to them should they have the opportunity. This confirmed Issifu and Asante (2015), Salih (2018a) stands that mistrust amongst contending gates fuel chieftaincy dispute. As a result, things that could be done within a shorter time get lengthy or may not be done at all (Bukari *et al*, 2017).

Furthermore, unemployment was ranked as fourth contributing factor of the chieftaincy dispute in Funsu with 13.3% affirmation of the respondents. The current and available secondary data from the Wa East District Assembly on the employment status of the people, 15 years and older by age within the district is shown in Figure 1.

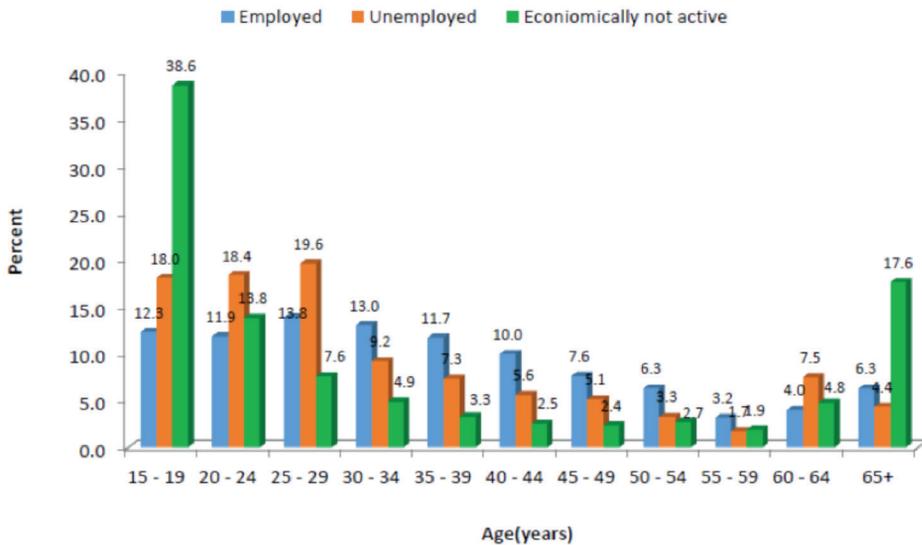


FIGURE 1: WA EAST DISTRICT POPULATION EMPLOYMENT STATUS 15 YEARS AND OLDER BY AGE

Source: Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) (2014: 37)

From Figure 1, employment status data from the Wa East District Assembly indicated that within the age ranges of 15-19, 20-24, 25-29, 30-34 and 65+, the proportions of the unemployed were 18.0%, 18.4%, 19.6%, 9.2% and 4.4% as compared with 12.3%, 11.9%, 8.3%, 13.8% and 17.6% who were employed respectively. However, the age groups from 30 to 59 years, the proportions for the employed persons were higher than those who are economically-active but unemployed (GSS, 2014).

Being a paramount chief of the Funsu Traditional area does not only come with responsibilities but access to power and resources that accrue to one. These are not exercised as burden only but profitable to the overlord. The contending gates and their supporters get to feel that becoming a chief attracts wealth in the community.

Politics had 11.1% endorsement of the respondents and ranked as the sixth influential factor of the Funsu Chieftaincy Conflict. The District Chief Executive of the Wa East District had this to say:

“politicians interfere in matters of chiefs fueling wrong people who are not rightful owners to the throne to contest for the title. So the gates aligned themselves to the

major political parties and these politicians for their parochial interest take undue advantage to win the support of the beneficiary gate(s) during election. Because of party politics, party members want the chief to come from their party.” (Interview with District Chief Executive of the Wa East District, 29th March, 2019).

This makes leading political figures sometimes to make statements that suggest their support for a particular gate(s) as well as prejudice against the other gate(s) just for the purpose of obtaining votes from the side the politician(s) is vying for. So self-seeking politicians at the highest level hire lawyers to prosecute the case in court or defend their preferred gate. This re-enforced that politicians are using the conflict to advance their course which generates crisis in the Funsu traditional chieftaincy

4.2. Sociocultural effects of the Funsu chieftaincy conflict

This section revealed that injuries and deaths, trauma, forced migration, collapsed of social ties, and difficulty to access health, education and social services as the socio-cultural effects of the conflict.

