

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA



**HOW CULTURAL PRACTICES SHAPE INTRA-TRIBAL CONFLICT IN
THE YENDI COMMUNITY OF THE DAGOMBA KINGDOM**

HENRIETTA ABUKOMAH-AMPONG



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HENRIETTA ABUKOMAH-AMPONG

(8230230036)

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UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA**

DECEMBER, 2025

DECLARATION

Student's Declaration

I, **HENRIETTA ABUKOMAH-AMPONG**, declare that this thesis, with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my own original work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

Signature:.....

Date:.....

Supervisor's Declaration

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this work was supervised in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of thesis/dissertation/project as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

Name of supervisor: Prof. David Naya Zuure

Signature :.....

Date:.....

DEDICATION

To Keon Henry Osei Owusu



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ABSTRACT

Intra-tribal conflicts in Northern Ghana, particularly in Dagbon, have repeatedly been linked to culturally embedded institutions that regulate authority, identity, and access to resources, with the 2002 Dagbon chieftaincy crisis in Yendi and the subsequent reconciliation culminating in the enskinment of Ya Naa Abukari II in 2019 underscoring the stakes of culturally grounded legitimacy. This study examined how cultural practices shape intra-tribal conflict and conflict resolution in the Dagbon community of Yendi Municipality, drawing analytically on access and symbolism theories to capture the interplay between material entitlements (notably land) and symbolic authority (notably chieftaincy and ritual). Using a pragmatic, mixed-methods explanatory sequential design, quantitative data were collected via structured questionnaires from 364 randomly selected community members and integrated with qualitative interviews with 20 purposively selected chiefs, elders, and opinion leaders (total N=384). Quantitative analyses in IBM SPSS (v20) employed descriptive statistics; instrument reliability and validity were supported by pilot testing, Cronbach's $\alpha=0.69$, and exploratory factor analysis (KMO=0.72; Bartlett's $p<0.001$). Interview data were thematically analysed with member checking and triangulation. Respondents strongly associated conflict with chieftaincy succession (mean=3.24), inheritance norms (3.45), rituals/ceremonies (3.30), and culturally mediated resource allocation (3.48), while women's roles were rarely perceived as conflict drivers (1.97). Cultural practices were reported to intensify factional misunderstandings (3.33), structure how conflicts unfold and persist (e.g., culturally dictated handling, 3.48; loyalty/allegiance, 3.35), and amplify tensions during celebrations (3.45). For resolution, respondents preferred traditional mechanisms over formal legal systems (3.56), emphasizing elder mediation, ritual reconciliation (3.35), and forgiveness (3.45), yet acknowledging that rigid adherence to tradition can hinder resolution in contemporary, externally entangled disputes (2.99) and that women remain marginal in formal processes (1.97). The findings highlight culture's dual role as both generator and remedy of conflict, implying that sustainable peacebuilding in Dagbon requires culturally legitimate mechanisms that are adaptive, inclusive, and attentive to contested access and symbolism, while addressing translation and scope limitations inherent in the study context.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Overview

This chapter elaborates on the background of study, statement of the problem, the research objectives and questions relevant to the study, significance of the study and delimitations.

1.1 Background of the Study

Conflicts are an inevitable part of human existence and can arise due to various factors such as political, economic, social, and cultural differences. This is according to Fagbemi and Fajingbesi (2022) who defined conflict as a state of disagreement or opposition between two or more parties, which can lead to tension, hostility, and even violence. Conflicts can be either inter-ethnic or intra-ethnic (Thiranagama, 2018). Inter-ethnic conflicts involve multiple ethnic groups involved in a dispute, for example gaining control over land, while intra-ethnic conflicts involve disputes within the same ethnic group involving smaller units such as families or clans, for example in the quest for chieftaincy titles (Bukari et al., 2021). Factors such as competition over scarce resources; differences in values, beliefs and cultural practices; and political power struggles between communities or other parties can play a significant role in shaping the changing aspects of conflicts (Ratner et al., 2017). In particular, cultural practices – including rituals, ceremonies and festivals – have been identified as significant causes of and solutions to conflicts within and between communities (Ratner et al., 2017) as these practices can influence the way individuals and communities, as a whole, perceive and respond to conflicts that may arise (Geertz, 1973).

