

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

**CONFLICT RESOLUTION MECHANISMS IN SELECTED PUBLIC SENIOR
HIGH SCHOOLS IN THE UPPER WEST REGION OF GHANA**



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HIGH SCHOOLS IN THE UPPER WEST REGION OF GHANA**

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**A Thesis in the Centre for Conflict, Human Rights and Peace Studies,
Faculty of Social Sciences Education, submitted to the School of
Graduate Studies in partial fulfilment**

**of the requirements for the award of the degree of
Master of Philosophy
(Human Rights, Conflict and Peace Studies)
in the University of Education, Winneba**

AUGUST, 2023

DECLARATION

Student's Declaration

I, Zakari Ali Sulley, hereby declare that this thesis is my work and all secondary data employed in the study are acknowledged accordingly. No part of this thesis has therefore been presented in any form to any institution for the award of any other degree.

Signature:

Date:

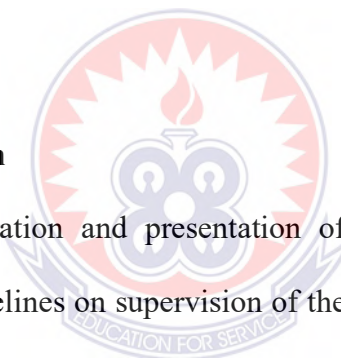
Supervisor's Declaration

I certify that the preparation and presentation of this thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of thesis as laid down by the School of Graduate Studies, University of Education, Winneba.

Name of Supervisor: REV. FR. LINUS NANGWELE, PhD

Signature:

Date:



DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my family.



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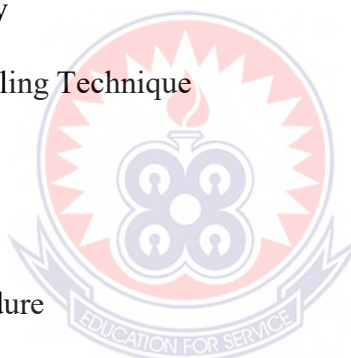
I am also grateful to the headteachers of Wa Islamic Senior High School, Eremon Senior High Technical School and St. John's Vocational and Technical Institute for granting me the audience to conduct the study in their respective schools. To the participants of the study, I am thankful for your time, patience and cooperation throughout the interview section.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

HNT	Human Needs Theory
UN	United Nations
GES	Ghana Education Service
NaCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
SRC	Students' Representative Council
SHSs	Senior High Schools
ADR	Alternative Dispute Resolution
NVC	Non-Violent Communication
MEND	Movement for Emancipation of Niger Delta
DCM	Dual Concern Model
TDC	Traditional Disciplinary Committee
VYMA	Victorian Youth Mentoring Alliance
NEPAD	New Partnership for African Development
HoDs	Head of Departments
BoGs	Board of Governors
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
ReSEC	Regional Security Council
CHPSs	Community-based Health Planning and Services
CHAG	Christian Health Association of Ghana
KVIP	Kumasi Ventilated Improved Pit

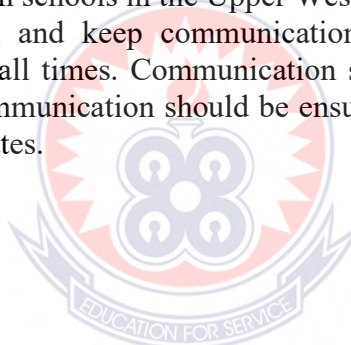
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to explore the understanding of the students and school administrators about conflict resolution, the sources of conflict and the mechanisms used by the students and school administrators of the selected public senior high schools in the Upper West region of Ghana in the resolution of conflicts. The study was approached qualitatively and designed as a case study. A total of fifteen (15) participants were selected for the study. Data were collected through in-depth interviews. Data were analysed using thematic analysis. The findings showed that participants understand conflict resolution as a process or steps taken to resolve or settle misunderstandings and disagreements between two or more people or parties with the view of ensuring peaceful co-existence between the opposing parties. The study unearthed that inappropriate behaviour, role performance, ineffective communication, distribution and scarcity of resources, appointment and promotion of staff, religion and tribalism were the sources of conflict identified in the selected public senior high schools in the Upper West region of Ghana. Also, the study revealed that the school disciplinary committee system, mediation, negotiation, reconciliation, issuing of queries, and the Students Representative Council (SRC) judicial and prefectorial boards were the mechanisms used in resolving conflicts in the selected senior high schools. The study recommended that school administrators of the selected public senior high schools in the Upper West region of Ghana should enhance effective communication and keep communication channels open between them, students and teachers at all times. Communication should be devoid of ambiguities; thus, the free flow of communication should be ensured for easy detection of conflict or dispute before it escalates.



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

The ability of head teachers and administrators to manage conflict, whether it is positive or negative, affects how effectively an institution performs (Armstrong, 2009). Efficiency is adversely affected if a conflict situation is intolerable. Organizations with intensive human interactions are likely to witness disagreement, inconsistency, and incompatibility in facilities and relationships among employees (Kocel, 2005). Administrators, teachers, students, parents, and other employees are in constant communication and interaction for educational facilities to reach success. Therefore, it is natural to have disagreements, discussions, and incompatibilities in schools that are at the centre of human resource development (Rahim, 2002). Conflict can occur in all aspects of social life. The input, process, and output of school organizations are small models of social life and open systems consisting of human beings. Conflicts in schools occur more realistically and concretely (Sarpkaya, 2002).

Conflict has generally become unavoidable in every educational institution including public senior high schools (SHSs) in Ghana. The dynamic nature of the society in which we reside may bring about incompatibilities which eventually lead to conflicts. According to Rahim (2002), conflict generally refers to differences in opinions and perceptions concerning a particular issue at a particular period. In other words, conflict is when two or more values, perspectives, and opinions are contradictory in nature and have not been aligned or agreed about. Also, conflict occurs within oneself when you are not living according to one's values; when values and perspectives are threatened, or discomfort from fear of the unknown or lack of fulfilment of one's

needs (Rahim, 2002). For any group or individual in institutions to be efficient, they need to work in a positive conflict environment.

Conflict is often good when well managed. For example, good teams always go through a "form, storm, norm and perform" contradictory values, perspectives, and opinions (McNamara, 2007). Conflict arises when issues and interests change over time due to the social, political, and economic dynamism in which we live (Jjosvold, 1993). As a result of the unavoidable nature of conflicts in all educational institutions, there is a need for public SHSs in Ghana to learn to deal with them effectively to minimize their negative impact and maximize their positive impact on educational institutions (Almost, 2006). That is, learning to resolve conflicts. An organization's invention and creativity are enhanced by well-managed conflict (Murthy, 2006). Suitable principles for transforming dysfunctional disputes into functional conflicts were provided by Bricoe and Schuler (2004). According to Brice and Schuler, many institutions utilise a competitive and win-lose strategy to mitigate conflict. They claimed that viewing conflict in such a negative light creates inefficiency, which undermines the fundamental goal of seeing conflict as a win-win solution to promote healthy competition and institutional coherence.

Conflict is generally caused by problems between individuals or groups working together. These problems may cause disruption or complete cessation of normal functioning in the working environment or current environment (Eren, 2008). Conflict arises when an individual has one or two responses towards a phenomenon or situation and when there are on-matching options and rivalry (Vaiz, 2017). In addition, there are many activities such as management of educational activities, clubs, celebrating certain days and weeks, school-family cooperation, meetings, and others that are carried out to attain the stated objectives of educational institutions. All school

stakeholders must be in touch in the process of implementation of these activities as it is not possible to carry them out by a single person (Bayer, 2015). Therefore, problems may occur in communication between people about their needs, ideas, beliefs, goals or values which can lead to conflict when not handled properly (Erthurk, 2019). Conflict ensures the questioning of objectives and organizational structure; developing the necessary working environment for change and areas where employees succeed (Karip, 2000). As for schools, teachers also want to take part in facilities in which they succeed. However, when teachers are assigned duties that they are not comfortable with, it often results in conflict at schools (Moisoglo & Dafui, 2014). All of the school's stakeholders must communicate effectively for the institution to be productive and efficient. However, issues could arise between parents, teachers, administrators, and kids due to their unique needs, feelings, and personalities. In this situation, interpersonal conflict develops and can have either beneficial or harmful effects (Okotoni & Okotoni, 2003). It is necessary to reveal the situations that cause conflicts in schools, the consequences and effects, and the mechanisms or approaches to use in resolving conflicts in schools (Akgöz & Cemaloğlu, 2020).

Successful conflict resolution involves listening to all parties and giving them the chance to express their needs and concerns in a way that ensures everyone is content with the result (Weaver, 2003). The fundamental procedures defined by Taylor (1911) form the foundation of the art of resolving conflicts or managing conflicts. Developing conflict resolution skills, self-awareness of conflict modes, conflict communication skills, and creating a structure for the management of conflict in your environment are all part of the conflict management process (The Foundation Coalition, 2003).

Schools, as organizations in their rights, have managers who are tasked with the duty of maintaining their stability to attain organizational objectives (Konak & Erdem, 2015). Conflicts in Ghana's public SHSs are on the rise in the recent past and the Upper West region is not an exception. The government of Ghana through the Ghana Education Service (GES) has indicated concern over the disturbances in public senior high schools which in some cases have resulted in students burning down school properties and even attacking teachers (Mankoe, 1989). This prompted a call for a consultative meeting to address the rising unrest. This was in response to the recent burning down and destruction of properties in some selected public senior high schools in the Upper West Region by students' worth over Eighty thousand Ghana cedis (CitiNews, January 29, 2018). The majority of student unrest occurred in public senior high (boarding) schools in the Upper West Region, with few exceptional cases reported in day public senior high schools. Some of the emergencies that arise as a result of unresolved conflicts include arson attacks, riots, protest and violence which result in injuries and destruction of school properties (Mankoe, 1989).

It is widely acknowledged that violence against teachers, and other students, and destruction of properties both in the learning institution and surrounding communities has greatly increased in the past years (Onsarigo, 2007). Therefore, this study seeks to explore the understanding of students and school administrators about conflict resolution, the sources of conflict and the mechanisms used by the students and school administrators of the selected public senior high schools in the Upper West region of Ghana in the resolution of conflicts.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Conflicts in educational settings have resulted in unfavourable interactions between teachers and students, learners and school administrators, teachers and school administrators, and the community. A power struggle has occasionally broken out in schools as a result of conflicts. Teaching and learning as well as the overall setting of the school have been disrupted by this state of affairs. Some conflicts have resulted in physical damage to school buildings and the deaths of some students (Mankoe, 1990).

According to Ogosia (2009), for there to be a positive culture of teaching and learning in schools, the environment must be secure, well-organized, and supportive of learning. Conflicts are an inevitable aspect of life, and as such, they are an inevitable component of school life. The school community needs to develop the ability to resolve conflicts constructively. The environment in schools would be more pleasant for everyone if members in an educational setting learn how to handle issues of misunderstanding. In such a setting, teachers and students can each spend more time instructing and learning. According to Adeyemi (2009), many instructors think that student behaviour has an impact on academic performance. Education professionals have always been conscious of negative behaviour (Collard, 2003; Abosede, 2006). School administrators must pay heed to this call because studies (such as Lynch, 2000; Onoyume, 2007) reveal that when conflict is not satisfactorily handled or when there is an excessive delay in the resolution of conflict, properties, lives, and academic hours of unthinkable scale are lost. Prolonged conflict resolution has disrupted school schedules, which has had adverse financial and emotional consequences.

Conflict resolution as a component of the social studies and government curricula in Ghana's SHSs does not appear to have placed enough emphasis on the methods or approaches that school administrators, teachers, and students in public SHSs can use to resolve conflicts in the classroom and the school environment. This is not to suggest that the prevalence of conflict in public SHSs may be attributed to a lack of training in conflict resolution (Mankoe, 1990). However, an absence of training in conflict resolution is a disadvantage to the people elevated to headship. The fact that there is a large percentage of school heads, instructors, and students who have received no training in conflict resolution shows a dearth of individuals who can handle conflict in the school system. In light of this scarcity, there is a strong case to be made that conflict situations in public senior high schools partly cause administrators, instructors, and students' unnecessary strain (Mankoe, 1990).

Social conflicts in educational institutions require moral authority and leadership integrity to resolve them, according to a prior empirical study by Onsarigo (2007) that sought to identify factors influencing conflicts in institutions of higher learning. However, Onsarigo's study was unable to identify the conflict resolution strategies that public SHSs should adopt to resolve conflict in the school environment so that it does not recur. Additionally, Gyan and Tandoh-Offin (2014) sought to determine whether or not the Traditional Disciplinary Committee used by the school management in conflict resolution has been successful in resolving Teacher-Teacher conflict, Teacher-Student conflict, and Headteacher-Teacher conflict so that new models could be used to supplement or completely replace the old system to improve institutional performance. According to the study findings, using the Traditional Disciplinary Committee (TDC) as a method of conflict resolution by school administration has not been successful in public SHSs in the Greater Accra Metropolis.

Also, literature on students' violence or conflicts in the Upper West Region focused on the causes and approaches to interreligious conflicts in public SHSs. However, the sources and mechanisms or approaches that are used by students and school authorities in managing and resolving other sources and causes of conflicts in public SHSs in the region were neglected (Marfo et al, 2019; Marfo et al, 2018).

Despite, significant interventions made by major stakeholders in education to manage and resolve conflicts in public SHSs in Ghana, there is still spate of students' violence or conflicts in public SHSs in the Upper West Region of Ghana, which have been reported by media outlets. On 20th November 2014, students of Wa Islamic SHS embarked on a peaceful protest on what they described as an astronomical increment of school fees without prior engagement and approval with their parents. However, the students peaceful protest became chaotic when personnel of the Ghana Armed Forces allegedly invaded the girl's dormitory and started beating the riotous students' following a call made to them by the police to go to the school and restore order. This angered the students to retaliate leading to the destruction of school properties and injuring of the protested students' (Joy online, November 20, 2014).

Consequently, a report by Citi News on 29th January, 2018, indicated how students' of Eremon SHTS went on rampage supposedly in protest against school authorities. The report stated that students acted in protest against a disciplinary measure imposed on one of them, by a friend of a teacher of the school, who had accompanied the teacher to the premises that night. The report further, stated that the visiting friend of the teacher went as far as lashing the student for a "misbehaviour" improper dressing, a situation that angered the students' who reacted in a violent manner (CitiNews, January 29, 2018). More so, students of Tumu SHTS on 30th May, 2019, embarked on a riot when school authorities seized their mobile phones through a roll call by the school

authorities. The students' started riots by assaulting the teacher on duty for reporting them to the school authorities to seize their phones (Modern Ghana, May 30, 2019) Apart from these media reports on student violence in public SHSs in the Upper West Region, there is limited data on the sources of conflicts aside the interreligious causes of conflicts in public SHSs in the region and the mechanisms or approaches that are used by the students and school administrators to manage and resolve conflicts in the schools.

Hence, this study was undertaken to explore the understanding of the students and school administrators about conflict resolution, the sources of conflict and the mechanisms that are used by the students and school administrators of the selected public SHSs in the Upper West Region of Ghana to resolve conflicts.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the understanding of students and school administrators about conflict resolution, the sources of conflict and the mechanisms that are used by the students and school administrators of the selected public senior high schools in the Upper West region of Ghana to resolve conflicts.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this research were to:

1. explore the understanding of students and school administrators of selected public senior high schools in the Upper West region of Ghana about conflict resolution;
2. determine the sources of conflicts in the selected public senior high schools in the Upper West region of Ghana;

3. examine the mechanisms that are used by the students and school administrators of the selected public senior high schools in the Upper West Region of Ghana in the resolution of conflicts.

1.5 Research Questions

The main research questions were:

1. how do the students and school administrators of the selected public senior high schools in the Upper West region of Ghana view conflict resolution?
2. what are the sources of conflicts in the selected public senior high schools in the Upper West region of Ghana?
3. what mechanisms are used by the students and school administrators of the selected public senior high schools in the Upper West region of Ghana in the resolution of conflicts?

1.6 Significance of the Study

The study, which aims to provide significant data regarding conflict resolution in schools, will be very beneficial to the administration of both private and public senior high schools. In turn, this will assist all stakeholders in public schools in deciding how best to resolve disputes within the school system. In their efforts to address conflict in schools and raise educational standards, the management of organizations and government bodies for education will find the study to be crucial.

The study will also help the Ministry of Education create a curriculum that can be used to improve stakeholder capacity in conflict management and resolution in public senior high schools in the Upper West region and, by extension, the entire nation regarding understanding conflict resolution and the suitable resolution mechanism(s) to resolve or handle conflicts in schools. The study is valuable because it addresses the

areas or sources and the underlying cause(s) of institutional conflict and provides solutions to improve stability in both educational institutions and public organizations that are prone to disputes of all kinds.

1.7 Delimitation of the Study

Delimitations are the features that the researcher chooses to establish the limits of the investigation. They cover the study's inclusion criteria as well as exclusion criteria (Dusick, 2011). The study is confined to the Upper West region of Ghana. The thesis was interested in exploring the understanding of the students and school administrators about conflict resolution, the sources of conflict and the mechanisms used by the students and school administrators of the selected public senior high schools in the Upper West region of Ghana in the resolution conflicts. The study was delimited to Wa Islamic SHS, Eremon SHTS and St. John's Vocational and Technical Institute in the Upper West region of Ghana.

1.8 Operational definition of key terms

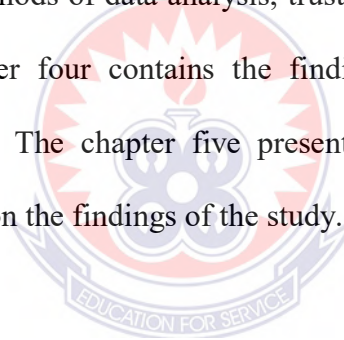
Conflict: Conflict is a struggle between rivals for shared values and claims to limited status, authority, and resources aimed to neutralize, harm, or destroy the rivals.

Conflict Resolution: Conflict resolution occurs when disputing parties come to an agreement that addresses their core differences, accepts each other's continued participation as parties, and puts an end to all hostility.

Conflict Resolution Mechanism: This refers to a process or an approach that is used to address a dispute or conflict between disputants or conflict parties.

1.9 Organization of the study

This study is structured into five different chapters. Chapter one comprised an introduction section, which consists of the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research objectives, research questions, significance of the study, delimitation of the study, operational definition of key terms and how the study is organized. Chapter two reviews literature relevant to the study which includes definition of terms and concepts and the theories chosen for this study. The third chapter deals with the research philosophical underpinning and the methodology of the study. It captures the research approach, research design, study area, population of the study, sample size and sampling technique, instrumentation, sources of data, data collection procedure, methods of data analysis, trustworthiness, ethical considerations and positionality. Chapter four contains the findings and discussion of the data gathered from the field. The chapter five presents the summary, conclusion and recommendations based on the findings of the study.



CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews literature that is relevant to the study. The areas examined include concept of conflict, conflict resolution, conflict management, sources of conflict, conflict resolution in schools, conflict resolution mechanisms and the theories chosen for this study. The relevant literature examined, spotlighting the gaps which this study seeks to fill.

2.1 The Concept of Conflict

The Latin word *conflictus*, which implies collision or clash, is where the term "conflict" originates (Kaus, 2012). Nevertheless, there have been numerous attempts, to sum up conflict in a single definition. Examples include definitions based on the primary reasons for conflict, such as financial resources, political influence, moral principles, or emotions; these are referred to as "causative agents" (Lyamouri-Bajja et al., 2013). Conflict, according to the classic definition, is a dynamic process in which structure, attitude, and action are continually altering and impacting one another (Galtung, 1969). According to Coser (1998), conflict is a struggle between rivals over beliefs and claims to limited status, authority, and resources, in which the rivals try to neutralize, harm, or exterminate their adversaries. According to Coser (1998), the parties involved in a conflict are engaged in a struggle for dominance, control, or identity and are actively attempting to harm one another. The fact that Coser's definition highlights the causes of conflicts, such as fights over people's identities, powers, and resources, is one noteworthy feature. Conflict, thus, is a battle between two parties pursuing interests and

objectives on which they have a wide disparity, whether it is positive or negative (Cosser, 1998).

Conflict arises when two or more parties engage in acts that seek to undermine or harm one another while pursuing incompatible aims or interests (Lund, 1996). These parties could be people, organizations, or nations. The parties' interests may differ in the management of political or traditional authority, the distribution of resources, and the parties' identities, beliefs, or ideologies (Maiese, 2003). Conflict may occur in people's quest to attain their needs and interests. When two groups or individuals, such as ethnic groups, pursue divergent political, economic, social, or cultural interests and requirements, they may engage in a potentially violent conflict (Maiese, 2003).

Conflict situations, conflict behaviours, and conflict attitudes are the three interconnected parts of conflict (Mitchell, 1998). According to Mitchell (1998), the cause of conflict is usually the realization by the parties involved that their goals are incompatible and that doing so leaves them frustrated which has the propensity to escalate into conflict. Mitchell (1998) goes on to claim that perceptions of the parties play a role in conflict attitude. Parties' unfavourable attitudes, such as resentment or rivalry, are strengthened when they believe they are not receiving what is due to them. Conflict behaviour refers to the precise acts used by parties against other parties to prevent them from accomplishing their objectives. As a result, conflict parties' attitudes influence their behaviour, which in turn fuels conflict (Mitchell, 1998). If these attitudes are unfavourable, so will the accompanying behaviour, which could result in aggressive conflict situations. Conflict results from all three of these (Mitchell, 1998).