The study revealed that a number of socio-cultural effects including psychological trauma, a sense of insecurity among the local population particularly women, forced migration as well as a disintegration of the social fabric result from the Funsu chieftaincy dispute. The case where families were losing their relatives, friends, spouses, parents and bread winners who were killed or injured during violent confrontations drained the pocket of relatives in organizing funerals and caring for the dependents of the deceased. This brought financial hardships on the affected households, families and relatives. The frustrations and pains on the victims' relatives were demoralizing. Also, this led to single parenting and psychological disorders in the hearts and minds of relatives of the deceased.

Also, trauma was another sociocultural effect of the Funsu Chieftaincy dispute in the Traditional area. According to a sub-chief:

‘the constant misunderstanding, renewed clashes and violence of the conflict promoted deep and long standing pain and hatred in the hearts of the opposing parties which awaited revenge to cause further distraction and psychological disorders. The stress and frustration people go through during violence eruptions cause mental, social, physical and economical stress and pains to the victims and their relatives’ (interview with a sub-chief, 10th March, 2019).

This signified that the Funsu chieftaincy conflict made inhabitants unsafe

particularly women and children. Any succeeding clashes were often twisted, fueled and scaled up in terms of violent confrontation with adverse maltreatment from the opposing factions where people ran for their lives. This upheld the view of Bukari *et al.*, (2017) when they observed that conflict made the victims emotional leaving them bitter, hostile and divisive among the combatants due to the division within their ranks.

Another sociocultural effect of the Funsu Chieftaincy dispute was that it renders people homeless during the renewed clashes. 'Regional Peace Council representative noted that

‘in times of renewed violent clashes in Funsu, houses were touched, shops damaged and properties vandalized’ (interview with Regional Peace Council representative, 13th May, 2019).

This meant that the clashes inflamed tensions and displaced family members, posing a threat to peaceful co-existence of the people of the Funsu Traditional Area. These showed that the opposing gates inflicted pain on one another and that further impoverished the victims. The victims who contributed to the productive force of the labour market will miss work during such difficult periods of the dispute. This would not only idle critical skills in the informal sector but formal as well.

Forced migration was another socio-cultural effect of the Funsu Chieftaincy dispute in the Traditional Area. This had been one of the serious threats of the Funsu conflict as opined by Police officer as a member of the District Security Council:

“in times of clashes, people are forced to leave the Funsu Traditional Area to other towns for fear of reprisal attacks. Government workers, farmers and business persons had no option than to leave the town for their dear lives. When people migrate to other places, there will be much pressure on social amenities making life uncomfortable in the new areas the people relocated to. This becomes the spillover effect to other locations that have no contribution to the causes of the Funsu dispute. It even leads to relocation of businesses and discourages workers, farmers and business persons to stay and work in the traditional area” (An interview with a Police Officer, 10th April, 2019).

This signified that people were forced to move permanently to places where there was peace and security. People would forcefully move from the district because of the conflict to save their lives. This created unplanned spending on the travelling which in a long run drains the coffers of affected

persons, put pressure on social amenities in the new relocated areas and break communication and contacts with even relatives in the Funsu Traditional area.

The people moving out meant relocation of the businesses and industries from the Traditional area. The consequence is, denying the inhabitants the job opportunities, revenues from these businesses and even development projects from the corporate social responsibility of these entrepreneurs. The relocation of some businesses would scare investors from the Funsu Traditional Area.

This supported Acheampong (2010) notion that chieftaincy dispute leads to loss of breadwinners of families leaving behind single headed households who are burdened with extra responsibilities of raising dependents in the family.