According to Geertz (1973), cultural practices are the beliefs, values, and traditions that are passed down from generation to generation and shape the way individuals and groups interact with each other. These practices can lead to conflicts when they are perceived as incompatible with the beliefs and values of other groups or when they are used to justify the exclusion or oppression of certain groups among other things (Busch, 2022).

Research studies over time have discussed how these cultural practices can contribute to conflicts in various ways. First, they can create a sense of in-group and out-group identity, which can lead to the exclusion and oppression of certain groups (Busch, 2022). For example, cultural practices that emphasize the superiority of one group over another can justify the oppression and marginalization of certain groups. Second, cultural practices can create a sense of entitlement and ownership over resources, which can lead to conflicts over land, minerals, water bodies, property, and other resources (Aasoglenang et al., 2024). Third, cultural practices can create a sense of loyalty and allegiance to certain groups, which can lead to conflicts between different groups (Brake, 2017).

Around the world, the role of cultural practices in conflicts has been studied extensively in various contexts. For example, in the Middle East, religious and cultural differences have been a major source of conflict between different groups (Brake, 2017). In Africa, cultural practices such as land ownership and inheritance have been linked to conflicts between different ethnic groups (Aasoglenang et al., 2024). According to Doke (2021), from 1982 to 2004 in the West African sub-region, a number of violent conflicts occurred in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea and La Côte d'Ivoire. In Latin America, cultural practices such as language and religion have been

used to justify the oppression of indigenous groups by dominant groups (Dayioglu, 2019).

In Ghana, a diverse country with a rich cultural heritage and over 100 ethnic groups with a complex variety of cultural practices (Issifu & Bukari, 2022), there has been relatively longer periods of peace compared to other countries in the West African sub-region and the African continent at large. However, there have been instances of conflicts between different ethnic groups and within communities (Assanful, 2021). In the last half century, according to Bukari et al. (2021), violent conflicts have occurred between the Kusasi and the Mamprusi, the Nanumba and the Konkomba, and the Gonja and the Vagala, all in Northern Ghana. Disputes over chieftaincy titles have also occurred in Wa and Dagbon and among the Gonja and the Mamprusi (Bukari et al., 2021). Cultural practices related to chieftaincy inheritance or succession customs have played a significant role in shaping these conflicts (Bukari et al., 2021).

The issue of chieftaincy succession has enflamed conflicts in many Ghanaian communities (Doke, 2021), where the position of chief is usually hereditary and is based on cultural practices such as rotation from one family to another that determine who is eligible to become a chief (Anamzoya & Gariba, 2022). However, these cultural practices can lead to conflicts when there are disputes over who should become the next chief, or when certain groups feel that they are being excluded from the process, as has been the case in Dagbon (Aasoglenang, 2023). Another instance of cultural practices contributing to conflicts in Ghana is the issue of land ownership and inheritance. In many parts of Ghana, land is owned communally, and inheritance is based on culture that prioritizes certain groups over others (Aasoglenang et al., 2024). This can lead to conflicts over land ownership and inheritance, as different groups may have competing claims based on their cultural practices.

The “traditional kingdom” of Dagbon is inhabited by the Dagomba people (Cohen-Khani, 2024), who are physically located in a large geographical portion of the Northern Region of Ghana. The Dagomba people are one of the largest ethnic groups in Northern Ghana, with a population of 1,508,000 people (Ghana Statistical Service, 2021). They have a rich cultural heritage that has been shaped by various historical and social factors (Britannica, 2016), including the influence of Islam and the legacy of the Dagbon Kingdom of old (Anamzoya & Gariba, 2022). The Dagomba people have a hierarchical social structure that is based on the concept of chieftaincy, where the Yaa Naa (paramount chief) is the head of the community (Anamzoya & Gariba, 2022). This social structure has been shaped by various cultural practices such as the inheritance of chieftaincy titles, the performance of rituals and ceremonies, and the use of traditional dispute resolution mechanisms (Aasoglenang, 2023).