Institutional conflict, according to Rocoff (1987), arises when members conduct themselves in a way that is contradictory with that of their network's peers, "members of other collectivises, or unaffiliated individuals who utilize the services or products of the organization" (p. 496). This description can be expanded by conceiving conflict as an interacting process that manifests as incompatibility, discord, or dissension between social entities (such as individuals, groups, organizations, etc.). Since it is well known that people frequently interact with themselves, calling conflict an interactive process does not rule out the possibility of intraindividual conflict.

Conflicts may occur when a party is required to engage in an activity that is incongruent with his or her needs or interests, or when a party holds behavioural preferences, the satisfaction of which is incompatible with another person's implementation of his or her preferences (Rocoff, 1987). Also, conflict will occur when a party wants some mutually desirable resource that is in short supply, such that the wants of everyone may not be satisfied fully or when a party possesses attitudes, values, skills and goals that help in directing his or her behaviour but are perceived to be exclusions of the attitudes, values and goals held by the other(s); or when two parties have partially exclusion behavioural preferences regarding their joint actions and when two parties are interdependent in the performance of functions or activities (Fisher, 1990).

This concept is significantly broader and emphasizes that conflict can involve divergent preferences and aims as well as opposing activities. It should be understood that before a party experience (or becomes aware of) a conflict, it must reach the threshold level of intensity (Baron, 1990). Your "internal dialogue" reveals an intrapersonal conflict between opposing impulses or concepts in your thoughts (Kirkwood, 2002). Beyond that, social conflicts which are disagreements between people acting as individuals,

members of groups, or representatives of organizations or nations are the main issue here. When two persons in a relationship have irreconcilable wants, goals, or approaches, interpersonal conflict results. Learning communication skills helps prevent and resolve such issues because communication breakdown is frequently a significant source of interpersonal conflict (Kirkwood, 2002). At the same time, humans have very real distinctions that cannot be overcome by any form of increased communication.

Role conflict occurs when autonomous people in a social system have very significant disagreements about what their roles should be, what is expected of them, or what they should be responsible for. The potential for interpersonal conflict between the parties involved arises from unclear role descriptions in an organization or unclear limits of responsibilities (Fisher, 2000). Since individuals are actively involved in role conflict, the emotional intensity is frequently great, and there is a strong propensity for the dispute to become personal (Fisher, 2000). Inter-group conflict arises between groups of individuals, including unions, management, departments or levels of decision-making within the same organization, or ethnic or racial groups (Fisher, 1990). Inter-group conflict is frequently caused by competition for limited resources, and societies have created a variety of regulatory tools, including mediation and collective bargaining, to deal with inter-group conflict in more minimal ways (Coser, 1998).

Inter-group conflict is heavily influenced by social-psychological processes (Fisher, 1990). Group members frequently form stereotypes (oversimplified negative ideas) of the opposing group, which leads them to frequently scapegoat that group and discriminate against them (Fisher, 1990). Both race relations in communities and organizations exhibit these traditional signs of intergroup conflict. For a society, destructive intergroup conflict can have a significant negative economic and social

impact (Fisher, 2000). Conflict that occurs within a group, team, or department is referred to as intra-group conflict (Griffin & Moorhead, 2007). There are two forms of conflict within groups: Task conflict and relationship conflict. Task conflict is perceived as a difference in attitudes, ideas, and opinions amongst group members or individuals over the subject matter of their decisions. Task conflict, for instance, involves how resources are distributed, how to follow rules or norms, and how to evaluate data. According to Griffin and Moorhead (2007), relationship conflict is the feeling of interpersonal contradiction and involves frustration and hostility between people.

In societies, multi-party conflict arises when many interest groups and organizations place differing priorities on resource management and policy formulation. Usually, economic values and political power play a role in these complex disputes. To reach a consensus, this complexity frequently exceeds the capabilities of traditional authoritative or adversarial procedures (Cormick et al., 1996). Globally, states engage in international conflict (Fisher, 2000). Resource rivalry is a factor, but occasionally power and value take precedence. Many of the same social-psychological misconceptions that define interpersonal and inter-group conflict can result from propaganda tactics (Fisher, 2000).

2.2 Conflict Resolution

A rapidly expanding academic subject is conflict resolution. Conflict resolution has quickly developed into a self-contained, vibrant, and interdisciplinary field of study. According to Bercovitch, Kremenyuk, and Zartman (2008), conflict resolution a relatively new field of study that only became specialized in the 1950s when superpower conflict threatened the very existence of humanity. The term resolution implies “The quality of being resolute, a firm decision, an expression of opinion or

intentions agreed on by a legislative body, the action of solving a problem or dispute, the process of reducing or separating something into components” (Hornby, 2000, p. 45). Therefore, we could view conflict resolution as an instance in which the disputing parties come to a conclusion that is able to deal with their core differences, accept each other's continued involvement as parties, and bring an end to any acts of violence against one another (Wani, 2011). A variety of procedures geared towards reducing or getting rid of conflict sources are referred to as conflict resolution (Wani, 2011).

According to Osei-Hwedie and Rankopo (2012), conflict resolution focuses on resolving potential existing conflicts and it is very relevant in today's world. This results from the reality that conflicts, rivalries, disagreements, and incompatibilities can only be checked and minimised through conflict resolution procedures, leading to the establishment of peace. It also clarifies why outstanding leaders, eminent academics, stalwarts, think institutes, the media, and civil society have placed such much emphasis on the idea of conflict resolution. It is important to highlight that the process of establishing and maintaining peace uses conflict resolution as a tool. According to Kriesberg (2009), the field of conflict resolution must emphasise the need for peaceful, non-violent means of resolving all conflicts in human society. These include diplomacy, communication, negotiation, summits, conciliation, arbitration, mediation, and cooperative, trust-inspiring measures.

When we provide the marginalised, minority, and neglected groups in society the same amount of focus, we may effectively resolve conflicts in human society. According to Wani (2011), there are various disputes in certain other societies, and to resolve them, various peaceful and non-violent ways and strategies must be used. Even though the United Nations (UN) Charter clause stipulates that war is the last recourse in the political process, certain states have a propensity to utilise war as a means of settling

conflict. The goal of conflict resolution strategies and procedures is not to eliminate conflicts, which is both undesirable and unattainable. Instead, its main objectives are to turn a real or potentially violent situation into a peaceful one.

It is the best tool that can be utilised to reduce and moderate conflictual circumstances in peace-building processes (Behfar et al., 2008). One could argue that the best way to achieve social justice, peace, harmony, cooperation, and international brotherhood is through conflict resolution. It is the ideal catchphrase for maintaining, fostering, and establishing peace in contested situations and war zones. The foundation of the discipline of conflict resolution is the idea that conflicts should only be settled amicably, without resorting to devastating violence.

According to Wani (2011), certain pioneers from many disciplines saw the need of studying conflict as a universal phenomenon that has comparable characteristics whether it occurs in families, interpersonal relationships, or international relations. These academics recognized the potential of utilizing tactics that were developing in areas like community mediation and labour relations.

According to Wani (2011), conflict resolution occurs when disputing parties come to an agreement that resolves their core differences, acknowledges one another as parties, and forgo all use of force against one another. Therefore, the term "conflict resolution" refers to a variety of procedures designed to lessen or get rid of sources of conflict. Wani (2011) also noted that the term "conflict resolution" is an umbrella term for a wide range of conflict management techniques and strategies, including diplomacy, mediation, arbitration, facilitation, adjudication, conciliation, conflict prevention, conflict management, restorative justice, and peacekeeping. According to Weaver (2003), effective conflict resolution happens when all parties are heard, opportunities are provided to effectively address interests, and each party is content with the

conclusion. Bercovitch et al. (2008), asserted that conflict resolution is concerned with concepts, theories, and techniques that can advance our comprehension of conflict and advance the political process for the balancing of interests. For them, the study of conflict resolution developed to put an end to the clashes that marked the Cold War. Conflict resolution studies are concentrated on using the knowledge from theory and research to resolve actual conflict situations (Bercovitch et al. 2009).

Marchetti and Tocci (2009) noted that conflict resolution aims to discover a common ground between the opposing parties' divergent underlying interests and look for potential solutions that may have been overlooked because of the parties' entrenched positions. Because "peace requires more than just a deal among conflicting parties," according to Wallensteen (2019, p. 8), conflict resolution goes beyond power bargaining and allows for a stronger role for third parties to assist the belligerents in moving from their positions to their interests to find a mutually acceptable agreement. Additionally, Mailla (2004), noted that conflict resolution refers to the use of peaceful means of resistance by parties in conflict to facilitate effective resolution.

Albert (2001), argued that conflict resolution has three goals: reducing the likelihood of destructive conflicts, stabilizing the end of destructive conflicts to prevent escalation, and preventing the emergence of a full-blown conflict by addressing the root causes of the conflict. Heitler (1990) also noted that conflict resolution requires the attainment of a solution that satisfies the requirement of all the conflicting forces, which produces an outcome of great feelings for all participants. Heitler (1990)–further noted that, a conflict resolution process must include the following: (1) the positions (these are the warring parties' initial statements about what they want and are saying); (2) explore underlying concerns (these are the parties' concerns and interests that are hidden behind their initial positions and serve as stepping stones to addressing the issues at stake); and

(3) joint-problem solving (this is when the warring parties collaborate to find solutions to problems).

2.3 Conflict Management

Conflict management cannot be defined in a single, balanced way. However, learning conflict management techniques can also lessen the likelihood of unproductive escalation in educational institutions. Rahim's five conflict handling or management styles or models applied in managing or handling institutional and organizational conflicts are described below. The Integrating style, also known as Problem Solving, indicates high concern for self and others. It involves collaboration between the parties in educational institutions/organizations that are willing to reach a mutual and acceptable solution through openness, exchange of information, examination and exploration of differences for arriving to a constructive solution that goes far beyond personal and limited visions of the problem.

Rahim highlights the two distinctive elements of his style as suggested by Prein (Rahim, 2011): 1) confrontation that is characterized by open communication, clarify misunderstanding, examining the underlying causes of conflicts; 2) and problem solving. Confrontation is considered as prerequisite of problem solving that implies the identification of appropriate solutions aiming to provide maximum and reciprocal satisfaction of concern of parties involved in conflicts in educational institutions and organizations (Rahim, 2011). The obliging style, also known as accommodating indicates low concern for self and high concern for others. An obliging person neglects and sacrifices personal concern so to satisfy the concern of the other party. This style is associated with a non-confrontation element characterized by the attempt of minimizing differences and emphasizing commonalities to satisfy the concern of the other party. As suggested by Rahim this style may take the form of selfless generosity, charity, or

obedience to the party's order. An obliging person can be defined as a "conflict absorber" terms describing a reaction of low hostility or even friendliness to a perceived hostile act (Rhaim, 2011).

Dominating Style, also known as competing, indicates high concern for self and low concern for others. A dominating person stands up for own rights and ignore others' needs and expectation; try to defend personal positions that he believes being as correct and right. This is a win-lose style expression in conflict, where a forcing behavior is exerted in order to win one's position. The avoiding style, also known as suppression, indicates low concern for self and others. Therefore, an avoiding person fails to satisfy personal concern as well as the concern of the other party (Rhaim, 2011). It has been associated with withdrawal, buck-passing, sidestepping situations. As suggested by Rahim this style may take the form of postponing an issue until a better time, or simply withdrawing from a threatening situation. This style often reflects little concern toward the issues or parties involved in conflict, and the attitude to refuse or denying to acknowledge the existence of a conflict in public (Rhaim, 2011). The compromising style indicates intermediate concern for self and others. The styles sees both parties involved in give and-take or sharing solutions, whereby both parties accept to give up something to make mutually acceptable decisions. Compromising style may involve splitting the difference, exchanging concession, or seeking a quick, middle ground position. A compromising person or party gives up more than a dominating but less than an obliging person or part (Rhaim, 2011). Similarly, a compromising person or party addresses an issue more openly than an avoiding person or party but does not explore alternative solutions as an integrating person or party. Rahim suggested that it would be possible to get more insights if using the taxonomy of game theory for reclassifying the five styles of handling interpersonal conflict in educational institutions

and organizations: integrating style can be reclassified to a positive-sum or non-zero-sum style, compromising to a mixed style, and obliging, dominating, and avoiding to zero-sum or negative-sum (Rahim, 2011). Although he indicated this possibility, he warns on the risk of using the taxonomy “win” and “lose” used by the game theory for this reclassification. This may be misleading, as matter of fact, Rahim highlights that each of the five styles of handling or managing interpersonal conflict may be appropriate, depending on the conflict situation, therefore considered as a situation dependent “winning style” (Rahim, 2011).

Developing conflict resolution skills, self-awareness of conflict modes, conflict communication skills, and creating a system for the management of conflict in your environment are all part of conflict management (Foundation Coalition, 2003). The phrase "conflict management" has been used to refer to all constructive conflict resolution techniques. While conflict resolution is a more general word that suggest that the core causes of conflict be addressed and transformed, conflict management refers to a more limited approach to the settlement and containment of violent conflict (Foundation Coalition, 2003).

When managed respectfully and constructively, conflict offers a chance to deepen the connection between two people or parties in an organisation. When handled poorly, it may do enormous harm to a relationship. These conflict resolution techniques maintain healthy and expanding personal and professional relationships (Segal & Smith, 2013). The Victorian Youth Mentoring Alliance, VYMA (2013) also believed that conflict could lead to change, present a learning opportunity, inspire people to improve, and help people see and understand distinctions, and help people become adaptive, help people clear the air, and help people move on. This necessitates the need for competent conflict handling, resolution, or management. More importantly, it's crucial to have the

knowledge and abilities necessary to address and handle disputes and find long-lasting resolutions or benefits for both parties (Hoban, 1992).

Management is a skill that is required for addressing conflict at any given time. Management means the organisation and coordination of situations or actions to reach set goals. Conflicts that are not handled well or at all lead to a breakdown in trust and decreased productivity. Loss of trust and productivity can be an indication of the demise of a small firm or organisation, whose success frequently depends on the harmony of a small group of individuals (Dontigney, 2013). We can spend more of our energy on work projects and developing our relationships when we manage our conflicts more skilfully. We are also less likely to engage in destructive behaviours that will hurt our organisation (Foundation Coalition, 2013). Conflict culture, or how the team handles conflict, exists in all teams and organisations. However, the majority of teams never discuss the conflict culture, giving individuals the chance to make assumptions that could be detrimental to the team. According to Foundation Coalition (2013), exercising conflict management techniques results in more successful participation in the conflict, which has positive effects on both the individual and the team in terms of relief, understanding, improved communication, and increased productivity. Additionally, it was shown that people often lack the social abilities necessary for productive teamwork within educational institutions prone to instability. For organisations to operate effectively, it is crucial to teach people suitable communication, leadership, trust, and decision-making skills linked to conflict management. Additionally, individuals have more opportunities to be successful team members when they learn how to handle and resolve conflicts with others.

In particular, Winneba Senior High School was the focus of Afful-Broni's (2012) investigation into conflict management techniques in Ghanaian schools. The study looked at how administrators handle disagreement. To obtain respondents' opinions on the causes, impacts, and management of conflict, the researcher administered questionnaires, conducted interviews, and took observations for the descriptive case study. The study concluded that to manage conflict, school leaders-built consensus, refrained from arguing and blaming staff and students when issues occurred, met with the necessary parties when they noticed the emergence of conflict and sought the help of counsellors and the Ghana Education Service.

In Enugu Educational Zone government secondary schools, Enugu state, Nigeria, Eze and Victor (2022) also conducted a survey to examine the various strategies employed to manage and resolve conflict between teachers and school authorities. A descriptive survey design was employed for the investigation. 187 respondents made up the study's sample size. The research revealed that embracing change, savvy distribution of resources, involvement in making decisions, and the use of dialogue, punishment, coercion, compromising, and avoidance are the main strategies for managing and resolving conflict. According to the study, school administrators should keep advancing their leadership abilities, be adaptable to change, and provide growth opportunities for others.

Ignace (2014) looked into how Tanzania's Kinondani Municipality evaluated the techniques used by heads of schools. Both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection were used in the study. 85 participants were chosen as the study's sample size. The study found that school administrators lacked knowledge and abilities in dispute resolution. The survey also showed that head teachers employed accommodation, cooperation, compromising, avoiding, and competing to manage and settle disputes.

According to the report, the Municipal Educational Office should arrange seminars for head teachers every vacation to help them develop or enhance their managerial efficacy by enabling them to learn or improve their leadership abilities and dispute-resolution techniques.

Ageng'a and Simatwa (2011) examined the evaluation of conflict management and resolution in public secondary schools in Kenya's Nyakach District. A descriptive survey research design was used for the investigation. Data gathered were analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively. 427 respondents made up the study's sample size. The study's conclusions showed that low academic achievement, disagreements over ideas, a pessimistic outlook, and improper management of school resources and funds were the main sources and causes of conflicts. The study found that arbitration, reconciliation, cooperation, and effective communication were among the conflict management and resolution techniques employed. The study suggested that the Ministry of Education should educate all parties on their responsibilities in public secondary schools in order to manage and resolve conflict.

Additionally, Fleetwood (1987) specified that educational managers used five categories of conflict management techniques to resolve a conflict when evaluating the conflict management styles and strategies of educational managers. Administrators of secondary schools were profiled and their conflict-resolution strategies were examined. Throughout a period of more than a year, the researcher conducted interviews with five secondary school administrators and conducted observations of them. According to the study, people only ever develop one conflict resolution technique and apply it in whatever circumstance. The study also found that factors like sex, race, and a student's prior record all had an impact on the usage of conflict management techniques and strategies. Before using the proper conflict management style(s) to resolve

disagreements, the study urged educational managers to evaluate and analyze conflict situations.

2.4 Sources of Conflict

The question of whether aggressive conduct is an innate human trait or a response to social, political, and economic conditions has been a source of debate among scholars throughout the history of the study of conflict (Nader, 1968; Collier, 1975; Tadesse, 1994). Such a strategy is known as the individual characteristic theory, according to Schellenberg (1996), and it concentrates on the man and his deeds rather than the circumstances of the act. This understanding of conflict stems from Freud's theories, according to which violence is a part of our fundamental animal nature. Human conflict is inevitable because it is a biological fact that exists within all of us, not because it is a necessary component of social existence.

In the nineteenth century, social Darwinists emphasised the importance of competition and conflict in all human societies, using the concept of the survival of the fittest as a foundation. They analysed conflict as part of a universal struggle urged by inborn aggressive tendencies. The new theoretical viewpoint known as ethnology concurs with Freud's view as well. This approach, according to Schellenberg (1996: 43) “emphasizes the genetic instance of social behaviours”. Ardrey (1961, 1966) and Lorenz (1963, 1966) cited in Tadesse (1994) and McCauley (1990: 132), argued that human violent behaviour is inherited. Tadesse (1994) continued to demonstrate how a particular community or person could be peaceful or aggressive depending on the time and situation. These ethnographic works have been successfully used by anthropologists to demonstrate the inadequacies of the biologically based explanation of the causes of conflict and to disprove it. Even those who have contested the idea that

human hostility is inherent have chosen alternative approaches to dealing with the root causes of conflict.

Katz (1996) distinguished three sources of conflict. These include (1) structural conflict (a conflict that results from the need to manage the interdependence between various organisational sub-units), (2) role conflict (a conflict that results from predetermined behaviours), and (3) resources conflict (a conflict that results from interest groups vying for organisational resources). According to Robbins (2005), there are three main causes of organisational conflict, and knowing where a dispute originated increases the likelihood that it may be managed effectively. Communicational (conflicts resulting from misunderstandings, etc.), structural (conflicts relating to organisational responsibilities), and personal (conflicts resulting from interpersonal differences) aspects are highlighted as the main origins of the conflict. When applied to a problem that originated from a different source, conflict management techniques that were effective in one situation might not be appropriate in another. Various viewpoints link the unit of analysis in question to the origin of organisational conflict. The participants in a conflict are the units of analysis. They identify a conflict, start it, and keep it going. Their traits define the factors influencing a conflict's trajectory and dictate how it will be managed. As a result, disputes can be classified as coming from within the individual, coming from relationships between individuals, or coming from interactions between groups. It is normal for people in such circumstances to feel frustrated and to let their conflict situation show through a variety of behaviour patterns, such as apathy, boredom, absenteeism, binge drinking, or destructive behaviour (Katz, 1996).

According to Jung (2003), conflict can arise when an organization's goals are not met and is related to power. Also, it is thought that people are aware of the elements that lead to conflict, such as lack, resistance, and conflicting interests or objectives. When

one party interferes with the other's efforts to attain its objectives, conflict may also result. However, Jung (2003) asserted that it is likely that in instances of normal conduct when processes are clear and the environment is steady, the causes of conflicts are not strongly connected with the attainment of goals and objectives. Conflict variables in these situations are presumably more correlated with status, personality, autonomy, and functional dependency (Jung, 2003).