Collapsed of social ties was another socio-cultural effect of the Funsu dispute. A sub-chief was of the view that:

‘the spirit of unity is diminishing in the community as the dispute has broken the cordial relationship amongst people in the community. The dispute makes people stop attending funerals and weddings from opposite gate(s). The spirit of togetherness is greatly diminishing and the people of Funsu no more see themselves as one. Most people fear to come close with friends from the opposite gates. There are divisions in the community and everybody now lives an individualize life where everybody for him or herself and God for us all’ (Interview with a sub chief, 16th March, 2019).

The District Chief Executive admonished that:

‘the conflict has destroyed the “TanhaViali” festival instituted in the South Sissaala Tertiary Youth Association (SOSTYA). The festival which used to be celebrated annually and brings together tertiary students from the traditional area has not been celebrated for the past three (3) years due to the dispute. This has also affected the celebration of other festivals in the area such as “Zumbenti”.The dispute has also relegated the position of chiefs in the traditional area to the background. This is so because people nowadays do not follow chiefs to durbar grounds, funerals and the authority of chiefs in settling disputes was waning. The vacant Chieftaincy position in the traditional area is affecting a whole lot of issues ranging from adjudication of disputes to performance of certain traditional rites. Traditionally the chiefs lead in the performance of such matters. The dispute made the traditional area to look like children without father’ (An interview with the DCE, 19th March, 2019).

The dispute brought disunity in the area, collapsing the extended family and destroying peer relationship. The respective gates perceived themselves never safe to freely reach out to the opposite gates to attend funerals, naming

ceremonies and other social events. The inter-gate humanity, goodwill and support for one another was gradually eroding as people within the opposing gates fear to participate in these social events freely and with closer contacts between and among peers of the various contending gates. The factions breed mistrust against themselves and through this frowning on inter-gate marriage opportunities, relations and patronage of social gatherings.

The inability to celebrate these festivals due to lack of trust for one another and absence of togetherness weakens the unification of the Funsu people to co-exist as one. So the cordial relationship that used to exist among the Funsu people would no more be there and people would continue to challenge the kingmakers' capacity to offer the fair and neutral selection and installation of the Paramount Chief for the Funsu Traditional Area. This has been shared by Issifu and Asante (2015), and Mbowura (2014) of the stained relationship amongst the conflicting parties caused by chieftaincy dispute.

Difficulty to access health, education and other social services was another negative socio-cultural effect of the Chieftaincy dispute that the Funsu Traditional area had to battle with. A nurse said that;

"the Funsu Chieftaincy dispute kept fear in people to go to other sections within the Funsu town to attend school, seek healthcare, fetch water, buy food, transact business and many more other services. The feuding parties did not want to be visiting facilities at the opponents sections for fear of the opponents harming them. The dispute made the Traditional area to be denied with collective bargaining power to lobby and mobilize resources to initiate health, education, roads, drinking water, electricity and other social services' projects." (Interview with a Nurse, 18th April, 2019).

So if people in the Traditional area could not seek for health services out of their jurisdictions for fear of reprisal attacks from their opposing gates, this could exacerbate people health conditions. Similarly, students at a certain sections may stop attending schools located at the opponents' section(s) for fear of being attacked by the opponents. Thus, limiting the right of the victims to education which had the potential to increase the illiteracy rate of the inhabitants of the Traditional Area. As a result, the inhabitants may not have the requisite human resource with the desired skills and experience critical to occupy public departments and private sector job creation. So when these employments avenues got to be occupied by people who are not natives, then any profit made might not be invested in the Traditional area but rather moved out to certain jurisdictions that the workers and owners of businesses

were from. Even the commitment to duty at the work place may be called to question. These caliber of workers and entrepreneurs would not commit to avail themselves to go to work every day and be punctual, let alone to eschew other poor attitudes towards work.

4.3. Economic and political effects of the Funsu chieftaincy dispute

Dwindling food production was noticed as an economic effect of the Funsu Chieftaincy dispute.

Balonsi representative observed that:

‘the Funsu Traditional area is a predominant farming community, unfortunately the conflict made each of the factions unwilling to release land, machines and even inputs to the opponents’. (Interview with Balonsi gate representative, 20th May, 2019).