However, according to Bukari et al. (2021), despite the rich cultural heritage of the Dagomba people, there have been instances of intra-tribal conflicts within the community. These conflicts have been attributed to various factors such as disputes over land ownership, chieftaincy succession, and the distribution of resources (Aasoglenang, 2023). The role of cultural practices in these conflicts has been a subject of substantial discussion, with scholars agreeing invariably that cultural practices have contributed to the perpetuation of conflicts within the community (Bukari et al., 2021). According to Dagomba culture, the position of a chief is hereditary and is passed down from generation to generation (Anamzoya & Gariba, 2022). However, disputes can arise when there are competing claims over who should become the next chief, or when certain groups feel that they are being excluded from the process (Aasoglenang, 2023). This has been the case in the well-known conflict

within the Dagomba community, popularly referred to as the Dagbon chieftaincy crisis (Aasoglenang, 2023; Doke, 2021; Owusu-Mensah, 2022).

According to Doke's (2021) study of conflicts in Northern Ghana, the crisis in Dagbon is based on the succession of the Ya-Naa, the Dagbon king, following a rotational 'gate' system established after Ya Naa Yakubu I's death (1829-1849). Initially, succession was to be among his sons, Abudu, Andani, and Mahami, but Mahami's early death left the rotation to Abudu and Andani. This arrangement continued until 1974 when Ya-Naa Muhammadu Abudu IV from the Abudu Gate was enskinned, sparking protests from the Andani Gate, claiming it was not Abudu's turn. The government of the time (National Redemption Council) intervened, and after a commission of inquiry, replaced Muhammadu Abudu with Naa Yakubu Andani IV from the Andani Gate leading to further conflict as the Abudu faction opposed the decision. This led to an escalation of the conflict in 2002 and resulted in violent clashes, including the death of Ya-Naa Yakubu Andani IV who was the sitting chief.

Evidently, cultural practices can play a significant role in shaping the dynamics of conflicts within and between communities, a fact confirmed by Doke (2021) who posits that conflicts are connected to the culture of a community. In the case of the Dagbon people in Northern Ghana, cultural practices such as the rotational system of inheritance of chieftaincy titles and land ownership have been identified as major contributors to intra-ethnic conflicts. Understanding the role of cultural practices in relation to conflicts within communities is essential for addressing these conflicts and fostering lasting peace in the region.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Conflicts are a common feature in many societies, often driven by factors such as politics, economics, and cultural practices. In particular, cultural practices have been

recognized as significant contributors to conflicts in various regions (Ibrahim et al., 2022). The Dagbon community, located in Ghana's Northern Region, boasts a rich cultural heritage shaped by a complex history (Britannica, 2016). Despite this, the community has experienced frequent intra-tribal conflicts, primarily stemming from disputes over chieftaincy succession, land ownership, and resource distribution (Aasoglenang, 2023).

This study specifically investigates the influence of cultural practices on intra-tribal conflicts within the Dagbon community. While there is extensive research on conflicts in northern Ghana, many studies emphasize political factors as the primary drivers of these conflicts (Ahorsu & Gebe, 2011; Bukari et al., 2021). For instance, Bukari et al. (2021) and Ahorsu & Gebe (2011) highlight political power struggles and governance issues. However, fewer studies have examined the dual role that cultural practices can play, both as sources of conflict and as avenues for conflict resolution. This gap calls for an in-depth exploration of how cultural traditions, such as chieftaincy succession, rituals, and land inheritance customs, influence conflict dynamics.

A notable example within the Dagbon community is the prolonged Dagbon Chieftaincy Crisis, which has its roots in disputes over the succession of the Ya Naa, the paramount chief. This crisis, which escalated into violence in 2002, led to the assassination of Ya Naa Yakubu Andani II, deepening divisions between the Abudu and Andani royal gates (Aasoglenang, 2023; Doke, 2021). Such instances exemplify the urgent need to study how cultural practices can exacerbate or mitigate intra-tribal tensions.