According to Veludo-de, and Campomar (2005), some justifications for conflict escalation include: (i) as departments expand, people lose touch with other departments or even begin to think distinctly from other areas; (ii) the setting up of various profit centres within an integrated business system and the increased emphasis on financial measures as a tool for manager motivation result in numerous conflicts; Conflicts arise as a result of (iii) the emphasis on functional specialisation, politics surrounding promotion and hiring; (iv) the increased room for employee criticism among co-workers within school organizations. While this freedom of speech can be advantageous for society as a whole, it can also result in conflicts within organisations and in educational institutions, which may lead to disputes between them.

The uneven degree of interdependence, which impacts the amount of trust and commitment of the groups, is another cause of disputes identified by Kumar, Scheer, and Steenkamp (1995). When parties depend on one another to differing degrees, this is known as asymmetric interdependence. That is, within the same group, some members can rely on others who, in turn, exhibit independence towards them. Individuals depend on one another when there is total interdependence, though. According to Kumar et al. (1995), relationships with entire interdependence are less likely to have conflict than those with asymmetric interdependence. Because the dependent party typically adapts

to the circumstance so that it cannot be changed and accepts the leader's power, conflict is less likely to occur in situations where there is a significant degree of dependence.

Capozzoli (1995) identified seven causes of conflict: (1) Team members carry culturally distinct principles to their work teams; (2) Team members exhibit distinct behaviours that lead to varying objectives for teammates; (3) Team members have a unique need that is not fulfilled, which leads to disappointment that compounds conflict; (4) Team members have distinct expectations that are not achieved; (5) Team members' various perspectives lead to distinct readings of the same information. (6) Conflict is frequently made worse by a dearth of resources. (7) The differing personalities of the team members clash frequently. Additionally, Rayeski and Bryant (1994), noted that conflict is fuelled by pressure and ambiguity and results in stressful circumstances for the team and its members. In addition, Kezsbom (1992) conducted research and determined that ambiguous roles and structures, costs, reward structures, technical opinions, personality, communication (see also Twinsley 1997), politics, administrative procedures, resource allocations, scheduling, leadership, and unresolved prior conflicts were among the sources of conflict. This study highlighted the significance of the relationships between various conflict sources. Conflicts can have a variety of root causes in every organisation.

Additionally, conflicts will increase if the management fails to specify the tasks of individuals working in a group (Kirkwood, 2002). Role-related pressures may lead to interpersonal conflicts. If the objectives for each member of a group were not clearly defined, conflicts between individuals and groups would result (Fisher, 2000). The research also states that there are numerous causes of organisational conflict, and each one has a different set of outcomes (Cormick et al., 1996). There are generally six main sources: (i) the conflicts that result from interpersonal conflict, which happens when

one person is under personal tension; (ii) the issues brought on by role conflict, which is a condition that happens when there is a disagreement over one's role within the organisation; (iii) the power struggles that set individuals and groups against one another to further their interests; and (iv) the misunderstandings and conflicts brought on by distinction, or the conflicts that occur when individuals address common problems in distinct manners.; (v) the interdependence requirements for cooperation, which, if not vast and even between the parties, result in lapses in communication and interaction and, if serious, more intense conflicts; and (vi) the external pressures from forces outside the enterprise, which breed internal pressures as the system seeks to adapt without upsetting its internal order (Kahn, 1964; Fisher, 2000; Robbins & Rivers, 2005; Henry, 2009).

The literature reviewed above stated that the methods of conflict management and conflict resolution which are appropriate in one case may not necessarily be appropriate when applied to a conflict generated from another source(s) (Robbins, 2005). The literature reviewed supra also indicates that there are numerous reasons why conflicts arise in organisations. Consequently, it also described Rahim's five style or model of conflict management that can be applied in managing conflicts in educational institutions and organizations (Rahim, 2011). If group goals are not clearly defined for each member, conflicts between people and groups would result (Kahn, 1964; Fisher, 2000; Robbins & Rivers, 2005; Henry, 2009).

2.5 Conflict Resolution in Schools

According to the Ghana Education Act of 2010 as amended (Act 802), the school administrator is in charge of the community of various staff members and students and is accountable for all that occurs in the school. Travo (2002) and Kochhar (1988) stressed the significance of the school manager as the key foundation in the framework

of school management who is in charge of the community of staff members and students. Kochhar (1988), stated that a school manager is skilled in enlisting others, setting up favourable circumstances, and starting processes that bring out the best in everyone who works there, including teachers, support personnel, and students. The manager drives the search for solutions to the institution's shared challenges, encourages teamwork, coordinates efforts, prepares what needs to be done, and assesses performance to determine why something succeeded or failed. Otigi (1977), noted that the success or failure of a school is primarily dependent on the school management. Kochhar (1988, p. 125) added that "the school is as greater as the manager because everything in the school, the plant, the staff, the curriculum, methods and techniques of teaching among other human relationships, bear the impress of his/her personality and the way conflict is handled and resolved".

Schools are not deemed outstanding because of their spectacular structures, but rather because of the management's regular employment of conflict resolution techniques to settle disputes in schools (Griffin, 1994). The post of school principal is one of the most important in any educational system. He/she needs motivation, enthusiasm, vision, personality, and conflict resolution skills among other things to be effective. Hence, there is the need for school administrators and other stakeholders in education to learn how to manage and resolve conflicts within the school system by deploying the appropriate mechanisms or approaches in managing and resolving conflicts in the selected public SHSs in the Upper West Region. To accomplish both individual and organisational goals, diverse groups of people are employed by organisations, especially large and complicated ones. This implies that management must foster an atmosphere conducive to teamwork. However, work groups typically tend to struggle over scarce resources, position, and power, interrupting their ability to work together.

Management encounters conflict from outside influences in addition to internal conflict. Government, labour unions, and economic situations are a few examples of these (Vanwyk, 1989). Griffin (1994) asserts that more than any other single element, a school manager's public and professional reputation will be influenced by the level of stability in the institution. In other words, high stability leads to good outcomes in all areas of academic pursuit.

2.6 Conflict Resolution Mechanisms

The circumstances under which conflict resolution techniques (negotiation or mediation) are selected in a dispute vary depending on its nature and the parties or individuals involved. Previous research by Bercovitch and Kadayifei-Orellana (2009) sought to determine the motivational and rational calculations of parties involved in a conflict. The study found that a mediator's motivation is crucial when assessing whether or not to intervene and whether or not such mediation can help the parties and the mediator develop a sense of trust and credibility. Examining the impact of the situation in which a choice was taken has not received much attention (Moore, 2012). According to Shamir (2003), a large amount of conflict research has focused on mediation and negotiating procedures as well as their overall efficacy. How does negotiation or mediation start, and why do parties pick one over the other, is a persistent question that needs to be answered before a technique can be said to be effective. These inquiries have largely gone unanswered. Conflicts in the international sphere typically lack such procedural rules (Kriesberg, 1998), even when institutionalised procedures exist for dealing with some types of conflict, including instructions about the process and how to commence it (for example, the arbitration for labour-management disputes). According to Moore (2012), states frequently only use ad hoc conflict resolution procedures,

selecting (directly or obliquely from a wide range of strategies like negotiation, mediation, arbitration, inquiry, conciliation, or referral to international organisations).

It is also crucial to note that there are a few prerequisites that must be met before using conflict resolution mechanisms. When a conflict is prolonged, drawn out, or difficult, mediation is probably used, according to Bercovitch and Jackson (2001). It assumes that the conflict must have taken on a complicated nature for mediation to be employed as a resolution method. Second, mediation frequently becomes involved when efforts to resolve a dispute between the parties have failed (Bercovitch, 1992; T'Hart, 1995; Kleiboer, 1996) or when hostility makes it impossible to resolve a dispute at all. For instance, Touval and Zartman (1989) claimed that the parties are likely to request mediation once they have come to a painful impasse.

Third, there must be a mediator who is willing and able to intervene (Bercovitch & Jackson, 2001), and there must be a chance for the mediator to do so (Rubin, 1992). Mediation will not take place if the parties want to forego any outside assistance. Fourth, parties are more likely to use mediation when they believe it will help them reach a better settlement than they can on their own, when they believe the mediator will give them a face-saving way out of the conflict or a way to sway their adversary, or when they believe that rejecting mediation will cause more harm than accepting it (Bercovitch, 1992; Kleiboer, 1996; Zartman & Touval, 1996). Finally, bilateral agreements are less likely to be successful in resolving elusive issues like ideology, security, or ethnic identities. Mediation is the recommended way of conflict resolution when such ethereal problems are at the core of a disagreement (Bercovitch & Jackson, 2001).

In contrast, because of their levels of concern for their own and their adversary's outcomes, disputing parties opt for negotiation or any other strategy (Bercovitch & Jackson, 2001). This is what is called the Dual Concern Model (DCM). This is articulated in terms of adversarial vs collaborative dispositions at the level of global politics (Fisher, 2007). Second, according to Moore (2012)'s Perceived Feasibility Model, disputing parties will select a method (negotiation) if it is practical and will almost certainly enable them to achieve their conflict objectives. To determine whether negotiations or unilateral acts are more advantageous, negotiating players do a cost-benefit analysis. Third, data from the study by Bercovitch and Jackson (2001) showed that negotiation is the most common methodological option when parties are arguing relatively simple tangible concerns (such as terms of independence for former colonies, access to or control over resources). Bercovitch and Jackson (2001) contend that understanding the nature of the disagreement is important to enlighten you when choosing a resolution mechanism to resolve a conflict after identifying the prerequisites that call for the employment of a specific mechanism. The empirical study looked at the association between conflict management and the number of fatalities and conflict intensity utilising the number of deaths in a conflict. The study proposed that the degree of conflict intensity is one of the most crucial criteria influencing the decision of a conflict resolution strategy. Data from the study by Bercovitch and Jackson (2001) supported the idea that parties prefer to negotiate a settlement to disputes when they are not too contentious. Conflicting parties typically resolve their disagreements directly without the involvement of other parties.

However, mediation is required when the rate of antagonism among the parties is so great that face-to-face negotiations are impossible. According to several studies, opposing parties will choose to settle their differences on their own when a

disagreement is not too acrimonious (Bercovitch & Houston, 1996; Bercovitch & Jackson, 2001; Moore, 2012). To put it another way, when a disagreement is low intensity or small in scope, the parties believe they can resolve it amicably without the need for a mediator (Wall & Lynn, 1993). Realistically, many parties in these situations view outside interference as an undesired intrusion (Pruitt & Kim, 2004). A high number of fatalities is a sign of a hostile environment. To resolve the issue in such situations, a mediator may need to act as a liaison between the parties. The literature makes some inferences that the type or identity of the parties involved in the conflict may have an impact on the strategy or mechanism used. Bilateral engagement may not always be feasible when participants in a conflict have distinct identities and power capacities (Pruitt & Carnevale, 1993; Bercovitch & Houston, 1996; Kleiboer, 1996). More precisely, negotiations become very challenging when parties to a conflict do not share the same political system or set of cultural norms and values. This is because “shared norms and socio-political similarity minimize misperception and facilitate a successful conclusion to the conflict” (Bercovitch & Houston, 1996, p. 21).

Tandoh-Offin and Gyan (2014) conducted a survey on conflict resolution mechanisms in public senior high schools in Ghana and their impact on school administration in Greater Accra Metropolis. The objective of the study was to determine various mechanisms applied in resolving conflicts within public senior high schools in the Accra Metropolis. The study used a descriptive research design. A sample size of 265 respondents was selected for the study. The research instruments included a questionnaire and an interview guide. The findings of the study revealed that teachers tend to use authoritarian and power-based methods to resolve conflicts with students; this included punishments and force of different kinds. To resolve disagreements among students at the selected schools, some school administrators are making a

concerted effort to use conflict resolution mechanisms including negotiation and mediation. The study also showed that students react aggressively and competitively to conflict. Students believe in using violence or showing disobedience to the authorities at the school, to demand for anything they feel they are denied of. The study recommended that the Ministry of Education provide a course on conflict resolution for teachers through the colleges of education.

Ramani and Zhimin (2010) examined conflict resolution practises in public secondary schools in Nairobi Province, Kenya, in a study comparable to that of Afful-Broni. Descriptive and exploratory research designs were used in the study. 265 people were chosen as a sample for the survey. A questionnaire and an interview schedule were presented to the respondents as part of the research tools. According to the study's findings, the majority of students who encountered personal conflicts handled them in a constructive manner by maintaining their composure while arguing their point of view, exchanging accurate information with the other parties involved to find a compromise, and engaging in negotiations. The paper urged school administrators and teachers to work towards adopting open systems where everyone is free to express their opinions and where potential points of contention are publicly discussed.

A study on Principal's conflict resolution tactics and effective management of secondary schools as viewed in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Nigeria, was undertaken by Edo and Omunakwe (2021). 471 respondents made up the study's sample size. A questionnaire served as the data gathering tool for the study. According to the study, Principals use avoidance and accommodation tactics as part of their conflict resolution strategies for managing secondary schools effectively. The study advised school managers and administrators to determine the true reasons and nature of conflict among

the complete workforce of the schools before considering any suitable conflict resolution techniques.

A study on conflict resolution techniques and efficient management of public secondary schools in Delta State, Nigeria, was also carried out by Ajudeoniu and Ossai (2022). The research design adopted was descriptive. For the study, a sample size of 300 respondents was used. The study's conclusions showed that the public secondary schools in Delta State employed avoidance and adaptation as their primary conflict-resolution tactics. The study suggested that the government incorporate conflict management and resolution instruction into the curricula for teacher training.

2.7 Theoretical Framework

Human Needs Theory

One of the theories that underpin this study is the Human Needs Theory. The unfulfilled needs of people are the focus of the analysis framework offered by the human needs theory. The theory holds that the root cause of conflict is unfulfilled human needs. According to Burton (1997), one of the major contributions of the fundamental human needs theory is that, the individual is the most essential unit of analysis. Humans work to satisfy their ontological demands in every situation. Identity, security, recognition, and development, together with fundamental physiological and physical needs, are some of the basic needs of humans.

Since the inability to satisfy fundamental wants causes conflict, basic needs are important to those who deal with disputes (Burton, 1997). Humans will battle to end the frustration of not being able to meet their demands if they believe that there are incompatible goals between and among their rivals. Conflict at public senior high schools in Ghana's Upper West region is significantly influenced by several factors, one of which is the question of basic human necessities. Human needs are context-specific

rather than universal. According to Kendie et al. (2014), rivalries and polarisations, economic underdevelopment and inequities, bad governance, succession disputes, and competition for and access to resources are some of the reasons for violence in Ghana. Human needs theorists contend that conflicts and violent conflicts are caused by unfulfilled human needs. Violence happens when certain people or groups cannot see another way to meet their needs or when they require understanding, respect, and consideration for their needs. These necessities are known as basic human needs or human needs and are necessary for humans to live and achieve well-being.

According to Rosenberg (2003), every human behaviour is an attempt to satiate unfulfilled desires since violence is a tragic expression of those needs. We may look at other ways to meet these wants, preventing violence and devastation, if we can connect with our needs and those of others. At all societal levels, alternative behaviour meant to satiate these demands, such as racial strife, street gangs, or domestic violence, would result from society's denial of or incapacity to provide for fundamental material requirements, recognition, protection, and identity. According to Burton, the enormous potential of the human needs theory is that it would offer a comparatively objective foundation, transcending regional, political, and cultural variations, for comprehending conflict resolution, the causes of conflict, or designing conflict resolution processes, as well as for founding conflict analysis and resolution as an independent discipline.

The on-going research work can be positioned in this theory because of the recent spates of conflicts in Wa Islamic SHS, Eremon SHTS and St. John's Vocational Technical Institute which were reported by media outlets in the Upper West region of Ghana between and among the students, teachers, school administrators and other employees were based on competing interests, values, beliefs, needs and goals which were crucial to the selected public senior high schools in the region. The human needs

theory, which states that one must take the needs of the participants or actors into account to resolve a conflict, is related to this study. The theory is especially helpful in that it underscores the necessity to comprehend the origins of the conflict to enable conflict resolution professionals and actors to use the right procedure. According to the theory, conflict is sparked by feelings like rage and frustrating, which are essential to the continued existence of many populations. Ineffective conflict resolution may stem from any intervener's failure to recognise the conflicts' motivating factors (Human Needs). This study demonstrates that while choosing a conflict resolution strategy, interveners must carefully consider the needs of the participants or actors. In other words, systems for resolving conflicts must work to accommodate the demands of the parties involved. It is clear from the foregoing that the Human Needs Theory and the Deprivation Theory are related. Conflict occurs when people are denied the opportunity to meet their needs.

Many people have used the theory of human needs. Here, the theories of Rosenberg, John Burton, and Abraham Maslow will be briefly discussed. Maslow (1943) noted that certain needs are more pressing than others in his Pyramid of Human Needs. At the bottom of the hierarchy, he lays supplies of food, water, and shelter. He places the need for safety and security at level two, followed by the need for belonging or love at level three, the need for self-esteem at level four, and the need for personal fulfilment at level five. According to Maslow, every individual tries to satisfy his or her needs on a certain level at a given time. A person who is focused on getting enough food and water is not going to be thinking about how to get enough love, self-esteem, or a sense of community. Humans will not try to fulfil their need for personal fulfilment until the prerequisites at the base of the pyramid are met.

Human needs theory has been actively applied to present social and political problems by Burton (1997). Burton examines how ubiquitous human needs are frequently disregarded in his work on lengthy social disputes, which encourages groups to use violence to assert their rights and meet their desires. Burton contends that education and culture cause parties to manipulate the issues and denigrate the other parties in situations where human needs are compatible.

According to Rosenberg's (2003) theory, people must meet their needs to survive and be happy. Subject to the existence of other wants, Rosenberg subdivides the needs into groups. The study proposes a model for connecting with our own and others' needs through non-violent communication, an approach he applies at all levels of society and that he has used in mediation in numerous nations. The study asserts that our education and culture frequently prevent us from connecting with our real needs.

There is a lot that can be stated about how effective the Human Needs Theory (HNT) is for handling violent conflict. First of all, it is broadly applicable. Practitioners like Rosenberg employ HNT in violent conflict mediation, whilst some just view it as a tool for handling or resolving conflicts. Non-Violent Communication (NVC) is also used as a method in managing and resolving conflicts in educational institutions (Danielsen, 2005). It has also been helpful in attempts to promote reconciliation.

It can also be used at all social levels, for intrapersonal and interpersonal conflict, intergroup conflict, and in a global context. Second, the theory looks at the root of conflict and how the parties might effectively satisfy their own and other people's needs. Finding appropriate conflict resolution mechanisms and strategies to meet and address the underlying needs of students and the school administrators (headteachers and teachers) in the school environment, eventually, would help to manage and resolve all the protracted conflicts in public SHSs in the Upper West region of Ghana and by

extension Ghana as a whole. This is so because most of the conflict participants have needs that influence their behaviour. In conclusion, HNT has a wide range of applications and may offer long-term solutions since it emphasises the root causes of conflict, fosters understanding based on our shared humanity, and draws attention to the difference between topics that are amenable to negotiation and those that cannot.

There are various issues with the theory. How can we define human needs first? The various scholars have a number of disagreements. In a conflict situation, it will be challenging to effectively satisfy human needs if they are merely what we judge them to be. Second, should we give certain needs more importance than others? Is Maslow correct when he says that a person's necessities like food and shelter should come before those for self-worth and fulfilment? Or are rest, recreation, and protection equally essential to ensuring human well-being? The validity, applicability, and use of HNT in today's violent conflicts undoubtedly require further research.

Contingency Conflict Theory

This study also draws upon the contingency theory of conflict resolution and management to explain the understanding of conflict resolution and the mechanisms used in the selected schools in resolving conflicts. Over the past few decades, the contingency theory of conflict resolution and management has come into its own and become a position that has undergone empirical testing and served as an expansion, qualification, and extension of the value of symmetry. According to contingency theory, a continuum of stances rather than a small number of models of excellence are the finest representations of strategic communication (Fisher & Keashly, 1991). "The contingency theory is also an idealized representation of a highly complex reality; however, it may descriptively capture some of the essence of the relationships between

highly escalated conflict and the interventions required to address or resolve it” (Fisher, 2007, p. 10).

Contingency theory in conflict resolution was pioneered by Fisher and Keashly (1991). In brief, the theory that comes mainly from institutional and organizational psychology is that, at different points during a conflict situation(s) or (circumstance) different types of third-party intervention are more or less effective in resolving or addressing different conflict situations (Fisher & Keashly, 1991). The theory is useful in studying and analysing resource-based, objective-based and identity-based conflicts or disputes and the appropriate interventions or mechanisms to employ in addressing or resolving these broad types of conflict (Burton, 1993). The application of this theory is that the approach to third-party intervention is based on the analysis and assessment that social conflict involves a dynamic process in which objective and subjective elements interact over time as the conflict escalates and deescalates. Therefore, depending on the objective-subjective mix, “different intervention(s) or mechanism(s) would be appropriate to the students and school administrators of the selected schools in resolving conflict at different situations or states” depending on the specific context and circumstances of the conflict (Fisher & Keashly, 1991, p. 34). Also, the theory recognizes that conflict arises due to differences in goals, values, beliefs, and interests among individuals or groups. Therefore, there is no one-size-fits-all approach or mechanism to conflict resolution and that different mechanisms or strategies may be more effective depending on the conflict situation (Fisher, 1991). It is evident from the above that the Contingency Theory of conflict resolution relates to Kurt Lewin’s Field Theory. He argued that the display of the processes of conflict resolution will be strongly influenced by the context within which the conflict occurs. Contingency theory of conflict resolution acknowledges that “the analysis of protracted inter-group

conflict as rooted in denial of basic human needs explains why such disputes defy traditional methods or mechanisms of conflict management and resolution” (Fisher, 1991, p. 248).