Even when such lands were laid fallow or unused, the tractor services were for a fee, and the agricultural inputs were for sale, the gate having these services would still deny the opponents. Settler farmers who were perceived to be aligned to any of the gates were equally denied such services from the other contending gates. In the unlikely event the allocation of the land was to be made, it would be the unfertile lands given to the opponents. If the tractor service was to be offered, and the inputs were to be made available to the opponents, they would be offered at an exorbitant price. These became deliberate acts to deal with the opponents in any little opportunity each of the gates got. So when such pressures became unbearable, the victims would be forced to decline the offer even though that would inadvertently affect the expansion of farm lands and eventually the crop yield.

Similarly, the Muliabee gate representative said:

“when the Funsu Chieftaincy dispute degenerate into violence everybody rush for their dear lives, so nobody cares of farming and rearing of animals, which could decrease the production of food and heightens food insecurity in the Traditional area”. (An interaction with Muliabee gate representative, 16th March, 2019).

The dispute made farmers of the Traditional area unable to access their farms. Even in the periods of clashes, each of the gates became careful not to get to their farms too early or return from the farm too late for fear of reprisal attacks from the opponents. In such times, they had to move in groups to ensure safety, and if one did not find people to go to the farm with, on such days, no work was done on the farms. So during the periods of renewed clashes, farmers in the Traditional area would not have more time for farm work.

Kunkongbuni Gate representative said:

‘the Funsu Chieftaincy Conflict adversely affected agricultural production as financial institutions were unwilling to offer funding to farmers in conflict prone areas’ (Interview with Kunkongbuni gate representative, 19th April, 2019).

No financial institution was willing to grant loans in areas that clients would not have the free time to work with the capital to repay the loans. Financial institutions would grant loans to the farmers only when they know that the farmers in the Funsu Traditional area can payback the loans. So when such avenues elude the farmers in the Traditional area, access to capital would be constrained to expand agriculture. Also, the fear is that, when such loans are even granted, the farmers might divert them to buy ammunitions. It might be the case that the farmers in the Traditional area personal monies that were supposed to be used to expand farms were used to pursue court cases and buy guns to fight the opponents. This reduced the farm size of the people and ultimately the food production. When these happened the income of residents would shrink which also lead to low living standards.

Price hike was another economic effect of the Funsu Chieftaincy dispute in the Traditional area. A market woman interviewee who does business in the Funsu Township said that:

‘any time the Funsu Chieftaincy Dispute degenerates into clashes, shops remained closed for fear of looting and attacks. People struggle to purchase what they want to buy since the opposing gates cannot reach out to the opponents to buy goods. So even when the opponent’s side is the only source within the Funsu Traditional area that the goods or services can be obtained, it is difficult for the opposing gate to accept to approach the other contending side let alone to patronizing the goods or services’. (Interview with a market woman in Funsu, 13th April, 2019).

This constrained the well-meaning indigenes and inhabitants to do businesses particularly those who earn their livelihood from businesses. People that are in possession of certain goods pick and choose whom they sell to or the customers also become selective from whom they buy from. So when shortages of goods and services are experienced, abnormal pricing of goods and services takes a centre stage. The cost of doing business will become high since it is a risk to choose to sell in such a volatile environment that no one knows not who would be attacked next. These shortages would not only increase prices but have the potential to collapse businesses. Also, these tendencies promote the infiltration of substandard goods as Mohammed (2015) indicated that genuine business persons would be scared from the dispute areas.

Also, low sales became an imminent economic effect of the Funsu Chieftaincy Dispute in the Traditional area. The worst is the imposition of curfews during violent clashes where no one is allowed to go out, thereby, reducing trading hours. As a result, people who could have been customers would refuse to attend the market or visit the Traditional area since dealing with people from one of the opposite gates might be misconstrued as a loyalist to the gate by the other contending gate(s). Also, many other consumers will prefer patronizing different markets instead of that of the Funsu. As a result, Salih (2018b) indicated that chieftaincy dispute has restrictive impact on business.