Understanding the impact of cultural practices on these conflicts is essential not only for filling gaps in academic literature but also for developing more effective conflict

resolution strategies that are culturally sensitive. Moreover, intra-tribal conflicts in Dagbon have significant socio-economic repercussions, including displacement, property destruction, and the weakening of traditional leadership structures (Fagbemi & Fajingbesi, 2022). For example, the Konkomba-Nanumba conflict of 1994, also known as the Guinea Fowl War, resulted in the displacement of 200,000 people and the loss of 2,000 lives (Debrah et al., 2016). These conflicts threaten the social fabric and development prospects of the Dagbon community and Ghana at large.

By exploring the role of cultural practices in conflict causation and resolution, this study aims to provide insights that could inform the development of more sustainable peacebuilding efforts within Dagbon and other similar communities.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

This study investigated the influence of cultural practices on intra-tribal conflicts within the Dagbon community in the Yendi Municipality of Northern Ghana. By examining the specific cultural practices that contribute to conflicts within the community, the study aimed to provide insights into the complex relationships between cultural practices, conflict dynamics, and conflict resolution strategies. The study focused on identifying the key cultural practices that play a role in intra-tribal conflicts within the Dagbon community.

Furthermore, the study sought to analyze the impact of cultural practices on the resolution of conflicts within the Dagbon community by examining how cultural practices shape conflict resolution processes and outcomes and making recommendations for more effective and culturally sensitive conflict resolution strategies.

1.4 Research Objectives

The general objective of the study was to examine the role of cultural practices in shaping intra-tribal conflict and conflict resolution within the Dagbon community in Yendi Municipality, Northern Ghana. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. examine the major cultural practices associated with intra-tribal conflicts within the Dagbon community in Yendi Municipality.
2. examine the ways in which selected cultural practices shape the occurrence and persistence of intra-tribal conflicts within the study area.
3. examine the role of cultural practices in the resolution of intra-tribal conflicts within the Dagbon community in Yendi Municipality.

1.5 Research Questions

The study was guided by the following questions:

1. What cultural practices are associated with intra-tribal conflicts within the Dagbon community in Yendi Municipality?
2. In what ways do cultural practices shape the occurrence and persistence of intra-tribal conflicts within the study area?
3. What role do cultural practices play in the resolution of intra-tribal conflicts within the Dagbon community in Yendi Municipality?

1.6 Significance of the Study

The findings of this study on cultural practices and intra-tribal conflicts within the Dagbon community in the Yendi Municipality of Northern Ghana will be significant for several key stakeholders:

Firstly, the study will provide valuable insights for traditional authorities and community leaders in understanding the role of cultural practices in shaping the

dynamics of conflicts within the Dagbon community and other communities. By identifying the specific cultural practices that have contributed to conflicts, such as chieftaincy succession and land ownership, traditional authorities can develop more effective strategies for conflict resolution and prevention. This can help to promote social cohesion and stability within the community, ultimately contributing to improved community development and well-being.

The study's findings will also be of interest to policymakers and government agencies responsible for conflict resolution and community development in Ghana. By highlighting the complex interplay between cultural practices and intra-tribal conflicts, the study can inform the development of more nuanced and culturally sensitive policies and interventions. This can help to address the root causes of conflicts and promote sustainable peace and development in the region.

Moreover, the study's methodology and findings will be of interest to conflict resolution practitioners and researchers who are working to understand and address the role of cultural factors in shaping conflicts. By developing a comprehensive understanding of the cultural practices that contribute to intra-tribal conflicts in the Dagbon community, the study provides a framework for investigating similar dynamics in other cultural contexts. The findings can inform the development of more effective and culturally appropriate conflict resolution strategies and contribute to the growing body of knowledge in this field.