By choosing the contingency theory for this study, it would help in the understanding of conflict resolution, be able to determine the sources of resource-based, objective-based and identity-based disputes or conflicts within a contingency (circumstance) framework, and the appropriate third-party intervention(s) or mechanism(s) that would meet or address the competing interests, values, beliefs, goals and needs of parties in the selected schools to manage and resolve conflicts depending on the circumstance(s) that is a contingency (Fisher, 2012). This theory would help the students and administrators of the selected schools to determine highly intensified conflicts based on the specific conflict situation or circumstance at hand, whether it needs a third-party intervention (mediator/Police service) as a mechanism(s) or a different approach or mechanism(s) to resolving conflicts of low intensity, where the students and the school administrators of the selected schools would want to resolve or handle such conflicts through their own initiated mechanism(s) in the schools without any third party intervention(s). Also, the contingency theory would help elicit the understanding or views of the students and school administrators of the selected schools about conflict resolution based on their personal experiences and thoughts about different conflict situations (s) or circumstances and the different interventions or mechanisms that would help them in resolving conflicts in the schools. The understanding of conflict resolution in itself, would help individuals or actors in conflict to adopt the appropriate interventions or mechanisms to resolve their different conflicts based on the specific contingency (situation) that is the circumstance(s) of the conflict. The contingency theory of conflict resolution explains that individuals or disputants can adopt their

conflict resolution mechanisms or strategies (interventions) that fit the specific context and circumstances (contingency) of the conflict (Fisher, 1991).

The contingency theory can be useful in resolving conflict through effective communication, reconciliation and negotiation (Fisher & Keashly, 1991). By choosing the contingency theory, the students and the administrators of the selected schools would be able to use negotiation and effective communication as mechanisms to resolve conflicts depending on the specific circumstance (intensity of the conflict) that is the contingency of the conflict. Recent research in Ghana and Sub-Saharan Africa has shown the usefulness of contingency theory in analysing, assessing and explaining different conflicts in schools depending on the specific circumstances or situations of the conflict and the different interventions or mechanisms that were employed in resolving or addressing the conflicts. Gyan and Tandoh-Offin (2014) used the contingency conflict theory to explain the conflict resolution mechanism in public senior high schools in the Greater Accra Metropolis embarked upon by the school administrators. “Their study revealed that” third-party intervention (mediation) was used in resolving different conflicts in schools depending on the specific conflict situations or circumstances.

2.8 Summary of Literature

The literature revealed some measures, strategies, and mechanisms that have been used by some educational institutions in resolving and managing protracted conflicts in public senior high schools in Ghana and Sub-Saharan Africa. Also, the literature reviewed provided evidence that conflict is inevitable in human endeavour. The literature further revealed that some of the conflict resolution mechanisms have not been able to entirely resolve conflicts in public SHSs because certain pre-conditions did not warrant the use of a particular mechanism or mechanisms employed in the conflict.

More so, it is evident that despite significant interventions made by major stakeholders in education in Ghana to resolve conflicts in public SHSs in Ghana. There is still space of students' violence or conflicts in public SHSs in Ghana. It appears those interventions have not been successful in managing and resolving conflicts in public SHSs in the Ghana. It is also evident from the literature reviewed that, previous studies focused on the internal actors, causes and approaches to handling or resolving interreligious conflicts in public SHSs in the study area. However, those studies neglected other relevant sources and causes of conflicts and the mechanisms used by the students and school administrators in managing and resolving conflicts in public SHSs in the Upper West Region. This study, therefore, fill these gaps.



CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the philosophical underpinning and the methodological consideration for the study. Specifically, the chapter discussed the research approach, research design, study area, population of the study, sample size and sampling technique, research instrumentation, sources of data, data collection procedure, data analysis and ethical considerations. The chapter also discussed the positionality of the researcher in the study.

3.1 Philosophical Underpinning of the Research

Thomas Kuhn initially introduced the word paradigm to describe a theoretical mode of thinking in 1962 (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). According to Guba and Lincoln (1994), a paradigm is a set of beliefs that symbolises a certain worldview. A mental model or a framework of ideas or beliefs through which one understands reality is another way to define a paradigm. A paradigm describes the philosophical perspective of the researcher, which determines the ontology, epistemology, and methodology to be applied. It represents the underlying assumptions that shape the researcher's perception of reality. Tuli (2010) asserts that a researcher's perspective on a phenomenon and the approach they should employ is determined by their paradigm. Accordingly, a paradigm denotes a framework, pattern, or system of theories, principles, and presumptions that are common to both science and academia (Olsen, Lodwick, & Dunlop, 1992).

The philosophical assumption or research paradigm that underpins this study is the interpretivism or interpretivist research paradigm. The interpretivist paradigm is founded on the assumption that people's perceptions, ideas, thinking, and the meanings that are significant to them can be understood through researching their cultures (Boas, 1995). Therefore, the methods used to comprehend human and social sciences cannot be compared to those used in physical sciences, because humans translate their surroundings and behave based on that interpretation (Hammersley, 2013). Reeves and Hedberg (2003: 32) note that "interpretivist" paradigm stresses the need to put analysis in context. Interpretivist also adopts a relativist ontology in which an event may have several interpretations rather than a fact that can be determined via a particular method to gain a deeper understanding of the events and discover the complex issues and the phenomenon in the specific context the situation is embedded in so that researchers can see what has happened and how it happened (Creswell, 2007). The interpretive paradigm is concerned with understanding the world as it is from the subjective experiences of individuals.

Hammersley (2015) contends that the interpretive paradigm is the best philosophical assumption to be used to explain social realities since it allows people to interpret phenomena from their diverse contexts and experiences. The study was underpinned by the interpretive research paradigm since the main aim of the study was to collect information from participants by exploring their understanding of conflict resolution, the areas or sources of conflict and the mechanisms the participants employed in the resolution of conflicts in the selected public senior high schools in the Upper West Region of Ghana. Interpretivism is an approach to social science that asserts that understanding the beliefs, motivations, and reasoning of the individuals in a social situation is essential to decoding the meaning of the data that can be collected around

a phenomenon (Hammersley, 2015). As an interpretivist researcher, one should understand that there could be more than one interpretation of the findings derived from the data, so it is the responsibility of researchers to find ways to see and understand the diverse nature of experiencing the issues and the situation in the cultural settings (Hammersley, 2013).

Tuli (2010) contends that interpretivist paradigm can take the approach of methodologies from narrative study, and case study to ethnography because they provide the in-depth life experiences of the narrators who are the social actors, who constitute their culture. Moreover, researchers can probe an interviewee's thoughts, values, prejudices, perceptions, emotions, and perspectives by utilizing the key approach of interactive interviews, which allows researchers to analyse and set off matters that we cannot observe (Wellington & Szczerbinki, 2007). Many theorists and scholars criticized interpretivism paradigm for its subjective notions, beliefs and perspectives of participants (Yanow, 2006). Yanow (2006) discusses that the perspective of self is strong for interpretivists that sometimes they overlook how people's perceptions are powerful and how they are influenced by this power when they interpret their subjective ideas. Observation and interpretation serve as the foundation for interpretive rhetoric; observation is gathering information about an occurrence. Interpretation entails giving that information meaning by forming conclusions or determining whether it fits with some abstract pattern (Creswell, 2014). This study adopted the interpretive research paradigm because it helped the researcher to understand the views or perspectives of the participants about conflict resolution, the areas or the sources where the conflicts emanated from and the mechanisms, they employed in resolving them.

3.2 Research Approach

The study adopted the qualitative research approach to explore the understanding of the students and school administrators about conflict resolution, the areas or sources of conflict and the mechanisms that are used by the students and school administrators of the selected public senior high schools in the Upper West Region of Ghana in the resolution of conflicts. The scholarly motivation for choosing this approach is found in Crossman (2021) who defined qualitative research as a type of social science research that collects and works with non-numerical data and that seeks to interpret meaning from these data that helps us to understand social life through the study of targeted population or place. In this sense, qualitative research can be said to involve an interaction between the researcher and the researched in the sociocultural context of the participants of a study (Kusi, 2012).

The focus of qualitative approach is an ongoing understanding of what meaning participants ascribe to a social or human problem (Creswell, 2014 as cited in Kuupiel, 2021, p. 54). “Subjective meanings and context” are usually the focus of qualitative research (Smith & Caddick, 2012, p. 61 as cited in Kuupiel, 2021, p. 54). “Qualitative research emphasizes on quality” (Adzahile-Mensah et al. 2017; Ary, Jacobs & Sorensen, 2010 as cited in Kuupiel, 2021, p. 54). This research approach was adopted because the researcher sought to explore participants' understanding or thoughts about conflict resolution, the areas or sources of conflict and conflict resolution mechanisms that were used by the students and school administrators of the selected public senior high schools in the Upper West region of Ghana in the resolution of conflicts. The approach also gave an in-depth understanding of the issue under study. The study collected data through interacting with the students and school administrators of the selected public senior high schools in the Upper West region of Ghana, by being with

them and interviewing them (Kuupiel, 2021, p. 54). The findings of the study were arrived at through the exploration of participants' understandings or views, thoughts and experiences using interviews but not by statistical procedures and quantification. In quantitative research, Bryman (2008) and Creswell (2003) suggested that participants are expected to give detailed rather than general information on the features of the specific phenomenon under investigation. This approach further allowed the research participants to share their understanding, feelings and experiences about conflict resolution, the areas or sources of conflict and the appropriate mechanism(s) used in resolving conflicts in and around the school environment. Qualitative research approach considers collecting information from participants to understand the phenomenon under study from the perspectives of those involved in the research (Ary, Jacobs & Sorensen, 2010 as cited in Kuupiel, 2021, p. 55). For that reason, the study chose people who could provide my research with reach information on their understanding or views about conflict resolution, the areas or sources of conflict and the mechanisms used in the selected public senior high schools in the Upper West region of Ghana in the resolution of conflicts.

3.3 Research Design

To achieve the research objectives of this study, the researcher adopted the case study design to provide evidence of the understanding of conflict resolution, the areas or sources of conflict and the mechanisms used by the students and school administrators of the selected public senior high schools in the Upper West region of Ghana in the resolution of conflicts. A case study, according to the Centre for Innovation in Research and Teaching (2019), refers to an in-depth, detailed study of an individual or a small group of individuals. It is a research method that allows for the investigation of a phenomenon in its context using a variety of data sources. This guarantees that

the topic is not examined through a single lens, but rather a multitude of lenses, allowing for the discovery and understanding of numerous aspects of events. Case studies involve having a sustained-detailed study of a phenomenon (Ary et al., 2010 as cited in Kuupiel, 2021, p. 56). A case study seeks to produce a “detailed description and understanding” of a unit or case (Ary et al., 2010 as cited in Kuupiel, 2021, p. 56). Thus, in this research the focus was on the depth of the students and school administrators understanding, perspectives and lived experiences and not the breadth as espoused by Kuupiel (2021). One of the advantages of this approach is the close collaboration between the researcher and the participants while enabling participants to tell their stories (Crabtree & Miller, 1999). Through these stories, the participants can describe their views and share their experiences which will enable the researcher to better understand the participants' actions (Lather, 1992; Robottom & Hart, 1993).

Wellington (2015) adds that the strength of this approach is that it's illustrative and illuminating, accessible and easily disseminated, holding the reader's attention and paying vivid accounts which are “strong and reality” (2015, p. 174). As a design for my thesis, the case study helped me to use different methodologies to explore the participants thoughts, views and their experiences about the phenomenon within their context. In qualitative case studies, a case can be a program, an individual, an institution, an event, a community or a process (Creswell, 2014; Ary et al., 2010; Cohen et al., 2007 as cited in Kuupiel, 2021, p. 57). This research took and studied conflict resolution mechanisms in public senior high schools in the Upper West region of Ghana as a case because it offered a unique example of real people in a real situation as suggested by Cohen et al. (2007) (cited in Kuupiel, 2021, p. 57). On the other hand, he notes that they are not replicable, may not be representative, “typical or

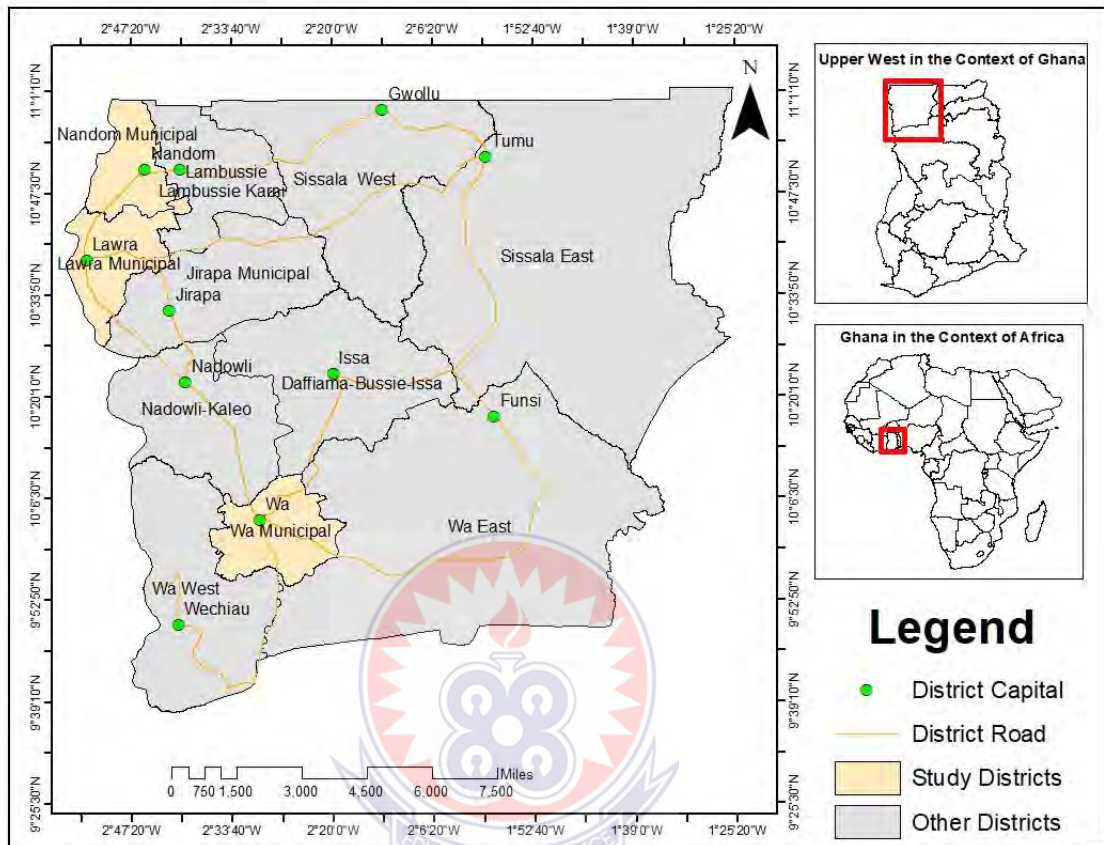
generalizable” (Wellington, 2015, p. 174). Denscombe (2014) notes the difficulties in choosing, knowing and setting boundaries to the case study. Case studies move beyond description to analysis and evaluation. Shaughnessy et al. (2003) suggest that case studies often lack a “high degree of control, and sometimes are rarely controlled systematically and have little control over extraneous variables” (p. 290). This, they argue, renders it difficult to make inferences and draw conclusions from case studies. It was therefore essential for me as a researcher to explore the understanding of the students and school administrators about conflict resolution, identify the areas or sources of conflicts and the mechanisms used by the students and school administrators of the selected public SHSs in the Upper West region of Ghana in the resolution of conflicts by the use of the case study design.

3.4 Study Area

The study area, Upper West region, is located in the North Western corner of Ghana with latitude 9.8-11.0° North and longitude 1.6-3.0° West. The region is bordered on the North by the Republic of Burkina Faso, on the East by the Upper East region the West by Cote d’Ivoire. The Upper West region is one of the sixteen regions of Ghana, it has eleven administrative districts, which include, the Wa municipal, Sissala East municipal, Nandom municipal, Lawra municipal, Jirapa municipal, Nadowli-Kaleo district, Sissala West district, Wa West district, Wa East district, Lambussie-Kani district and Daffiama-Bussie-Issa district assemblies (Ghana Statistical Service, 2021). However, this study is limited to some selected public senior high schools in three clustered zones (Northern, middle and southern) of the region, within which the Nandom municipal, Lawra municipal and Wa municipal assemblies fall under the study area. The capital and largest city of the region is Wa.

Figure 3.1: Map of Upper West region showing the various municipal and districts capitals.

Map of Upper West Region



Source: Ghana Statistical Service, GIS, 2014.

The majority of the population 15 years and older in the region are skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers (30.0%), about 31.1 percent are craft and related trade workers (Ghana Statistical Service, 2021). The proportion of the male population working as agricultural, forestry and fishery workers (35.4%) is higher than that of females (26.5%). On the other hand, the proportion of females (21.1%) engaged in craft and related work is more than double that of males (10.1%) (Ghana Statistical Service, 2021). The economic activity of the people of the Upper West region is agriculture. Crops grown include corn, millet, peanuts, okra, shea tree, and rice.

Sheep, goats, chicken, pigs and guinea fowl are raised for meat and eggs. The major ethnic groups in the region fall under the broad generic categories of the Mole Dagbon (75.7%) and Grusi (18.4%) (Ghana Statistical Service, 2021). The languages spoken by the people of the region are Dagaare, Sissali, Waale and Lobi. The region also has three major religious affiliations, thus, Christianity (35.5), Islam (32.2%) and Traditional religion (29.3%) (Domanban, 2020). Festivals such as Kobine, Willa, Kakube, Zumbeti, Dumba, Buwaala, Kelwie, Kala, Paragbiele, Bagre, Bongngo and Singma are the festivals celebrated by the people of the region, which portray their way of life. Areas of tourist attraction in the region include the Wa Naa's Palace and Dondoli Sudamic (Larabanga) Mosque, Jirapa Naa's Palace, Nandom All-Stone, Gothic Art Church and the Hippopotamus Sanctuary at Wechiau. These apart, areas like the Gwollu Slave Defense Wall and Slave Site Caves as well as George Ekem Ferguson's tomb attract tourists to the region.

In terms of facilities or infrastructure, the region can boast of a regional library, a regional hospital, three (3) government hospitals, two (2) CHAG hospitals, three (3) private hospitals, five (5) polyclinics, seventy-two (72) health centres, ten (10) clinics, five (5) maternity homes and three hundred and nineteen (319) CHIPS compounds (Ghana Statistical Service, 2021). It also has community-based health posts, staff accommodation, classroom blocks and teacher resource centres, markets across the municipal and district capitals, KVIPs, public basic schools, public senior high schools, a technical university, a university and nursing and teacher training institutions. The source of water for household use is treated pipe-borne water and manual or mechanized boreholes. In the region, however, 19.7 per cent have access to pipe-borne water and 62.1 per cent also have access to borehole water (Ghana Statistical Service,

2021). The remaining households depend on wells and other surface natural water sources such as the river, springs, streams, rainwater or dugout. In terms of electricity, all the municipal and district capitals, and major and surrounding communities are connected to the national grid with few rural communities yet to be connected to the national grid. However, the entire area of the regional capital with its surrounding communities is connected to the national grid. The public senior high schools in the region are usually boarding institutions with some few schools, particularly in the municipal and district capitals that run both the day and boarding system. The number and distances to the nearest senior high school institutions are therefore not very critical for determining accessibility. In most cases, accessibility is determined more by costs, competition of individual students and/or parental choice than by the proximity of the institutions. The region covers a geographical land area of 18,476 sq. km, which constitute about 12.7 per cent of the total land area of Ghana. The 2021 population and housing census report, recorded a total population of 904,695; giving it a population density of 48.79 persons per kilometre square. The population is 238,284 per cent urban and 663,218 per cent rural (Ghana Statistical Service, 2021).

3.5 Population of the Study

Polite and Hungler (1999) defined population as the entire aggregation of cases that meet a designated set of criteria. The population of a study is the aggregate of all the cases which one wishes to generate (Kay, 1997). Yogesh (2007) explained that a population is any group of individuals who have one or more characteristics in common that are of interest to the researcher. In the context of this study, the population comprised all public senior high schools in the Upper West region of Ghana. Participants of the study were headteachers, teachers and students of the selected public senior high schools in the Upper West region of Ghana. Equal chances were given to all

the selected public senior high schools in the region without discrimination. As a result, the researcher had three specific predefined schools to collect the data. A key reason for doing this was to verify that the participants meet the criteria for being in the sample (Ritchie et al., 2013). The researcher ensured that the participants met the following inclusion criteria: Availability and willingness to participate, the understanding and experience of the participants about the phenomenon and the public senior high schools in the region that has ever experienced the phenomenon (conflict).