Difficulty in accessing transport to travel during renewed clashes was noticed as one of the economic effects of the Funsu Dispute conflict. This signified that hike in transport fares may be experienced as few vehicles risk enjoying the monopoly of travelling to the Funsu area. This reduces production hours, causes over loading of trucks, road accidents and spoilage of perishable goods. Traders suffer conveying their goods and other passengers would also be stranded at stations. When high cost of transport fares is experienced, it has the potential of folding up businesses. Also, it poses difficulty for farmers to transport their produce home, to the market centres particularly in urban areas. Prah and Yeboah (2011) confirmed that during dispute, vehicular transport ceases to operate for fear of being attacked or arriving late and breaking curfew.

Furthermore, soaring unemployment became one other economic effect in the Funsu Chieftaincy conflict. The implication becomes that investors are unwilling to invest in the areas to create jobs. This would make the people poorer, heightening dependency and expenditure on the needy. Many of the people tend to have lost their source of livelihoods, unable to go to their places of work.

Loss of labour force became an economic effect that the inhabitants of the Funsu Traditional area have to be faced with. Confirming this, the Balonsi Gate representative in an interview noted that:

‘as the Funsu Chieftaincy conflict often degenerates into violence, some members of each faction involved are forced to run away from the Funsu Traditional area’. (Interview with Balonsi representative, 17th March, 2019).

Thus, the dispute left people displaced including young men, women, business persons and even public sector workers. The intensity of the dispute forced out people from the Funsu Traditional area. Those who would have fled may be persons within the working class and so the Traditional area tends

to lose critical human resource. So crucial working hours get to be lost as well. These occurrences undermine efficient utilization of human capital in the Funsì Traditional area.

Marshall (2005) upheld that the displacement, emigration of people during conflict reduces the working class in conflict environment.

Upsurge in middlemen in business was another economic effect of the Funsì Chieftaincy in the Traditional area. A businessman in Funsì said:

The services of middlemen would eventually result in additional cost as these middlemen would at times make further additions to the prices of goods and services to make up certain profit margins for their gains. These increments of doing business will affect the final consumer and become disincentive that scares genuine business persons from doing business in the Funsì Traditional area. So successive governments get blamed for the rise in cost of living, depreciation in the economic conditions of residents and eventually, the government of the day becomes unpopular. This jeopardizes the local economy of the Funsì Traditional area as people cannot go to certain places in the town to do their businesses and work freely and unimpeded. These middlemen as agents induce smuggling and hoarding of goods and services in order to outwit the target clients, traditional and local authorities to earn astronomical profit. This makes the market unattractive to clients in the period of eruption of violence and which has the tendency to collapse businesses particularly owners who cannot play it smart in such dealings in the volatile dispute environment of the Funsì Traditional area. Development agents find it difficult to operate because the safety of their lives can be in peril let alone regain their investment from the dispute zone.

The study further found that politicians used the dispute to sustain their popularity, and influence the installation of a new chief thereby, making the dispute complex. The politicians from the area meddled in the processes to influence others on the dispute that inure to their electoral advantage. Even for fear of losing votes, politicians are afraid to do the right things that would bring permanent resolution of the chieftaincy dispute in Funsì. So these politicians who needed the support of the people backed the gate(s) that would pay allegiance to them, unfortunately without thinking of the ramification. So it became difficult getting consensus when citing projects or facilities in the community. Monies were then diverted to quell violent confrontation in maintaining peace. Few other genuine politicians who wanted to be neutral and play it safe, found it difficulty engaging or consulting stakeholders on certain critical matters pertaining to the development of the district for fear of

being tagged as taking sides. Thus, making the dispute murkier which pose a security threat. The dispute took political twist because politicians in the area were meddling in the matters by providing funds and loyalty to their preferred gate(s).

This supported Marshall (2005:11) assertion that the politicization of the chieftaincy institution is ‘exclusionary politics and discrimination... similarly, the more recent push to institute democratic reforms has often induced political leaders to court political support from loyal kin groups and broader ethnic support bases to help secure electoral victories, limit support for political rivals, and restrict the mobilization of potential challengers’.

4.4. Mechanisms used in resolving the Funsu chieftaincy conflict

The competing gates, District Security Council and the Regional House of Chiefs employed the following mechanisms to resolve the dispute:

Supernatural arbitration through oracle, swearing and concoction drinking were mechanisms used to resolve the chieftaincy dispute in the Funsu Traditional Area.

Arbitration Committee Report on the Funsu Chieftaincy Dispute (2004) said that if all the feuding parties had agreed to abide by the supernatural arbitration through oracle, swearing and concoction drinking, the non-royals, unqualified gates, litigants and disputants within or outside the royal gates would have been prevented from routing for the title. Given the penalties that supernatural arbitration entails, individuals who are feuding contenders will be careful about pressing on with illegitimate claims to the chieftaindom.

This upheld Ahiave (2013) assertion on the potency of supernatural arbitration through oracle, swearing and concoction drinking in resolving disputes.

The use of security forces was another mechanism employed in resolving the Chieftaincy Dispute in the Funsu Traditional area. A representative of the Kingmakers indicated that:

‘the police and military have always been used to foil violence occurrence in the Funsu Chieftaincy Dispute. They monitor to pick signals on any rising tension in the Funsu town.’(Interview with a representative of kingmakers in Funsu, 30th April, 2019).

Security forces help to save lives and properties, and maintain law and order when the feuding gates are up in arms in the Funsu Traditional Area.

The continuous presence and use of security forces in the dispute area is the right way to go to reduce simmering tension in the Funsì Traditional area. Notwithstanding the critical role of the security forces, they are usually under public criticism for their brutal exertion of force in maintaining law and order in the Traditional area. Also, security forces continue to face accusation of bias. This has the tendency to stall the amicable resolution of the Funsì Dispute since security forces are deemed to be partial and unethical. Mbowura (2014) affirmed that the involvement of security forces helps to identify early signs of an impending clash as well as dissuade belligerents.

The legal system was another mechanism employed to resolve the Funsì Chieftaincy Dispute. The filing of the Funsì Chieftaincy dispute by Muliabee gate at the Wa 'Naa'(chief's) palace, and the Kingmakers, Balonosi gate and Kunkongbuni gate subsequent Appeal filed at the Judicial Committee of the Regional House of Chiefs against the ruling of the Wa 'Naa'(chief) showed that, the contending gates had faith in both the Traditional and the modern justice systems. Therefore, the study asserted that the ruling was deemed to provide rules, guidelines and regulations in governing the installation of the new chief. The verdict was to bind all parties to one way of resolving Funsì Chieftaincy disputes. The legal process subjected each gate to the rule of law to stem the tide on the Funsì Chieftaincy dispute. The Kingmakers, Balonosi gate and Kunkongbuni gate's subsequent Appeal filed at the Judicial Committee of the Regional House of Chiefs underscored the technicalities and legalities in the legal system as a mechanism in dispute resolution where the processes followed in filing a case are as fundamental as the adjudication process, the ruling and the enforcement of the judgment. Thus, the incompetent filing of the case led to it being struck out of the Judicial Committee of the Regional House of Chiefs. However, this did not mean that the petitioners who were the Kingmakers, Balonosi gate and Kunkonibuni gate of Funsì did not have locus to file an Appeal against the ruling of the Wa Naa (chief) that declared the Muliabee gate as the legitimate gate to occupy the Funsì skin. Moreover, the Judicial Committee was of the view that, the petitioners had not exhausted the traditional processes in resolving the dispute over the Funsì skin. Therefore, the Judicial Committee of the Regional House of Chiefs, Wa, declined and struck the case out. This has the tendency for the Funsì Chieftaincy Dispute to degenerate into renewed clashes. Thus, the winner of the court case may be in jubilation that could infuriate the loser and trigger renewed clashes. However, in democracy, the court is the final institution that passes judgment

on a case and brings it to a close. This concurred with Owusu-Mensah (2013, p.42) finding that the legal system to resolve chieftaincy dispute is grounded in “the constitution; enactments made by or under the authority of the Parliament established by the constitution; existing laws; orders, rules and regulations made by any other authority under a power conferred by the constitution and the common law of Ghana”.