3.6 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

A sample is defined as a small subset of a larger population whose selection is based on the knowledge of the elements of a population and the researcher's purpose (Babbie, 2004). Also, a sample is a representation or a subset of the entire population from which it was selected (Marezyk, DeMatteo & Festinger, 2010). The selection of the sample for this study was done strategically and systematically so that the units (selected schools) and persons (participants) who met a specific criterion were identified and selected (Merriam & Sampson, 2000; Sapsford & Jupp, 2006). Also, Creswell (2005) asserts that selecting a larger number of interviewees for qualitative research in particular will result in superficial perspectives. With the addition of each new individual or place, a researcher's overall ability to present an in-depth picture deteriorates (Kusi, 2012).

The sample size for the study was fifteen (15) participants from three (3) selected public senior high schools in the Upper West region of Ghana. The region, was however, clustered into three (3) zones or belts, thus, the northern zone or belt, the middle zone or belt and the southern zone or belt, this was done due to the number of participants and public senior high schools in the study area. According to Simkus (2022), the purpose of cluster sampling is to reduce the total number of participants in a

study if the original population is too large to study as a whole. Only one (1) school was selected from each zone or belt thereby making the number of selected public senior high schools in the region three (3) for the study. A selected public senior high school in a particular clustered zone or belt had a sample size of five (5) participants. The category of the sample comprised one (1) head teacher, two (2) teachers and two (2) students from each selected public senior high school within a particular zone or belt in the Upper West region of Ghana.

The purposive sampling technique was employed to select the participants and the public senior high schools in the region. Purposive sampling was used to select participants because they have the information required for the study. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique that is selected on the characteristics of a population and the objectives of the study (Crossman, 2021). According to Avoke (2005), the researcher manually selects the cases to be included in the sample using their assessment of typicality. According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2009), the purposive sampling methodology is a method where researchers utilise their judgement to choose a sample, they think would yield the data they require based on earlier knowledge. More so, purposive sampling is extremely useful when one wants to construct a historical reality, describe a phenomenon or develop something about which only a little is known (Kumar et al., 2017). Also, Patton (2015) affirms that purposive sampling is strategically selecting information-rich cases to study, cases that by their nature and substance will illuminate the inquiry questions being investigated.

To create purposive sampling, a researcher first decides which viewpoints he or she wants to investigate, then seeks study participants who represent the whole spectrum of those perspectives. In this study, the headteachers, teachers and students in Wa Islamic Senior High School, Eremon Senior High Technical School and St. John's Vocational

and Technical Institute were purposively selected based on the fact that they have the information required for the study.

There are thirty-three (33) public senior high schools (including technical/vocational institutions) in the Upper West region, out of this number there are nine (9) public senior high schools in the northern zone or belt, fourteen (14) in the middle zone or belt and ten (10) in the southern zone or belt of the Upper West region of Ghana. The purposive sampling method was also used to select the three public senior high schools, thus, Wa Islamic Senior High School from the southern zone or belt, Eremon Senior High Technical School from the middle zone or belt and St. John's Vocational and Technical Institute from the northern zone or belt of the Upper West region of Ghana. The selection of these schools for the study was based on the recent spates of conflict in the aforementioned schools (Joy online, November 20, 2014; CitiNews, January 29, 2018; Modernghana, May 30, 2019).

3.7 Instrumentation

A semi-structured interview guide was used to collect data from the participants for the study. Data were collected through one-on-one interviews. Participants were interviewed one-on-one to hear their responses on their understanding of conflict resolution, the areas or sources of conflict and the mechanisms used by the students and school administrators of the selected public senior high schools in the Upper West region of Ghana in the resolution of conflict in their respective schools. In the semi-structured interview, the topics and questions are open-ended and the wording and sequence may be tailored to each individual's interviewee and the responses given, with prompts and probes (Kinofi, 1998). Fraenkel and Wallen (2009) noted that an interview is one of the main techniques used to collect data in qualitative research. Interviewing is a means for gathering in-depth information about how people perceive,

comprehend, and explain life events. The interview guide covered the themes developed to gather data on the understanding of the students and school administrators about conflict resolution, the areas or sources of conflict and the mechanisms used by the students and school administrators of the selected public senior high schools in the Upper West region of Ghana in the resolution of conflicts. The questions asked were the same for all the research participants.

3.8 Sources of Data

Research Methodology Network (2019) defines data collection as the process of gathering information from all pertinent sources in order to identify solutions to research problems, test hypotheses, and assess results. The gathering of data enables an individual or organisation to provide relevant answers, evaluate results, and predict future probabilities and trends. Generally, data can be grouped under two forms; primary and secondary data. The data collected were basically primary. Salkind (2019) defined primary data as an original data source in which data are collected first-hand by the researcher for a specific research purpose or project.

3.9 Data Collection Procedure

A good data collection procedure is crucial to ensure that the reliability estimate is trustworthy (Wohlin & Wesslen, 2003). Face-to-face interviews were employed to gather data for the study. The researcher “had a pre-data collection conference with his supervisor to discuss his research instruments and the whole research process” (Kuupiel, 2021, p. 63). The interviews were conducted at the participants' respective public senior high schools. In addition, the researcher got an introductory letter from the Centre for Human Rights, Conflict and Peace Studies, which he displayed to the study's participants to validate his status as a student and the fact that his research was

primarily academic in nature. Upon getting to the field, the researcher first visited the Wa Islamic Senior High School in the Wa Municipality, Eremon Senior High Technical School in the Lawra Municipality and St. John's Vocational and Technical Institute in the Nandom Municipality of the Upper West Region to seek approval from the headmasters to conduct the interview. The researcher introduced himself and stated his mission to the headmasters of the three selected public SHSs. The headmasters further introduced me to the other participants after the researcher showed them his student identity card and the introductory letter he received from his department. However, specific days were allocated to visit each of the selected public SHSs, since the schools were located in different parts; northern belt/zone (Nandom), middle belt/zone (Lawra) and southern zones/belts (Wa) of the Upper West region of Ghana.

The headteachers, teachers and the students of the selected public SHSs were met individually for the interview. The researcher explained in detail each of the parts of the interview guide to the participants to ensure that they fully understood the questions before answering. The researcher also informed the participants that the objective of the data collection was just for academic purposes and not for victimizing anyone or satisfying the interest(s) of any quarters or third party. Therefore, the participants had the latitude to sufficiently express themselves and address the issues. Interview time was allocated for the participants. The allocated time for each interview was between 5 and 15 minutes. The comments or conclusions of the interviewees during the interview were examined to get clarification on some of the responses of the participants. The researcher used his smartphone to record the interviews and filed notes were also taken during the interviews. This was, however, necessary to ensure that the data gathered for the study were not lost or destroyed.

3.10 Methods of Data Analysis

All the one-on-one interviews with the fifteen (15) participants of the study were audio recorded with the researcher's smartphone which had a secure password lock. Thus, no other person had access to the data apart from the researcher. Data analysis is the process of reviewing data utilising analytical and logical reasoning to investigate each component of the data presented, according to Fraenkel and Wallen (2006). In analysing the data obtained, the researcher transcribed the audio responses of each participant into password-protected Word documents and also made use of the field notes taken during the data collection process. In this study, the researcher used thematic analysis to analyse the data. The transcribed data were read to identify the common themes which run through after which comparison of the emerging themes were matched against one another which covered the research questions and objectives set for the study. A coding frame, which describes the relationship and the link among the codes with frequency was generated based on the research questions and objectives of the study. Themes were then formed based on the emerging themes or patterns from the coded data. In a much more appropriate and practical manner, the emerging themes were then arranged based on the research questions and objectives of the study and were analysed thematically. The findings of the study were discussed based on emerging themes that were identified in the data.

3.11 Trustworthiness

The study was conducted with consideration for the criteria of credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability to assure the reliability of the research. According to Guba (1981), the level of plausibility, reliability, or authenticity of data and data analysis is what is meant by the credibility criterion in research. Therefore, the study was carried out with ethics and professionalism in mind to ensure legitimacy. The

study and data collection procedures were carefully carried out to ensure a similar outcome even if another researcher conducts the study under the same socio-cultural conditions, all other factors being held constant. Thus, this was done to ensure the reliability of the research findings. Guba (1981) again clarifies that this criterion refers to the ability to observe the same outcome or conclusion under similar conditions.

Guba contends that while the interpretivist researcher may not be able to replicate the same results, they will be able to draw inferences that are influenced by their construction of meaning because they deal with human behaviour, which by its very nature continuously variable, contextual, and open to multiple interpretations of reality. The researcher's abilities and skills to ensure that the findings emerge from the data acquired and evaluated for the research are what determine the dependability of such inferences and interpretations (Kinunja & Kuyini, 2017). The researcher, however, addressed the investigation objectivity to avoid any biases and preconceptions and to ensure the confirmability of the findings. The researcher ensured that, throughout the whole data collection and analysis process, the participants' views and unique experiences were given preference over the researcher's priority. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the transferability criterion reflects the researcher's efforts to give readers their findings enough background information about their research to enable readers to apply the findings to their cases or situations. In this study, the thick description was used where the exact wording of the participants was quoted verbatim in the analysis of the findings, and critical distance (preventing researcher bias) from the phenomenon under study was also maintained.

3.12 Ethical Considerations

This study is for academic purposes and therefore, demands quality in the processes as in commissioned or contract research. To protect the welfare and rights of research participants, ethical considerations are essential when conducting any type of research with humans (Kimmel, 1996). The researcher carried letters along that introduced him and the importance of the research being conducted. Informed consent of all participants was sought before engaging them in one-on-one interviews. Hammersley and Traianou (2012) contended that informed consent often concern access to, for example, people, documents, institutions, settings and information. This, in turn, requires attention on how to secure consent and from “whom (whose consent is required), for what (eg. Information, purposes and for what subsequent uses), for whom (on whose behalf and covering which people: participants, gatekeepers, others), for how long, and how to give information (in what form or medium, and with how much formality/informality)” (Hammersley & Traianou, 2012, p. 82-96). Informed consent thus, protects and respects the rights of self-determination and places some of the responsibility on the participant should anything go wrong in the research. Self-determination requires participants to have the right to weigh up the risks and benefits of being involved in a piece of research, and deciding for themselves whether to take part (Howe & Moses, 1999). Participants who opted to voluntarily partake in the study were included. To assure confidentiality, the researcher informed participants that their names would not be required during the data collection. Access to the data obtained or collected was restricted to only the researcher. Before starting the interviews, the researcher double-checked that the participants understood the goal of the study and that their rights were respected. Also, permission was sought from the participants to use my smartphone to record the interview session to capture detailed data while

focusing on listening and prompting. The participants were assured that they would have access to the study's findings if interested and that they could contact the researcher further if they had any questions about the study.

3.13 Positionality

Scharp and Thomas (2019) argued that scholars who engage in critical social science research should assess how their positions and experiences might contribute to their interpretations of people's lived experiences. To them, as in all research, it is helpful to understand our positionality and, therefore, our lens on the data. With this in mind, one can disclose his/her position and dynamics that surround a phenomenon under study. Even though the researcher hails from the Upper West Region of Ghana, the researcher has not attended any of the selected public SHSs before and never lived in Lawra, Wa and Nandom and is not from any of these areas either. Thus, the researcher entered into the study as an outsider and a student-researcher to independently explore the understanding of the students and school administrators from their own perspectives with regards to the phenomenon under study. The study, therefore, did not ask participants for their names. The study also asked questions in simple language that helped participants to understand and respond appropriately to the questions. The research was conducted purposely for academic reasons and thus did not have any hidden motives. The research was self-funded and no organization or government agency funded it. As a result, the researcher gains objectivity and ceases all attempts to shape the study's conclusions to suit or appease the interests of any groups or outside parties. However, the research information gathered came from the experiences, viewpoints, and perspectives of the participants.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

This study was undertaken to explore the understanding of the students and school administrators about conflict resolution, the sources of conflict and the mechanisms that are used by the students and school administrators of the selected public senior schools in the Upper West region of Ghana in the resolution of conflicts. The questions included: How the students and school administrators of the selected public senior high schools in the Upper West region of Ghana view conflict resolution? What are the sources of conflict in the selected public senior high schools in the Upper West region of Ghana? And what mechanisms are used by the students and school administrators of the selected public senior high schools in the Upper West region of Ghana in the resolution of conflicts? In this chapter, the study presents and discusses the findings of the study, indicating how they interact with the literature and the theories.

FINDINGS

4.1 Understanding of Conflict Resolution by the Students and Administrators in the Selected Senior High Schools

This section presents the view or understanding of the students and school administrators of the selected public senior high schools in the Upper West region of Ghana about conflict resolution. I asked about the participants' understanding of conflict resolution to obtain the needed information necessary for providing a good explanation of their views about conflict resolution. Participants were asked about their views of conflict resolution. The findings show varied views or understanding about conflict resolution.

4.1.1 Resolving Misunderstandings and disagreements between people

Participants indicated that they understand conflict resolution as resolving misunderstandings and disagreements between people. Some of the participants indicated the following:

Conflict resolution means how to resolve misunderstandings and disagreements between two or more individuals. (Participant II, 2023)

...per my understanding conflict resolution is the strategies or measures you put in place to resolve or avoid misunderstandings between two individuals. (Participant I, 2023)

...okay my point of view about conflict resolution refers to how you can resolve conflict or misunderstandings between people in the school or our society. (Participant IV, 2023)

From the comments, it seems there is some kind of similarity of views or understanding about conflict resolution, as the ways or measures put in place to resolve or avoid misunderstandings and disagreements between two individuals or people. Thus, it can be argued that based on their views or understanding of conflict resolution, the concept of conflict resolution is about resolving or avoiding misunderstandings and disagreements between people within the school or society.

4.1.2 Dispute settlement between parties

I realized in the interviews that, some participants understand conflict resolution as dispute settlements between parties in a conflict or dispute. Some of the participants in the interviews indicated as follows:

...it is a matter of dispute settlement. That is bringing peace between two litigated people who are in trouble or who are fighting over something. (Participant III, 2023)

...oh, my point of view, it is the various ways to settle disputes or issues between two or more people. (Participant V, 2023)

...to my understanding, it is about you settling the differences between two or more people to maintain peace and harmony. (Participant VI, 2023)

The comments of some participants suggest that their understanding of conflict resolution is settling disputes between two or more opposing parties.

4.1.3 Steps Taken to Resolve a Misunderstanding

From the interviews, when exploring other participants' views or understanding of conflict resolution in the selected public senior high schools in the Upper West region of Ghana. The participants understand conflict resolution as taking steps to resolve misunderstandings between and among people. Some participants stated:

So, conflict resolution refers to the various steps or processes that you follow to resolve misunderstandings or maintain peace and harmony between parties in a dispute, which is my little understanding of what conflict resolution is about... (Participant VII, 2023)

My understanding of conflict resolution is the steps taken or various ways by which a misunderstanding can be resolved between parties. It might not be only one step but a means by which the misunderstanding can be resolved. (Participant VIII, 2023)

...it could be the different steps put in place to resolve conflict or a problem, it could be verbal or anything to resolve misunderstandings that are going on between two people, it could be a group or one-on-one person. (Participant IX, 2023)

The comments suggest that the understanding or views of some of the participants of the selected public senior high schools in the Upper West region of Ghana about conflict resolution are the various steps put in place by which a misunderstanding can be resolved between parties. One of the participants in the interviews revealed that the steps, however, might not be only one but the different means by which misunderstandings of any kind can be resolved between parties.

4.1.4 Finding peaceful resolution to conflict between two parties

One other understanding about conflict resolution that emerged during the interviews was that it is a process of finding a peaceful resolution to a conflict between two parties. Some participants indicated:

My understanding about conflict resolution is when there is a misunderstanding between two or more parties and you try to find an amicable solution to ensure that they co-exist and make peace with each other. (Participant X, 2023)

Conflict resolution involves the processes that two or more parties use to find a peaceful resolution to their disputes. (Participant XI, 2023)

...okay so conflict resolution is about finding peaceful resolutions to make sure that conflicts are resolved or minimized in an organization or between two parties. (Participant L, 2023)

The comments of the participants suggest that their understanding of conflict resolution is about finding peaceful ways of resolving conflicts and bringing peace between the parties involved. Thus, it can be argued that conflict resolution involves the processes of resolving disagreements and misunderstandings between two or more parties in a dispute and making sure that the peace pipe is smoked to foster unity and peaceful co-existence between the parties in an organization.

Overall, the discussions here support the literature that conflict resolution is a situation where the conflicting parties enter into an agreement that solves their central incompatibilities, accepts each other's continued existence as parties and ceases all violent action against each other (Wani, 2011). Research argued that conflict resolution serves three purposes namely: minimization of chances of destructive conflicts, stabilization of cessation of destructive conflicts to prevent escalation, and prevention of outbreak of a full-blown conflict done by uprooting the basic reasons for the conflict (Albert, 2001). It can be argued based on the findings that conflict resolution process must include the demands of the competing parties that seek to addressing their interests, needs, values, beliefs and goals. The findings, therefore, confirm Marchetti and Tocci's (2009) assertion that conflict resolution seeks to find a common ground between different underlying interests and try to identify solutions that may have been missed due to the entrenched position of parties. The dispute settlement between parties,

Osei-Hwedie and Rankopo (2012) noted that conflict resolution deals with the settlement of conflicts that may already exist. Finding peaceful resolution to conflict between parties, Kriesberg (2009) contended that conflict resolution, as a discipline of peace studies, must emphasize that all conflicts in human society should be resolved by peaceful and non-violent methods. Behfar et al. (2008) also asserted that conflict resolution is the best instrument that can be used to minimize and mitigate conflictual situations in peace-building processes. I realized in the interviews that drawing upon the contingency theory helped in eliciting the perspectives or views of the students and school administrators of the selected schools about conflict resolution based on their personal experiences and thoughts about different conflict situation(s) or circumstances and the different interventions or mechanisms that helped them in resolving conflicts in the schools. Understanding conflict resolution in itself helped the students and administrators of the selected schools to adopt the appropriate interventions or mechanisms in resolving different conflicts based on the conflict situation(s) or circumstance(s). Thus, conflict resolution, as a discipline, hinges on the assumption that conflicts ought to be resolved only through peaceful means and not through violent means of destruction (Behfar et al., 2008). Resolving misunderstandings and disagreements between people, Bercovitch et al. (2008) asserted that conflict resolution concerns itself with ideas, theories and methods that can improve our understanding of conflict and our collective efforts to reduce violence and enhance the political process of harmonisation of interest. Research has indicated that conflict resolution is an umbrella term for a whole range of methods and approaches for dealing with conflict from negotiation to diplomacy, from mediation to arbitration, from facilitation to adjudication, from conciliation to conflict prevention, from conflict management to conflict transformation, from restorative justice to peacekeeping (Wani, 2011). The

findings thus, agree with the literature that conflict resolution refers to a range of processes aimed at alleviating or eliminating sources of conflict (Wani, 2011).

4.2 Sources of Conflict in the Selected Senior High Schools

The study aimed to determine the sources of conflict in the selected public senior high schools in the Upper West region of Ghana. The interviews revealed that there were many sources of conflicts in the selected public senior high schools in the Upper West region of Ghana. The sources of conflicts identified included; Inappropriate behaviour: Role performance: Ineffective communication: Distribution and scarcity of resources: Personal or individual misunderstandings: Appointment and promotion: Religion and Tribalism.

4.2.1 Inappropriate behaviour

Inappropriate behaviour was discovered as a source of conflict in the selected public senior schools in the Upper West region of Ghana. The study unearthed that some of the inappropriate behaviours include, Bullying or infringing on others' rights and misconduct from students. The participants indicated that bullying or how the rights of freshers or juniors are abused or infringed upon by seniors in their schools is a source or area that usually triggers conflict between seniors and juniors. Some students shared as follows:

When seniors, especially when the form ones are in, the tough ones among the seniors would like to bully the juniors infringe on their rights by subjecting them to beating and all manner of bad treatments when the teachers are not around, it usually happens after preps time. They even sometimes extort money from them. (Participant OT, 2023)

Extortion of the junior's money by the seniors and unnecessary bullying of the juniors without justification do result in disagreement in this school, because some of the junior who are grown up don't usually confirm to the inhuman treatment the seniors try to meant on them. (Participant I, 2023)

Sometimes bullying and unnecessary punishments from prefects and some seniors leads to serious confrontation between the tough juniors and the prefects or seniors. (Participant III, 2023)

The comments suggest that bullying or the infringement on the rights of the freshers or juniors by some senior students is a major source of conflict between and among students in the selected public senior high schools in the Upper West region. According to four of the students the bullying sometimes ranges from beatings, being woken up at odd hours by seniors to wash for them, extortion of money and also being asked to fetch water at such odd hours. However, in the interviews, the students and teachers acknowledged the fact that the juniors do report such situations to their housemasters and housemistresses to resolve them or even curb the menace of bullying in the selected public senior high schools.