Dialogue and capacity building were among the mechanisms used to resolve the Funsu Chieftaincy Dispute. The arbitration committee report on the Funsu Chieftaincy Dispute (2004) had representatives from the Beetina [kingmaker], Balonosi gate, Kunkongbuni gate, Muliabee gate, Reagent, Imam and other sections of the Traditional area. The use of neutral parties to organize and moderate the discussion allays the fears of the conflicting parties where each feuding gate pours out their emotions, frustration, threats, interest, and position about the dispute. The sharing of each party’s concern in dialogue, facilitated processes of resolving differences through non-violent means. Resolving chieftaincy disputes involves multi-stakeholder role where civil society, government, the Wa East District Assembly, political parties, experts in the dispute and other opinion leaders in and outside the Funsu Traditional area require to exercise restraint in their commentary. These various persons play a critical role in propagating the message of peaceful coexistence among gates, residents and general public in and outside of the entire Funsu Traditional area. This supports Ibrahim (2018) quest to use alternative dispute resolution mechanisms in settling chieftaincy disputes.

5. Conclusion

This paper examined the effects of chieftaincy disputes in Funsu Traditional Area in the Upper West of Ghana. The paper found that the Funsu chieftaincy had no documentation on the succession route resulting in the infiltration of people contending for the Funsu chieftaincy skin. So getting a consensus on the successor to the skin continued to be met with dispute and resistance from the feuding gates of the Funsu Traditional Area. The dispute had consequences on the lives of Funsu people where mistrust led to the cultivation of vengeance attitude amongst the gates against one another. This polarized the feuding gates in Funsu with respect to which gate is the true royal and eligible to the skin. The feud inflamed tensions and threats of security where the violent confrontations made victims’ and their relatives to live with the trauma.

The security forces were employed in resolving the Chieftaincy Dispute in the Funsì Traditional area. The police and military were used to foil violence occurrence in the Funsì Chieftaincy Conflict. These security forces were stationed in the conflict area to monitor and pick signals on any rising tension in the Funsì town. This was to reduce simmering tension in the Funsì Traditional area.

Also, the legal system was one mechanism employed to resolve the Funsì Chieftaincy Dispute. This was manifested in the filing of the Funsì Chieftaincy dispute case by Muliabee gate at the Wa ‘Naa’(chief’s) palace. The Kingmakers, Balonosi gate and Kunkongbuni gate subsequent Appeal filed at the Judicial Committee of the Regional House of Chiefs against the ruling of the Wa ‘Naa’(chief) showed that, the contending gates employed justice systems.

Furthermore, the supernatural arbitration was employed as a mechanism in resolving the chieftaincy dispute. This was manifested in the Arbitration Committee Report on the Funsì Chieftaincy Dispute (2004) which indicated that under the auspices of the Presiding Member and the Coordinating Director of the Wa Municipal Assembly, a Reconciliation Committee was formed to arbitrate and reconcile the parties involved. As such, representatives were drawn from the Beetina [kingmaker], Balonosi gate, Kunkongbuni gate, Muliabee gate, Reagent, Imam and other sections of the Traditional area.

Therefore, the supernatural arbitration and use of legal system were non-violent mechanisms used to prevail upon the feuding gates to cease fire to atone the social, cultural, economic and political effects of the Funsì Chieftaincy dispute on the lives of inhabitants in the Funsì Traditional area. Except that, the delay in dispensing justice in the courts, and the lack of commitment of the feuding gates to these non-violent mechanisms failed to resolve the Chieftaincy dispute in the Funsì Traditional Area. As such, the dispute still lingered on since the measures had fallen short to persuade the parties to arrive at a compromise. So, the Wa East District Assembly should liaise with the Regional House of Chiefs of the Upper West Region, and District and Regional Security Councils to synchronize the customary laws based on the constitutional and legal instruments and the Funsì Tradition to codify and produce a document that would fill the loopholes in the succession route to the Funsì Chieftaincy Title.

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