Further, the data revealed that students' misconduct towards school administration, teachers and colleague students is another area or source of conflict in the selected public senior high schools. Disrespect for authorities and rules and regulations contained in the student's handbook usually results in clashes between the students and school administrators. Three teachers indicated that some students smoke "wee" (Indian Herm) and when an adult or a teacher tries to advise them or caution such students it often results in misunderstanding and serious confrontations. A teacher stated as follows:

Students' misconduct is another source of conflict in this school. Some of them do go outside the school by scaling the school wall to smoke "wee" and when they are caught and being cautioned, they seem not to understand you the adult or the teacher, because they leave in their world. (Participant DC, 2023)

Romance relationship between students also creates conflict situations. A teacher shared in the interview as follows:

Students' behaviour, student-to-student relationship issues. There are some cases of disagreement between female students fighting and quarrelling over the same boy or male and the vice versa that have come before me severally which I resolved. (Participant IV, 2023)

Three teachers stated that some of the students were already in such relationships before they were admitted to the schools, this was made known to the teachers when they interrogate students in such situation that is before them to resolve. According to the them, some of the students also got themselves into the boyfriend-girlfriend relationships in the school and any attempt to get them out of such conduct is sometimes met with aggressive resistance.

Greer et al. (2007) argued that since organizations are made up of individuals, it is obvious that relationship conflicts will occur. The findings support Cronin and Bezrukova's (2006) argument that relationship conflict was positively associated with negative emotions and aggravation, which in turn reduced members' ability to process information.

4.2.2 Role Performance

The performance of roles in the schools was another source of conflict. The data revealed that poor involvement of students in decision-making with regards to their welfare, Poor attention to people's needs and wants, Inability to meet timelines set or given by HoDs, and refusal to play one's roles tend to create conflict in the schools. For instance, a student indicated as follows:

When it is about taking decisions and implementing something without informing or involving the students in the decision-making before the decision is taken and implemented, we usually become unhappy and sometimes we do rebel to some of the decision that they took that do not address our needs on campus. (Participant VI, 2023)

Some headteachers indicated in the interview as follow:

Non-involvement of the students in some crucial decisions that requires their presence and attention brings issues, now we consider them when making decisions and even the implementation process too haven noticed that the non-involvement in the process brings misunderstandings (Participant CV, 2023)

The non-involvement of the students in certain decisions do brings about disagreement and misunderstanding when it comes to them cooperating with the decision taken in their absence. (Participant III, 2023)

The comments suggest that when students are not involved in decision-making or informed about something, it is usually difficult to have them cooperate with whatever thing you want them to do.

The findings support the literature that when conflict occurs there is a perception of disagreement between group members or individuals about the content of their decision and involves differences in viewpoints, ideas and opinions (Griffin & Moorhead, 2007).

Also, unaddressed or poor attention to the needs of participants creates conflicts in the selected schools. Some teachers stated:

When students needs or concerns are not taken seriously due to whatever reasons and they feel they are not been attended to or neglected frustration sets in and the next thing you would hear or see them doing is rioting and rampaging to getting their needs and concerns addressed. (Participant CA, 2023)

Sometimes too the food and other things that the students eat. If they raise concerns about the poor nature of the food that they eat and the unhygienic condition in which food is prepared and we (school authorities) decide not to give attention to that it do bring issues to us, because the stubborn ones will induce the others and the thing you will see is rioting (Participant OT, 2023)

The comments suggest that the poor attention given to people's needs and wants often triggers conflict or misunderstandings between students and school administrators in the selected public senior high schools. When individuals are deprived of meeting or realizing their goals or wants, they tend to exhibit aggressive attitudes towards school authorities. When people perceive that they are not given the needed attention or are denied what is due them, a negative attitude of frustration and aggression tends to set in

and this usually results in disagreements or conflicts between the students and school administrators. For instance, a headteacher highlighted that:

When students feel they are not getting what they requested for, what is due them, and their general welfare is not prioritised by the school administration, they are relegated to the background usually results in conflict. (Participant DR, 2023)

Rosenberg (2003) affirmed that violence is a tragic expression of unmet human needs, implying that all actions undertaken by human beings are attempts to satisfy their needs. The human needs theory stipulates that to be able to resolve a conflict, one must consider the needs of the participants or actors (Burton, 1990). I realized that the inability of teachers to meet deadlines or timelines given to them by their various heads of departments results in conflicts. Some teachers shared as follows:

The sources of conflict in this school vary from one level to another. At the administrative level, it usually between the school authorities and the teachers, HoDs and the follow teachers within the same department. For instance, this morning I was having problems with my teachers, I was harsh on them because I gave them a period to enter the students' marks, some haven't been able to do that as I speak to you, I wasn't quite happy about that and spoke harshly to them. Those of them that have not entered their marks, some of them may see it from a different perspective because today they realized I was hard on them, those who were not also happy about the way I spoke to them, they feel like I have never been wild on them this way before. If they take it personal, it becomes a conflict or problem between us. (Participant V, 2023)

When a particular teacher within a department is unable to meet a timeline or discharge a particular duty satisfactorily given him by his or her HoD, could also be source of conflict in this school. (Participants I, 2023)

When it comes to peers, thus, teacher to teacher there could be conflict when a head of a department is trying to make sure everybody does his or her work and you know, you can't get everybody going in line with you at a particular time, maybe we have been asked to present our scripts and there is a deadline for it. It could be because of one or two reasons some couldn't meet the deadline. It then depends on how the HoD addresses the issue, if it is approached peacefully it works. But if the HoD gets angry and insults the person or teacher that can trigger disagreements and misunderstanding between the HoD and the teacher. (Participant II, 2023)

The comments suggest that the inability of teachers to meet timelines given by their HoDs within a particular department in the selected public senior high schools tends to trigger conflict or misunderstandings between teachers and their superiors (HoDs). According to four teachers, conflicts arising from meeting timelines or deadlines are not usually a major source of conflict in the selected public senior high schools. It only results in a conflict when the HoDs address or approach the issue with anger which often translates into heated arguments. Also, when students are unable to meet timelines or deadlines given to them on practical works or project works by their subject teachers that triggers a conflict between the students and teachers. A student indicated as follows:

The delay in submitting our assignments or a project work with deadlines attached to and we are unable to meet the timeline, some of the teachers do beat and insults us, when the students isn't comfortable with that he or she retaliates, then it results in confrontations between the teacher and the students. Sometimes the teachers punish such students and in the process of giving the punishment it is associated with humiliations from the teachers, which sometimes leads to serious confrontation between the teachers and hard or stubborn students who try to resist the beatings, humiliations and the punishments. (Participant IV, 2023)

Jung (2003) argued that conflict is associated with power and can emerge when the goal achievement of an organization is avoided. Sometimes refusal to play one's role result in conflict. Two teachers and a student stated:

Basically, in an education set-up like this school, refusal to do something that you are supposed to do sometimes can bring about conflict. For instance, you are asked to submit students' scripts or asked to supervise students to undertaken an activity and you intentionally or unintentionally refuse to discharge such a role it's also an area that causes conflicts between either teachers and their HoDs or the assistant headmaster academics and the students and the teachers in this institution. (Participant III, 2023)

When some subordinates feel that school authorities are over exerting much responsibilities on them and others are idling it can result in disagreements which eventually will lead to conflict, thus, teacher-to-teacher conflict. (Participant V, 2023)

Also, when the junior students especially the form ones come or report to school and a senior student asks them to do something and they refuse, there is always conflict or misunderstanding that emerges between the juniors and seniors. More so, conflicts result between students and teachers, when teachers ask students to do something and the students refuse to do it as expected, there is always a conflict between the students and the teachers. There have been issues of disagreement between prefects and then the students based on prescribed roles that each one is expected to play. This always result in conflict between the prefects and the students that are involved in such situations. (Participant IV, 2023)

I realized in the interviews that when some roles are not clearly or properly stated or spelt out to teachers by their HoDs and students by their teachers, they tend to feel very reluctant in playing such roles or performing their responsibility as expected of them. This sometimes triggers misunderstandings or conflict between teachers, students and headteachers.

Fisher (2000) indicated that if there are ambiguities in the role definitions in an organization's responsibilities, then the stage is set for interpersonal friction between the persons involved. The findings thus support the literature that role conflict involves very real differences in role definitions, expectations or responsibilities between individuals who are independent in a social system (Fisher, 2000). Fisher (2000) explained that emotional intensity in role conflict is often high since people are directly involved as individuals, hence there is a strong tendency to personalize the conflict. Research has indicated that if the task or role of individuals working as a group is not clearly defined by management, they will lead to more conflicts (Kirkwood, 2002).

4.2.3 Ineffective Communication

The study revealed that ineffective communication among teachers and students, political arguments between teachers, and miscommunication between school administration and prefects often lead to conflict in the selected public senior high schools. Some participants shared as follows:

Ineffective communication or conversations either between teachers, students, teachers and students, students and school administrators, and school administrators and teachers result in disagreements or conflicts in this school due to communication breakdowns. (Participant III, 2023)

Poor conversations between teachers which is often characterised by inappropriate usage of some words by young and newly recruited teachers towards the elderly ones tend to create heated confrontations and disagreements between teachers in this school. (Participant L, 2023)

Also, the numerous unhealthy conversations and the usage of certain words to describe each other in our communication as teachers even in the presence of students usually leads to conflict in this school. The way we communicate with each other doesn't show mutual respect and that is very bad or let's say very poor the least to say. (Participant LI, 2023)

Communication breakdown and how communication takes place or is received sometimes trigger interpersonal or intergroup conflict in the selected schools. A student highlighted that:

Also, when we are effectively communicated to on certain issues it usually leads to misunderstandings between us and the school authorities. Hence, I see ineffective or poor communication as a major source of conflict in our school and I think this is what I can say for now... (Participant II, 2023)

The interviews also revealed that political arguments between some teachers of the selected public senior high schools who are sometimes appointed or elected executives of the two major political parties in Ghana, NDC and NPP tend to trigger conflict.

Some teachers indicated as follows:

...it may even transcend to issues and even politics for example, if someone or belongs to the NDC makes a statement on the current economic challenges we are facing as a country and an NPP affiliated teacher feels that certain statements made by NDC sympathizer is not true it leads to some sort of serious argument and confrontations are you getting it? (Participant II, 2023)

I think politics, some of the teachers here who are into active politics, argue a lot with other teachers who are not in the same party with them, you know some of us are not into politics, but when it comes to national issues, we also talk about it, like the recent economic issues in our country. when supports or sympathisers of the current government unhappy with some of the statement they argue with us to justify the current challenges which some of us do disagree with most of their explanations. However, during this time if one is not emotionally strong and controls his or her temper it can result in misunderstandings and unnecessary quarrels. it often happens in our staff common room sometimes. (Participant IV, 2023)

Politics, for instance, another source of conflict here. You know some of the teachers here are either sympathizes of the NDC or NPP and some are even appointed or elected executives of these parties and sometimes their continuous argument on political issues often leads to disagreements or conflict between them here. (Participant LV, 2023)

The comments suggest that political conversations and arguments between teachers of the two main political parties (NPP and NDC) and their sympathisers in the selected public senior high schools bring discomfort and strain relationship between them. Sometimes miscommunication between the school administration and the prefects often leads to misunderstandings or conflict in the selected public senior high schools. Some students shared as follow:

I want to stress again on the communication, but then I think I will speak more about miscommunication between the higher authorities and then the prefects because we represent what they say. We represent the rules of the school. So, when there is a miscommunication between the authorities and the prefects and it is presented wrongly to the students it often results in misunderstanding between us and the students. (Participant VI, 2023)

Sometimes in our school, it is due to miscommunication. Sometimes, the ideal information does not get to them, they are quick to ascribe their own meanings and interpretations to the information given then and this eventually brings disputes and misunderstandings. (Participant II, 2023)

...if you are communicating or giving information to the students in the classrooms, dining hall or the assembly hall instead of them paying attention, they will be making noise and later on you will see them doing the opposite of what was said and you will hear them saying that the message wasn't communicated well and all that. When this happens, it leads to misunderstandings between the prefects and the students.
(Participant I, 2023)

The comments suggest that the wrongful meanings and interpretation students ascribe to information disseminated to them by the prefects often result in misunderstandings between prefects and students. I realized in the interviews that the prefects are usually blamed by the school authorities for not listening to them attentively and disseminating wrong information to the students.

Kahn et al. (2009) argued that when the interdependence requirements for collaboration are not extensive and balanced between parties, it can lead to communication and interaction breakdowns and conflicts. Katz (1996) noted that communicational conflicts arise from misunderstandings due to breakdowns of interactions. The findings support the literature that miscommunication and misinformation is often an important source of interpersonal conflict and learning communication skills is valuable in preventing and resolving such difficulties (Kirkwood, 2002).

4.2.4 Distribution and Scarcity of Resources

Also, it was revealed in the interviews that the distribution and scarcity of resources in the selected public senior schools was another source of conflict. According to participants, the recent increase in the enrolment of students from the basic education level to the senior high level since the inception of the free senior high school policy has created infrastructure and material deficit and this has led to competition for the already existing limited infrastructure which usually brings about misunderstandings among the stakeholders in the schools especially students when they want to access those infrastructures. Some participants indicated as follows:

Also, we don't have enough beds, classrooms, textbooks, furniture and so sometimes when we are competing or rushing for the limited ones for example, the textbooks in the library, the limited number of furniture in the classrooms, the beds and put pressure on existing one. The number of students is more than the dormitories available here and also the limited space of the library sometimes brings about confrontations between seniors and juniors. So, the inadequate resources in our school are also a source of conflict usually among us the students. (Participant LX, 2023)

...also misunderstanding between students and sometimes students and the school authorities when there is competing demand for spaces in the library, dormitory, classrooms and textbooks it triggers conflicts here. for whatever and the same thing happens here. (Participant VI, 2023)

The comments suggest that misunderstandings between and among students, students and school authorities often arise when there is competition for textbooks, beds, furniture etc in the selected public senior high schools. Two headteachers stated the following response:

Oh, you know as management, we are also lobbying the government through the regional minister and the regional director of education to improve upon our limited resources, even recently for example, a contract was awarded by the government through the regional minister to build a new assembly hall for the school, because the old one can no longer contain the numbers now. So, my son, we are working on it because we acknowledge it as a challenge. (Participant II, 2023)

The introduction of the free senior high school policy has brought a lot of pressure on the already existing facilities such as the classrooms and the dormitories due to the numbers. However, there efforts by the central government to address this challenge. As we speak now there are two dormitories under construction, one for the girls and the other for the boys new. The regional minister recently cut sod for the construction of a twelve units classroom block just adjacent the administration block. Efforts are been made to addressing the resources constraints. (Participant III, 2023)

Also, discrimination in the disbursements of welfare packages tends to cause conflict between teachers and school authorities in the selected public senior high schools. Some teachers shared as follows:

We have a welfare scheme here and when it has to do with people in management who have been confronted with a particular problem or issue, because the person is part of management we go all out for that person, we treat the person with all kind of respect. But when it happens to a teacher in this school, we don't want to involve ourselves fully as management, this usually triggers confrontations and misunderstandings between teachers and the school authorities. (Participant V, 2023)

The selective nature with which the welfare package is disbursed or shared in this school sometimes bring about misunderstandings between we the teachers and the school management. (Participant VI, 2023)

Fisher (1990) affirmed that conflict will occur when a party wants some mutually desirable resource that is in short supply. The findings thus support the literature that competition for scarce resources is a common source of inter-group conflict (Coser, 1998). This feeds into Katz's (1996) argument that resource conflict stems from interest groups competing for organizational resources. Thus, conflicts or misunderstandings arises between students, students and sometimes the school authorities due to the competition for limited resource and the authority's inability to providing enough resources to support teaching and learning in the selected public senior high schools in the Upper West region of Ghana. Research has indicated that parties' interests can differ over access to resources (Maiese, 2003). Capozzoli (1995) further argued that limited resources often increase conflict. The findings support Baron (1990) argument that conflict can relate to incompatible preferences, goals, and not just activities. Thus, the high preference given to management members over the teachers in the disbursement of welfare packages is a source that triggers misunderstandings or conflict between management members and the teachers of the selected public senior high schools in the Upper West region of Ghana. Coser (1998) argued that the parties in conflict are in competition or struggle over power, resources or identity in which the conflicting parties attempt to injure one another.

4.2.5 Personal or individual misunderstandings

The interviews revealed that personal or individual misunderstandings born out of intolerance and poor socialization between students are another source of conflict among students in the selected public senior high schools. Participants in the interviews indicated that the poor socialization nature of some students, in terms of how they relate, tolerate and react to varied views expressed by their peers over matters that have to do with for instance, decisions during prefectorial meetings and in the classrooms, sometimes trigger misunderstandings and confrontations among them. Some participants shared as follows:

Sometimes too socialization is also a source of conflict here. When some students find themselves amid others and during interactions and they are unable to accommodate the divergent views or opinions amongst themselves it results in unnecessary disagreements and misunderstandings. (Participant LM, 2023)

Most of us are coming from different backgrounds and when we are discussing some issues or trying to come to a decision, we have people with various views and then sometimes it's very difficult to tolerate one another. As a results, most of our meetings ends inconclusive. A typical example is in a prefectorial meeting we mostly find it difficult to decide on critical issues before us due to pettiness and unnecessary arguments arising our inability to accommodate varied views on issues. (Participant LX, 2023)

The comments suggest that personal or individual misunderstandings are occasioned by students' inability to tolerate one another due to poor socialization arising from varied views and individual backgrounds. According to some participants, different backgrounds of students sometimes make discussion of sensitive issues and decision-making very cumbersome because they are unable to build consensus among themselves during decision-making. Fisher (2000) indicated that personality conflict refers to a very strong difference in motives, values or styles in dealing with people that are not resolvable. The findings agree with the literature that personal conflict arises from individual differences (Robbins, 2005).

4.2.6 Appointment and Promotion

The interviews also revealed that the appointment and promotion of new and low ranked teachers at the expense of old and highly ranked teachers by school authorities to positions in the selected public senior high schools in the Upper West region of Ghana was one of the sources of conflict that brings about disagreement and misunderstanding between old and highly ranked teachers and the school authorities.

One of the teachers in the interview shared as follows:

When a highly ranked teacher, let's say somebody with the rank of Assistant Director AD 1, deputy director is neglected for whatever reason an appointment is given to somebody who is below that rank it usually causes conflict in this school, because why should my subordinate be given an appointment and be lording over me? That can be a major source of conflict. (Participant VI, 2023)

Other teachers indicated as follows:

Sometimes we feel disrespected and disregarded when positions are given to newly posted teachers here. (Participant IV, 2023)

...as for me I'm ok if I am not considered for an appointment, I have been in this school for close to a decade and qualified for any appointment in this school but if I am not appointed it doesn't really worry me. (Participant II, 2023)

The comments suggest that highly ranked teachers sometimes become frustrated and disgruntled and feel disrespected when they are not considered for appointments into positions in the selected public senior high schools. The findings support the literature that the politics of promotion and recruiting reinforce the isolation of departments and generate conflicts (Campomar, 2005).

4.2.7 Religion

The study found that religious superiority among teachers was one of the sources of conflict in the selected public senior high schools. Some participants indicated in the interviews that teachers of different faiths do not easily associate with one another because a particular faith sees themselves as superior to the other religious groups in

the school. One faith group tend to think that because they have more numbers than the other religious groups they are in the majority and the others are in the minority. This tends to breed tensions among the various religious groups in the selected senior high schools because members of each religion tend to strive to protect their faith. Some of the participants shared as follow:

When people treat their religion above other faiths because of their numbers that is placing their faith supreme to other religions it often leads to disagreements, because everybody will like to defend his or her faith and if you don't take care it can escalate into violent conflict. (Participant XC, 2023)

For me, religious affiliation is a serious source of conflict here. But you know, as a Muslim and even professionally trained teacher my religion teaches me to treat people equally, so for me, I am not moved by the Christian teachers who may not want to associate with me. (Participant CI, 2023)

I think other religious groups are allowed to practice their faith here without any restrictions at the expense of other faith usually results in some form of agitation and confrontations here. (Participant CX, 2023)

The comments suggest that people will go to any length to agitate and protect their religion or faith and would not allow anybody to look down upon the religion or faith they practice.

4.2.8 Tribalism

The interviews revealed that tribalism or tribal superiority was also another source of conflict in the selected public senior high schools in the study. Participants bemoaned that there is high ethnocentrism in the selected schools. The interviews showed that when a management member associates himself or herself with only his or her tribesmen or ethnic group and later appoints them into positions of influence in the schools at the expense of qualified and competent ones who are not necessarily his or her tribes mate it generates conflict. This is because other tribes tend to feel relegated to

the background or not recognized and given equal attention and opportunities by the school authorities. Some teachers indicated as follows:

When you are also part of management and you are aligned to a certain tribe, because you think you are Asante, you think you are a Waala, you think you are a Dagaaba, you think you are a Sissala, or you think because you are an Ewe and therefore, the Ewe people you are aligning with them more than any other tribe it's can bring about agitations and confrontations. You need to treat all tribes equally as a leader. (Participant C, 2023)

Some tribes treat other ethnicities here with disrespect and disdain which is an area that usually results in conflict here because nobody will allow you to look down upon his or her tribe. So, when people demonstrate that their tribe is superior to others because of the circumstances around them (i.e., because of positions or numbers dominated by one tribe) it usually triggers confrontations and eventually conflict sometimes in this school. (Participant D, 2023)

...let me say tribalism other people see their tribes as being superior to others. Even sometimes they even relate to their tribes' men and women here more than the other tribes in this school and that is wrong. Such segregation sometimes brings about misunderstandings among us the teachers and even within the student body as well... (Participant CC, 2023)

The comments suggest that tribal superiority or ethnocentrism among teachers and students which is characterised by unfairness and discrimination in the selection and appointment of teachers and students results in conflict in the selected public SHSs in the study. The interviews revealed that tribal considerations are sometimes used to make appointments of staff and students into positions in the schools, where a particular tribe with the appointing authority appoints more of its tribes' men and women into certain positions without regard to their experience, qualification and rank.

Another teacher highlighted as follows:

Sometimes qualified staff are denied appointments into positions in this school because they belong to tribe A or B? Even when it comes to students vying for school position, some tribes are not allowed to go through vetting to be elected as students' leaders. So, my brother, tribalism is a serious issue and if not addressed by the authorities it can lead to a serious conflict in this school. (Participant M, 2023)

The comment suggests that competent and qualified staff and students are deliberately denied the opportunity to serve in the selected public senior high schools in the study, because of their tribe or ethnic affiliations. Coser (1998) indicated that struggles over identity, tend to cause conflict. The findings support the literature that inter-group conflict occurs between collections of people such as ethnic or racial groups, departments or levels of decision-making in the same organization (Fisher, 2000). Thus, discrimination and denial by other ethnic groups to occupy certain positions by the appointing authority tend to trigger tensions among the various tribes or ethnicities in the selected schools. The findings further support Rosenberg's (2003) and Burton's (1990) arguments that denial of recognition and identity would lead to conflict.

4.3 Mechanisms used in Resolving Conflict in the Selected Senior High Schools

The study also sought to examine the mechanisms used by the students and administrators of the selected public senior high schools in the Upper West region of Ghana in the resolution of conflict. The purpose was to unearth the various conflict resolution mechanisms employed and what they consider before selecting a particular mechanism(s) in the resolution of conflicts. Thus, participants were asked about some of the mechanism(s) they used in the resolution of conflicts in their respective schools. Emerging themes from the interviews were: the use of the school disciplinary committee system; mediation; negotiation; reconciliation; issuing of queries; the use of SRC judicial and prefectorial boards; and the use of the Police Service.

4.3.1 School disciplinary committee system

The study found that the school disciplinary committee system was one of the commonly used conflict resolution mechanisms by the school administrators in the selected public senior high schools in the resolution of conflicts in their respective schools. Participants stated that whenever school administrators or authorities are faced

with conflicts of any kind that emanates from the students and teachers, they first of all set up a committee or disciplinary committee to launch an investigation into what brought about the dispute or conflict by inviting the parties involved. In the interviews, I realized that parties involved in the conflict are also allowed to give a written or verbal account of what caused or necessitated the conflict. The parties are allowed to present witnesses. Witnesses are asked to also write their witness statements and also give verbal accounts to help identify the cause(s) of the conflict. After the disciplinary committee is done with its investigations a report of the findings and recommendations is usually presented to school authorities to act on it. Some teachers shared as follow:

We use the disciplinary committee where we do invite students who are in disagreement to the disciplinary committee and then resolve it. We usually ask them to write statements as it happens in court, the conflicting students are made to write statements and then we look at their statements and question them, we also call some of the witnesses present to come and confirm what the parties are saying and whether it is true or not. When the need is, we invite their parents, we call them to come and answer questions too. So, that is for the disciplinary committee. (Participant A, 2023)

Oh, we set up committees, I mean when there is an issue, we set committees to investigate the issue and bring a report and then we act on the report. So, the major key thing to resolving the issue or disagreement is to set up a committee to delve into the issue and then based on their recommendations and findings, we act upon that. We also have the disciplinary committee here that often handles conflicts or issues involving students and to some extent disagreements between students and teachers. They meet the parties involved then find out what brought about the conflict and put measures in place to resolve or settle the disputes or issues. (Participant B, 2023)

We also put committees in place to resolve such issues, I mean we have the disciplinary committee that handles disputes involving students' and sometimes teachers. The committee is given the mandate to investigate the issue and to come out with its findings and possible road map to address the issues or conflicts. (Participant E, 2023)

Other teachers indicated in the interviews as follows:

The disciplinary committee usually invite teachers and students who are involved in conflicts or issues and then address them. They investigate or find out the root causes of the whole conflict or problem. They have their ways or strategies of resolving the issues or misunderstandings among

them. Statements are taken between the parties; we also listen to them speaking so that we can be able to resolve the issue or misunderstanding.
(Participant F, 2023)

We use the DC here. The form masters and the housemasters are also made part of a committee on certain conflicts that happen at the dormitory and classroom levels to find out the root cause of the disagreements and misunderstandings by calling the parties involved to address the issues.
(Participant G, 2023)

The comments suggest that the disciplinary committee system is a mechanism used in resolving conflicts in the selected schools. For instance, when I asked one of the headteachers in the interviews what he considered before selecting this particular mechanism he indicated as follow:

It depends on the issue or case and the people involved. If the conflict has even led to the breaking of school rules and regulations then it is referred to the DC, for example students, fighting and hurting each other and all that such incidence is referred to the disciplinary committee, are you following? So, it depends on the case for us to either go for the disciplinary committee meeting or go for other mechanisms. **(Participant H, 2023)**

Another teacher said:

Normally it depends on the issue or case and also the parties involved. You have to understand the case before you come out with a mechanism to be used in resolving it. **(Participant I, 2023)**

The comments suggest that the selection of a resolution mechanism such as the disciplinary committee is dependent on the gravity (intensity) of the case, the individuals or parties involved and the situation or circumstance of the case or conflict. Thus, if the intensity of a case or conflict situation is high, then other mechanisms such as mediation and the services of the Police would be explored, but if the intensity is low and involves students fighting and hurting each other, stealing and breaking school rules and regulations then, the disciplinary committee system is used by the school administrators to deal with such issues or conflicts.

4.3.2 Mediation

The interviews revealed that mediation was one of the conflict resolution mechanisms used in the selected public senior high schools in resolving conflicts. Some participants indicated in the interviews, that when conflicting parties are unable to settle their differences due to bitterness and entrenched positions, a mediator or a third party is invited or approached to intervene based on the circumstance or situation of the conflict. The mediator (a trusted teacher) usually invites the parties to the conflict to present their issues, views or cases. The mediator probes the issues and then helps the conflict parties come out with measures to resolve the conflict. The interviews revealed that, sometimes students fall on teachers they trust and have confidence in to resolve their misunderstandings. A teacher in the interview recounted:

I often intervene as a mediator in disputes between students and sometimes follow teachers who are in a particular misunderstanding or disagreement. So, when there is any dispute that is brought to my attention. I usually meet the parties to listen to their sides of the issue and then I come in as a mediator with a road map to immediately try to help resolve the matter or conflict. I do this in dispute that involves students, students and teachers. (Participant J, 2023)

Other teachers shared as follows:

And also, another conflict resolution mechanism we use is mediation. We get experts to mediate on some petty misunderstandings sometimes between us the prefects during prefectorial board meetings. (Participant Q, 2023)

We also use mediation, where sometimes I act as mediator or facilitator to resolve misunderstandings between students who are quarrelling and fighting over the same boy or girl, some of their colleague students do report such issues to me to resolve because they don't want school authorities to know the cause of their misunderstanding. (Participant CD, 2023)

The comments suggest that teachers (trusted teachers) are often invited by conflicting parties to intervene in disputes between them as mediators. In the interviews, I asked a teacher what informed him to opt for mediation as a mechanism for resolving their disagreements and misunderstandings, and he shared as follows:

It is often about the issue and the kind of people involved. So, as I said when the issue needs rapid attention and resolution and say the parties do not want the issue to be in the public domain, I usually act as a mediator to resolve it before it gets to the higher authorities. (Participant K, 2023)

Another teacher stated similarly that:

So, it depends on the parties and how urgent they need a mediator before the issue blows out of proportion. (Participant N, 2023)

The comments suggest that a mediator (a trusted teacher) is approached to intervene in their misunderstandings and disagreements because conflicting parties do not want school authorities to know about it.

4.3.3 Negotiation

The data revealed that negotiation was one of the mechanisms used in the selected public senior high schools in the resolution of conflicts. The headteachers indicated that the level of concern of conflicting parties on a particular matter or issue tends to inform their choice for negotiation in dealing with their conflict. The interviews revealed that negotiation was used as a mechanism by the school authorities to resolve their misunderstandings and disagreements arising from discrimination in the disbursement of welfare packages with the teachers. Two headteachers indicated the following:

For instance, when there were disagreements and misunderstandings between, we the school authorities and the teacher's concerning discrimination and that they are not getting their fair share of the welfare package and all that, we for instance, meet the teachers and negotiated with them at the end of the day we made a headway, I mean we were able to solve the problem. So, negotiation is one of the mechanisms we often use here in handling or settling such disputes. (Participant R, 2023)

You know the issues of the welfare package and the teachers feeling that they are being denied their fair share and all that, and when we realized it was becoming serious, as management we engaged the teachers through negotiation to bring a lasting resolution to the welfare package issues. (Participant T, 2023)

Another headteacher indicated in the interviews as follows:

I think over here we use negotiations more when it comes to issues or disagreements between teachers, teachers and school authorities. Sometimes too when handling some student's conflicts too. We use negotiation to settle the differences between say teachers and school authorities through consensus building by meeting the parties regularly to enable them to reach an agreement that will be beneficial to both sides. (Participant S, 2023)

The comment suggests that regular meetings are scheduled for conflict parties (teachers, students, teachers and school authorities) to negotiate to build consensus to get their disagreements or dispute resolved swiftly. I asked the headteachers what informed their choice for negotiation as their preferred resolution mechanism and they indicated as follow:

Oh, the nature of the conflict, the people involved and the situation or circumstance(s) of the conflict normally informed us that when we use negotiation as a mechanism, it would help us to bring an everlasting solution to the dispute. (Participant R, 2023)

So, you have to consider the mechanism that will bring peace, then you look at the kind of disagreement or conflict situation it is okay and the people involved. For instance, an issue between management and the teachers like this, the parties felt that going by negotiation it would enable both sides to achieve the goals we do so. So, for this school, negotiation has been very helpful in settling issues involving staff and works of this school. (Participant T, 2023)

This was corroborated by another participant in the interview when he indicated what he considered before selecting negotiation as a mechanism for resolving conflict in his school:

I decided to use negotiation as a suitable mechanism or approach to solve our disagreement with the teachers due to the fact that they are major stakeholders here and the situation as at then. (Participant S, 2023)

The comments suggest that it is always important for conflicting parties to understand the nature of the dispute, the conflict situation and the individuals involved so that it can help them to choose the appropriate resolution mechanism (i.e., negotiation) to resolve their conflicts.

4.3.4 Reconciliation

The interviews also revealed that reconciliation was one of the frequently used mechanisms by the students and the administrators of the selected public senior high schools in the study in resolving conflicts. I realized in the interviews that reconciliation was used by school administrators as a mechanism to reunite students and teachers who are in dispute. Participants in the interviews indicated that reconciliation was the best mechanism to employ when settling conflict between parties who had a dispute or who had just come out of a dispute so that they can be reunited and live peacefully. The study revealed that conflict parties are sometimes referred to the guidance and counselling units of the selected public senior high schools to offer counselling services to the parties on the need for reconciliation or reuniting to foster peaceful co-existence between them. Some headteachers shared in the interviews as follows:

Sometimes we also use reconciliation as a mechanism where for example, we realized that the extent to which the conflict or issue is, solving the problem or conflict there is the need to reconcile or reunite the students or teachers, so we find ways and means of reconciling them because resolving conflict should be a win-win situation. One sees himself or herself as being right, but here sometimes before conflict happens or before the issues come, we use more than the disciplinary committee and negotiation because the conflicting parties or the affected people would still have to leave together and the counselling unit also helps in this regard okay... (Participant W, 2023)

We also use reconciliation in resolving disagreements or problems between and among both students and teachers. During the reconciliation we often referred disputants to the guidance and counselling coordinator here to offer guidance and counselling services to students and teachers who are in some kind of conflict or the other. (Participant Y, 2023)

The comments suggest that the services of the guidance and counselling units of the selected public senior high schools are utilized to aid the reconciliation or reuniting process of parties in dispute. When I asked one of the headteachers in the interviews what he considered before selecting reconciliation as a resolution mechanism he indicated as follows:

So, it depends on the case, if it is just between the two arguing and insulting each other then we will go for the reconciliation and all that, are you following me? It may also be dependent on the personalities involved; the individuals involved are you getting it? (Participant W, 2023)

Another headteacher stated the following:

So, selecting or considering a particular mechanism depends on the situation or the kind of conflict that has been engaged in. If it is about petty quarrels between students or teachers definitely, we use reconciliation to get the parties involved reunited to focus on the common goal of the school. (Participant Y, 2023)

4.3.5 Issuing of queries

The interviews also revealed that issuing queries was one of the mechanisms used by the school administrators in the resolution of conflicts. Participants in the interviews revealed that queries are usually issued to conflicting parties for clarifications on the issues raised in the conflict when they are invited for interrogation to assist in investigations to ascertain the source and cause of the conflicts. I realized in the interviews that the issuance of queries is usually used during the disciplinary committee meetings and hearings to further probe or question the conflicting parties for clarification on the cause(s) of their misunderstandings before a recommendation is made to resolve the conflict. Students are made to sign a bond of good behaviour to help resolve the conflict if the offence has to do with the violation of school rules and regulations. Some teachers indicated as follows:

Secondly, the school authorities also issue queries as a mechanism to conflicting parties in a conflict in the school as a way of resolving whatever conflict or issue before them... (Participant SA, 2023)

For here, after we've issued queries as an approach to resolving the conflict or matter and clarified issues, we asked the parties especially students to sign a bond of good behaviour, even sometimes we invite their parents to come and witness the signing of the bond by their wards so that should suspension or dismissal occur in the future the parents will know that there was a basis for that. (Participant OP, 2023)

Oh, sometimes we also use the query-issuing approach during DC meetings to get detailed clarification and understanding of sources and causes of the conflict through several questioning before we can resolve the matter. The parties in the conflict are questioned for more clarifications and information help to resolve the conflict are you getting it because the information helps us to analyse and resolve the conflict. (Participant GO, 2023)

The comments suggest that the issuing of queries was used to complement the disciplinary committee system in the resolution of conflicts. The comments further suggest that as part of the resolution process, parties involved in the conflict, especially students, are made to sign bonds of good behaviour and sometimes their parents are invited to serve as witnesses. A teacher highlighted as follows:

You have to identify the problem, the causes and the circumstance(s). We also consider the possible solutions, because one solution cannot go for everything. (Participant CD, 2023)

The emerging theme is that no one single mechanism can be used in resolving all conflicts. As such, school authorities and the students tend to adopt different and multiple approaches to resolve conflicts in the selected schools.

4.3.6 The use of the SRC judicial and prefectorial boards

The study unearthed that students in the selected public senior high schools in the Upper West region use their SRC judicial and prefectorial boards as a conflict resolution mechanism to resolve conflicts between prefects and amongst students. The Students' Representative Council (SRC) judicial board which is headed by the assistant school prefect (as the chief justice) is used to resolve disputes between and among students before it gets to the school authorities. The SRC prefectorial board, which is

also headed by the school or senior prefect as the chair usually handles and settles quarrels, fighting and disagreements between and amongst prefects. However, participants indicated in the interviews that when the SRC judicial board and prefectorial board systems are unable to resolve disputes between and among students and prefects, they usually refer the issue or conflict to the disciplinary committees of the schools for resolution. Some students shared as follow:

Most of the time we use the SRC judicial board and as the chief justice of the judicial board, I just summon them to the judicial council to look into the matter by allowing the parties to air their view and finally come out with a judgement or verdict to resolve the matter or conflict. (Participant V, 2023)

As prefects, we have the SRC judicial council and SRC prefectorial board which we usually use as a mechanism to solve misunderstandings and disagreements which result in fighting. At the judicial council level, the people are invited to determine what brought about the fights. But the prefectorial board is the highest decision-making body of the SRC and also has the mandate to settle misunderstandings between we the prefects. (Participant IV, 2023)

We use the SRC judicial board system to settle disputes between students and sometimes among prefects, but if we see that it is beyond our control, we refer it to the school's disciplinary committee for further redress. (Participant II, 2023)

Another emerging theme is that the students in the selected public senior high schools use their SRC judicial and prefectorial boards system as a resolution mechanism to resolve their differences and when they are unable to resolve them, they often refer it to the school disciplinary committee to bring a finality to the dispute(s). A student stated as follows:

It depends on kind of students involved and matter before us. However, if it is beyond us, we refer it to the DC or if we are able, having the ability to resolve their differences we do so with this mechanism I just spoke about. (Participant I, 2023)

4.3.8 The Use of the Police Service

The interviews also revealed that school administrators of the selected public senior high schools sometimes resort to the police service in handling and settling conflicts or disputes in their schools. The school administrators indicated in the interviews that the Ghana Police Service is usually invited or called upon to intervene and restore peace when students were rioting and rampaging in Wa Islamic SHS in 2014, Eremon SHTS in 2018 and much more recently in 2021 at St. John's Vocational Technical Institute (conflict situation or circumstance), which resulted in the destruction of school properties and injuring of students. The headteachers indicated in the interviews that they also resort to the police service when students seem not to be cooperating with them when it comes to handling or settling criminal acts involving students. The headteacher stated the following:

Another way is by inviting the Police Service to help settle or restore peace when the students are rioting. For example, if we see that they seem not cooperating we use the law enforcement agencies like the Police Service to disperse them, to help restore calmness to resolve the matter or settle whatever caused the rioting and rampaging. (Participant PP, 2023)

If it is a criminal case like destruction school properties and the injuring of people, we refer it to the Police service to come in, because you know as a school, we don't handle criminal cases here. Sometimes too, the school invite the Police Service to come and educate the students and the teachers on crime-related acts within and outside the school. (Participant HP, 2023)

Occasionally, we invite the police to come and help restore calm in the school, because as school administrators, it is extremely difficult for us to handle or settle students rioting, protesting and rampaging issues. (Participant VP, 2023)

According to the headteachers, the intensity (circumstance) of the protest or rioting in their schools is a major factor they consider before inviting the Police Service to intervene to maintain law and order and pave the way for the resolution of disagreements or conflict. Two of the headteachers indicated as follow:

Oh, normally it's dependent on the how intensive the protest is, if it about rioting and rampaging which obviously we can't handle we do invite the Police Service to intervene to restore calmness to pave way for investigation of the causes of the riots and how it would be address. (Participant PP, 2023)

When we pick intelligence from the help of the prefects that they are about to embark on a protest or demonstration we call the security agencies, I mean the police to come and maintain law and order in the school by preventing them from embarking on such activities. So, it depends on the intensity of the issue at hand. (Participant VP, 2023)

Research has indicated that when a conflict is of low intensity or is narrow in scope, the parties feel they can manage and resolve the conflict by themselves and therefore do not seek assistance from any third party, intervener or mediator (Walls & Lynn, 1993). Therefore, by dwelling upon the contingency theory of conflict resolution the students and school administrators of the selected schools were able to use negotiation, the school disciplinary committee system, SRC judicial and prefectorial boards, reconciliation and issuing of queries to resolve their conflicts based on the contingency or circumstance (low intensity) of the conflict at hand, that do not require any third-party intervention to resolve such conflicts for them (Walls & Lynn, 1993). The findings correspond with Ageng'a and Simatwa study that was done in Nyakach District, Kenya, that school administrators and students used reconciliation and negotiation in resolving conflicts in their respective schools. Fisher (2012) stated that individuals can adopt their conflict resolution mechanisms or strategies to fit their specific context and circumstances of the conflict. However, conflicts that are of high intensity, are often resolved through third-party intervention (mediation and the Police service). This feed into Fisher and Keashly (1991) assertion that at a different point during conflict situation(s) (circumstance), different types of third-party intervention are more or less effective in resolving or addressing different conflict depending on the specific contingency or circumstance of the conflict. Bercovitch and Houston (1996),

Bercovitch and Jackson (2001) and Moore (2012) argued that when the level of hostility between parties is so high that they cannot negotiate face-to-face, mediation becomes necessary. Perhaps, this explains why Bercovitch and Houston (1996) and Fisher (1991) argued that the choice of a mechanism or strategy is affected by the circumstances/contingencies (conflict intensity), analysis and assessment of the objective-subjective elements and the nature or identity of the parties involved in the conflict. The findings also support the theories of the study as indicated by Danielsen (2005) and Burton (1993) that the Human Needs Theory (HND) and the Contingency theory of conflict resolution have been useful in reconciliation, negotiation efforts and Non-Violent Communication (NVC) based on the conflict situation.

Research argued that mediation is likely to be used when a dispute is long, drawn out or complex (Bercovitch & Jackson, 2001). I realized in the interviews that disputants or conflicting parties use mediation as a mechanism in resolving conflicts in the schools, based on the contingency or circumstance of the conflict at hand whether it merits using mediation or inviting a mediator/third party intervener (trusted teacher or individual) to intervene when they are unable to resolve or settle their disputes out of their entrenched positions and bitterness. This feeds into Bercovitch's (1992), T'Hart's (1995) and Kleiboer's (1996) argument that mediation often comes into play when the parties' conflict resolution efforts have reached an impasse based on their conflict situations. Also, Touval and Zartman (1989) argued that once the parties have reached a hurting stalemate, they are apt to call for mediation. This support Fisher and Keashly's (1991) argument that third-party intervention is based on the analysis and assessment that social conflict involves a dynamic process of objective and subject elements that interact over time as the conflict escalates and deescalates depending on the specific contingency that is the circumstance of the conflict. Therefore, a mediator must be

available and willing to intervene and there must exist some opportunity for the mediator to intervene (Rubin, 1992; Bercovitch & Jackson, 2001).

The findings also support Bercovitch's (1992), Kleiboer's (1996), and Zartman and Touval's (1996) revelation that mediation is likely to be used when parties calculate that it will help them reach a better settlement than they can achieve on their own; that the mediator or intervener will provide them with a face-saving way out of the conflict or a means of influencing their opponent or when rejecting mediation or the services of the Police will result in greater harm than accepting it. The findings further support the theories of the study as indicated by Rosenberg (2003) and Burton (1993) that the Human Needs Theory (HNT) and the Contingency theory propose a pattern of models for mediators (trusted teachers) to use in the mediation process to connect with the basic needs and interests of disputants depending on the conflict situation(s) or circumstance(s), and the appropriate mechanism(s) to employ to resolve the conflict.

Research has indicated that disputing parties choose negotiation or any other method because of their levels of concern for their own and their opponent's outcome (Bercovitch & Jackson, 2001). Moore (2012) argued that disputing parties will choose a mechanism (negotiation) if it is feasible and will in all likelihood allow them to realize their conflict goals (the Perceived Feasibility Model). Thus, negotiating actors undertake a cost-benefit analysis and assessment of the viability of negotiations and unilateral actions (Moore, 2012). I realized in the interviews that negotiation was used as a mechanism by the school authorities of the selected public senior high schools in managing and resolving their differences with the teachers on the disbursement of the welfare packages due to the analysis and assessment of the conflict situation or circumstance and the level of concern they had for each other to get the conflict

resolved through mutual agreement and respect for both authorities. The findings support Bercovitch and Jackson's (2001) revelation that when parties are contesting relatively straightforward tangible issues (e.g., access to or control over resources), negotiation is the primary procedural choice. The findings also correspond with Tandoh-Offin and Gyan (2014) study that was done in the Greater Accra Metropolis that school managers employed problem-solving methods such as mediation and negotiation to resolve school conflicts with teachers and students. Also, Bercovitch and Jackson (2001) argued that after identifying the preconditions that necessitate the use of a particular mechanism, it is also significant to understand the nature of the dispute so that it can inform you when selecting a resolution mechanism to resolve a specific conflict situation. Bercovitch and Jackson (2001) noted that in conflicts that are not too intense, parties prefer to resolve their differences through negotiation. The findings support the contingency theory of conflict resolution argument that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to conflict resolution and that different mechanisms or strategies may be effective depending on the specific situation(s) or circumstance(s) that is the contingency of the conflict (Fisher, 1991).

4.4 Summary

The chapter presented the findings of the study. The chapter also discussed the findings of the study and highlighted how they interact with the literature and theories of the study. The discussion reveals that the understanding of the students and school administrators about conflict resolution was explored and the emerging views or understanding about conflict resolution were categorized under the following themes: Resolving misunderstandings and disagreements between parties; Dispute settlement between parties; Steps taken to resolve misunderstandings between people; and finding a peaceful resolution to conflict between two parties. The discussion also reveals that

there were many sources of conflicts in the selected public senior high schools in the study due to multiple competing values, interests, beliefs, needs and goals. Some of the sources of conflicts include: Inappropriate behaviour; Role performance; Communication; Distribution and scarcity of resources; Personal or individual misunderstandings; Appointment and promotion; Religion and Tribalism. The school disciplinary committee system, mediation, negotiation, reconciliation, SRC judicial and prefectorial board and the use of the Police service were the mechanisms used by the students and school administrators of the selected public senior high schools in resolving conflicts.



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

The previous chapter presented and discussed the findings of the study. This chapter presents the summary of the findings of the study. Also, the chapter presents the conclusions of the study. Further, recommendations were made based on the findings of the study. The chapter ends by presenting what served as limitations to the study.

5.1 Summary

5.1.1 Research objectives

The study was guided by three objectives. They included to:

- i. explore the students and school administrators of the selected public senior high schools in the Upper West region of Ghana views about conflict resolution.
- ii. determine the sources of conflict in the selected public senior high schools in the Upper West region of Ghana.
- iii. examine the mechanisms that are used by the students and school administrators of the selected public senior high schools in the Upper West region of Ghana in the resolution of conflicts.

5.1.2 Research procedure

The research was undertaken to explore the understanding of the students and school administrators about conflict resolution, the sources of conflict and the mechanisms that are used by the students and school administrators of the selected public senior high schools in the Upper West Region of Ghana in the resolution of conflicts. The research was approached qualitatively and designed as a case study. A total of fifteen (15) participants were purposively sampled for the study. Data were collected through

semi-structured interviews. Analysis of the data were qualitative through thematic analysis.

5.1.3 Major findings

The following are the major findings of the study:

Research question 1: How do the students and school administrators of the selected public senior high schools in the Upper West region of Ghana view conflict resolution?

The participants gave varied understandings or views about conflict resolution and these were categorized based on the emerging and common themes. They included: Resolving misunderstandings and disagreements between people; Dispute settlement between parties; Steps taken to resolve or settle misunderstandings between people; and finding a peaceful resolution to conflict between two parties. Therefore, conflict resolution refers to the processes or steps taken to resolve misunderstandings and disagreements between two or more people or parties with the view of ensuring peaceful co-existence between the opposing parties. The understanding of conflict resolution in itself, helped the students and school administrators of the selected schools to adopt the appropriate interventions or mechanisms to resolving different conflict situations in their respective schools.

Research question 2: what are the sources of conflict in public senior high schools in the Upper West region of Ghana?

There were many sources and causes of conflict that were identified in the selected public senior high schools in the Upper West region of Ghana due to multiple competing interests, beliefs, values, needs and goals. Some of the sources of conflict were categorized based on the emerging themes which include: Inappropriate behaviour;

Role performance; communication; Distribution and scarcity of resources; Personal or individual misunderstandings; Appointment and promotion; Religion and Tribalism.

Research question 3: what mechanisms are used by the students and school administrators of public senior high schools in the Upper West region of Ghana in the resolution of conflicts?

The students and school administrators of the selected public senior high schools used different mechanisms in resolving conflicts in their respective schools based on different conflict situations. The mechanisms include the use school disciplinary committee system; Mediation; Negotiation; Reconciliation; Issuing of queries; SRC judicial and prefectorial boards and the use of the Police Service. The study noted that various mechanisms that were used by the students and school administrators in the resolution of conflicts successfully yielded positive outcomes notwithstanding the few challenges they encountered in the resolution processes. Therefore, the emerging theme is that no single mechanism can be used in resolving all conflicts. As such, the students and school authorities tend to adopt different and multiple approaches to resolve conflicts in the selected schools.

5.2 Implications

This work has several implications. The implications are categorized into two main areas: theoretical and practical implications.

5.2.1 Theoretical implications

The study demonstrates that in conflict resolution no single mechanism can be used in resolving all conflicts. As such, school authorities and the students tend to adopt different and multiple mechanisms to resolve conflicts in the selected schools. Therefore, third-party interventions should focus on addressing the sources of the

conflict, by looking at how best the parties can have their basic needs met and those of others within a specific conflict situation(s). Research has argued that conflicts may occur when a party is required to engage in an activity that is incongruent with his or her needs or interests, or when a party holds behavioural preferences, the satisfaction of which is incompatible with another person's implementation of his or her preferences (Rocoff, 1987). Thus, students and school administrators of the selected public senior high schools and intervening parties (i.e. mediators/third-party/trusted teacher/interveners/Police Service), should not treat the sources and causes of conflict and the basic needs, wants and interests of conflicting parties and the specific context and circumstances within which the conflict occurs in isolation when selecting a mechanism(s) in resolving of conflicts. Therefore, at different points during a conflict situation (circumstance) multiple or different types of third-party interventions or mechanisms should be adopted in resolving conflict (Fisher & Keashly, 1991). Identifying the sources, causes and the context of the conflicts would help in determining the appropriate mechanism(s) that addresses the grievances of the conflicting parties in the resolution process is very significant to a successful resolution of conflicts in the selected public senior high schools in the Upper West region of Ghana. Research including Kezsbom (1992) and Twinsley (1997) among others, identified conflict sources as including goals and priority definition, personality, communication, politics, administrative procedures, resources allocations, scheduling, leadership, ambiguous roles/structure, costs, reward structure, technical opinions, and unresolved prior conflicts. Some of the sources of conflicts identified in the study included were inappropriate behaviour, role performance, ineffective communication, distribution and scarcity of resources, personal misunderstandings, appointment and promotion, religion and tribalism. Therefore, adopting a resolution mechanism to

resolve conflicts, resolution experts or interveners must acknowledge the driving forces (Human Needs) and situation(s) (circumstances) within which the conflict occurred. Failure to do that may result in interveners' inability to resolve conflict effectively. Consequently, third-party interveners, the students and school administrators of the selected public senior high schools must critically factor in the basic needs of the participants or actors of the conflict and adopt the appropriate resolution mechanisms or strategies that fit the specific context and circumstances of the conflict. In other words, conflict resolution mechanism(s) must strive to meet the basic needs of the parties or actors in the conflicts by adopting the appropriate multiple interventions or mechanisms in resolving conflicts (Burton, 1997). Bercovitch and Jackson (2001) argued that before one uses a conflict resolution mechanism, certain preconditions must exist depending on the situation of the conflict. According to them, mediation is likely to be used when a dispute is long, drawn out or complex, has reached an impasse, and parties are unable to settle their differences then they will be apt for mediation (third party intervention), due to the contingency that is the circumstance of the conflict. Thus, using a resolution mechanism or multiple mechanisms depends on the nature or kind of conflict, the parties involved and the analysis and assessment of the conflict within a specific context and circumstance (Fisher & Keashly, 1990). Understanding conflict resolution is key to the identification of specific sources and root causes of conflict, analysis and assessment of conflicts and the appropriate mechanism to use in resolving conflicts. Bercovitch et al. (2008) asserted that conflict resolution concerns itself with the ideas, theories and methods that can improve our understanding of conflict and our collective efforts to reduce violence and enhance the political process for harmonisation of interest.

5.2.2 Practical implications

The study also demonstrates that conflicts that are not too intense. The students and the school administrators of the selected public senior high schools in the Upper West region of Ghana used the school disciplinary committee system, negotiation, reconciliation, the SRC judicial and prefectorial boards and issuing of queries as resolution mechanisms to resolve conflicts in their schools due to the conflict situations (low intensity of the conflicts). Wall and Lynn (1993) argued that when a conflict is of low intensity or is narrow in scope, the parties feel they can manage the conflict nicely by themselves and do not seek assistance from a mediator or a third party, they do that. However, in conflicts that are of high intensity, the students and school administrators of the selected public senior high schools in the Upper West region of Ghana use mediation and the Police service (third-party interventions) to resolve or settle such disputes. This feeds into Fisher's (2012) argument that in different conflict situations, individuals or actors can adopt conflict resolution mechanisms or strategies that fit the specific context and circumstances of the conflict. Bercovitch and Houston (1996), Bercovitch and Jackson (2001) and Moore (2012) also argued that when the level of hostility between parties is so high that they cannot negotiate face-to-face, mediation becomes necessary. Therefore, in conflicts of high levels of hostility or intensity such as rioting and rampaging by students the police service is needed as a trusted or third-party intervener to maintain law and order and allow parties to the conflict the opportunity to resolve the conflict through peace-making and peacebuilding. Also, mediators or third-party interveners must be seen as trusted (trusted teachers) and confidential individuals before students and teachers of the selected public senior high schools (conflicting parties) would utilize their services as mediators to get their conflict resolved through them (trusted teachers) or the third party. Thus, conflicting

parties will only be willing to either invite or give mediators the opportunity to intervene, if they trust and have confidence in them that they (mediators/third party interveners or trusted teachers) can help them resolve their dispute without sharing their information to the world or parties that do not matter in the conflict due to the conflict situation. Bercovitch (1992), T'Hart (1995) and Kleiboer (1996) affirmed that mediation comes into play when parties' conflict resolution efforts have reached an impasse. Research has also argued that a mediator must be available and willing to intervene and there must exist some opportunity for the mediator to intervene (Rubin, 1992; Bercovitch & Jackson, 2001).

5.3 Conclusion

The study has indicated that conflict resolution refers to the process or steps taken to resolve misunderstandings and disagreements between two or more people or parties with the view of ensuring peaceful co-existence between the opposing parties. It emerged in the research that: Inappropriate behaviour; Role performance; Ineffective communication; Distribution and scarcity of resources; Personal or individual misunderstandings; Religion and Tribalism were the sources of conflicts in the selected public senior high schools. The study showed that when the students and school administrators of the selected public senior high schools are confronted or faced with any of the sources of conflicts identified in the study, they used varied mechanisms such as the school disciplinary committee system; mediation; negotiation; reconciliation; issuing of queries; the SRC judicial and prefectorial boards; and the Police Service to resolve conflicts in their schools. The findings revealed that the sources and causes of conflicts identified in the selected schools were many due to multiple competing interests, beliefs, values, needs and goals. The emerging theme is that no one single mechanism can be used in resolving all conflicts. As such, the

students and school authorities tend to adopt different and multiple approaches to resolve conflicts in the selected schools. Therefore, acknowledging the driving forces (Human Needs) of the sources of conflict and effective communication was very significant in analysing, assessing and resolving conflicts of subjective and objective elements in the selected schools. School administrators should ensure equal representations and opportunities for appointments of leaders namely; teachers, prefects and non-teaching staff, this would help eliminate any form of favouritism, tribalism and discrimination amongst students, teachers and non-teaching staff and school administrators in schools.

5.4 Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the research findings:

- i. School administrators of the selected public senior high schools in the Upper West region of Ghana should pay much attention to the needs and wants of the students, teachers and other workers within the school system to help reduce unnecessary and unexpected riots, protests and rampages in the selected schools.
- ii. Also, the central government through the ministry of education should endeavour to provide enough infrastructure (dormitories, classrooms and libraries) and textbooks in the selected schools to cater for the increment in students' numbers as a result of the free senior high school policy. This would help curb any unnecessary confrontations and disagreements among the students in the selected schools.
- iii. Since the study found out that discrimination in the appointment of teachers to positions and disbursement of welfare packages were characterised by discrimination and in some cases, tribalism and religious superiority were sources of conflict, school administrators of the selected public senior high schools should ensure just and equal disbursement of welfare packages, representations and appointment opportunities for

all stakeholders in the selected schools. This would help curb any form of confrontations and disagreements among stakeholders in the selected schools.

iv. School administrators of the selected public senior high schools in the Upper West region of Ghana should enhance effective communication and keep communication channels open between them, students and teachers at all times. Communication should be devoid of ambiguities; thus, the free flow of communication should be ensured for easy detection of conflict or dispute before it escalates.

v. The study also recommends that the Ministry of Education through the National Council for Curriculum Assessment (NaCCA) should introduce a component on conflict resolution for school administrators, teachers and students as part of administration courses, social studies and government syllabus for teachers and students in the teaching and learning of conflict resolution, since the social studies and government syllabus do not lay much emphasis on appropriate ways of managing and resolving conflicts in public senior high schools in Ghana.

5.4.1 Recommendations for further studies

The following recommendations are made for further studies:

i. The study was approached qualitatively. As such, the views of the few participants of the selected public senior high schools in the Upper West region of Ghana were sought. I focused mainly on the participants of the selected public senior high schools in the Upper West region of Ghana. Therefore, further research could approach conflict resolution mechanisms in public senior high schools in the Upper West region of Ghana both qualitatively and quantitatively so that the views of a larger population of public senior high schools in the Upper West region could be sought. Research could also seek the views of other stakeholders such as the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA), the Board of Governors (BoGs), the chairman of the Regional Security Council (Resec),

the regional and district directors of education and a conflict resolution specialist. Further studies could also be undertaken to explore the views of all stakeholders of public senior high schools in the Upper West region of Ghana on conflict resolution mechanisms.

ii. The study also focused only on conflict resolution mechanisms in public senior high schools in the Upper West region of Ghana without including the private senior high schools in the region. Therefore, further research could approach conflict resolution mechanisms in both public and private senior high schools in the Upper West region of Ghana.

iii. The study clustered the region into three zones/belts and selected only three (3) schools out of the thirty-three (33) public senior high schools in the Upper West region of Ghana. Thus, the findings of the study are only based on the data or information obtained from the three selected public senior high schools in the Upper West region of Ghana and therefore the findings cannot be generalized. There is a need for further research on all the thirty-three public senior high schools in the Upper West region of Ghana on conflict resolution mechanisms. This would aid in generalization.

5.5 Limitations of the Study

The study was qualitatively approached, only fifteen (15) participants were drawn from three selected public senior high schools in the Upper West region of Ghana for the study, therefore, the findings of the study cannot be generalized to all the public senior high schools in the Upper West region of Ghana, because their perspectives may not reflect the entire public senior high schools in the region. The study sought information from people who were parties to the sources of the conflicts in the selected schools, therefore, their experiences, views and perspectives about conflict resolution, sources of the conflict and the appropriate mechanism(s) used in resolving

the conflicts may have influenced the responses they provided for the study. Also, the study was only limited to the mechanisms used by the students and school administrators of selected public senior high schools in resolving conflicts, however, the role of the regional security council, and regional and district directors of education in the resolution of conflicts in the schools were not included in the study. The study was restricted to only public senior high schools in the Upper West region of Ghana. The private senior high schools in the region were not included in the study, consequently, the findings of the study cannot also be generalized to include all the senior high schools (both public and private) in the region.



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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDE

I am Zakari Ali Sulley, a Master of Philosophy candidate at University of Education, Winneba's Centre for Conflict, Human Rights and Peace Studies. This study is being done in order to fulfil the prerequisites for the University of Education, Winneba's Master of Philosophy in Human Rights, Conflict, and Peace Studies programme. In the Upper West region of Ghana, the study examines how students and school administrators in the chosen public senior high schools' view conflict resolution, the areas or sources of conflict, and the methods they employ to resolve disputes. This interview's objective is to gather information for an educational project. I promise to treat both you and the data you gave me with the highest secrecy and anonymity. Some of the questions may be declined to be responded. I appreciate you agreeing to take part in this research.

Questions for Headteachers and Teachers

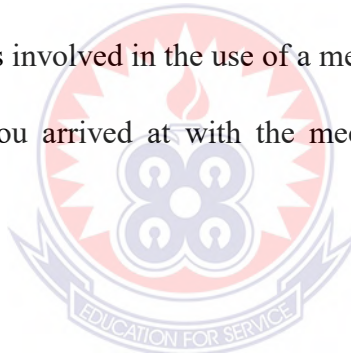
1. How do you understand or view conflict resolution?
2. What are the sources of conflict in your school?
3. In your own view, what are the causes of conflict in your school?
4. What is your understanding of conflict management?
5. What are some of the dispute-resolution techniques your high office employs?
6. What factors do you take into account when choosing a dispute resolution method for your school?
7. What difficulties do you encounter when utilizing a specific mechanism?
8. What are the techniques used while using a mechanism?
9. What is the outcome of the mechanisms you have used in resolving conflicts in your school?

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDE

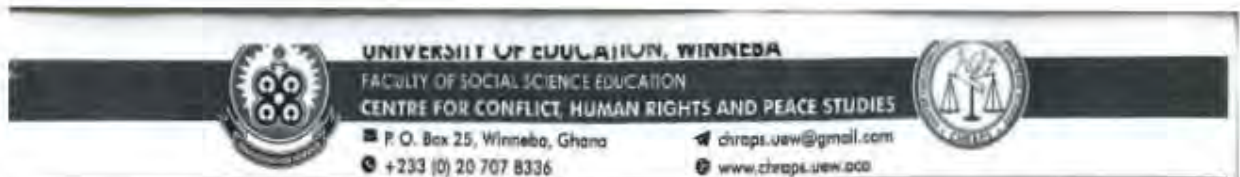
Questions for Students

1. How do you understand or view conflict resolution?
2. What are the sources of conflict in your school?
3. In your own view, what are the causes of conflict in your school?
4. What is your understanding of conflict management?
5. What are some of the conflict resolution mechanisms you used as a student?
6. What do you consider when selecting a resolution mechanism?
7. What challenges do you face when using the mechanism that you used in resolving conflict?
8. What are the strategies involved in the use of a mechanism?
9. What outcome did you arrived at with the mechanism(s) you employed in the resolution process?



APPENDIX C

INTRODUCTORY LETTER



Our Ref: CHRAPS.18/LOI/VOL.1/49

Your Ref:

March 8, 2023

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

ZAKARI ALI SULLEY – 220023962

We write to introduce to you, Zakari Ali Sulley with index number 220023962, pursuing Master of Philosophy in Human Rights at the Centre for Conflict, Human Rights and Peace Studies of the University of Education, Winneba.

He wishes to collect data for his thesis on the topic **“Conflict Resolution Mechanisms in Public Senior High Schools in The Upper West Region of Ghana”**.

We would be grateful if he is given the needed assistance from your outfit, please.

Thank You.

Yours faithfully,

Prof. George Hikah Benson
Director