Finally, at a grassroots level, the study's findings can empower local communities and civil society organizations in the Dagbon region to better understand and address the cultural roots of conflicts within their communities. By raising awareness of the role of cultural practices in shaping conflicts, the study can support the development of

community-led initiatives for conflict resolution and peacebuilding. This can have far-reaching implications for promoting social cohesion, community development, and sustainable peace in the region.

Overall, the significance of this study lies in its potential to contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex relationship between cultural practices and intra-tribal conflicts, and to inform the development of more effective and culturally sensitive strategies for conflict resolution and community development in Northern Ghana.

1.7 Scope of the Study

This study will investigate the cultural practices that contribute to intra-tribal conflicts within the Dagbon community in Northern Ghana. It will focus on the Dagbon traditional area, covering parts of the Northern, North East, and Savannah regions. The study will employ a qualitative research approach, utilizing methods such as in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis. It will explore various cultural practices, such as chieftaincy succession, land ownership, and traditional festivals, and examine how these practices shape and perpetuate conflicts within the Dagbon ethnic group. The study will not cover conflicts in other ethnic groups, conflicts related to religion, politics, or economic factors, or detailed historical accounts of the Dagbon conflict. The findings may inform the development of culturally sensitive conflict resolution strategies and contribute to the broader understanding of the relationship between culture and conflict in Ghana and other African contexts.

The study will be limited to the Dagbon community in Northern Ghana, which may raise questions about the generalizability of the findings to other ethnic groups or communities in Ghana or beyond. However, the in-depth examination of the cultural practices and their influence on intra-tribal conflicts within the Dagbon community

can provide valuable insights and a framework for understanding similar dynamics in other cultural contexts. While the specific cultural practices and conflict dynamics may vary across communities, the study's methodology and findings can inform further research and contribute to a broader understanding of the complex relationship between cultural practices and intra-tribal conflicts in Ghana and other African countries.

1.8 Organisation of the Study

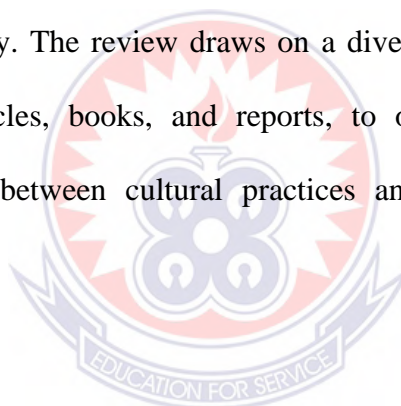
This study is arranged in five chapters. Chapter one presented the introduction of the research which comprised the background of the study, statement of the research problem and the purpose of the study. The research objectives and research questions were provided as well as the significance of the study and a definition of some key terms. Chapter two reviews related literature on the study. The review looks at relevant previous studies in the subject area underpinned by theoretical foundations adopted for the study. Chapter three deals with the methodology for the study and covers issues such as research design, population size, sample and sampling methods, research instruments, data collection procedure and many others. Chapter four focuses on the analysis and discussion of the findings or results of the study. Then finally, chapter five provides a summary of the methods and findings of the study, conclusions, recommendations and other issues.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Overview

The literature review provides a comprehensive overview of the research on cultural practices and intra-tribal conflicts, with a specific focus on the Dagbon community in Northern Ghana. It establishes the broader context of ethnic conflicts, highlighting how cultural differences and practices can contribute to tensions and disputes within and between communities. The review then delves into the specific dynamics of conflicts in Northern Ghana, noting the role of cultural practices, particularly those related to chieftaincy succession and land ownership, in shaping these conflicts within the Dagbon community. The review draws on a diverse range of sources, including academic journal articles, books, and reports, to offer an understanding of the complex relationship between cultural practices and intra-tribal conflicts in the Dagbon community.



2.1 Introduction

The relationship between cultural practices and conflicts has been well-documented in academic literature. Cultural practices, which refer to the beliefs, values, traditions, and customs that are passed down within a group or community, can have a significant influence on the emergence and perpetuation of conflicts (Ting, 2019; Ibrahim et al., 2022). Conflicts can arise due to a variety of factors, including political, economic, social, and cultural differences (Brake, 2017; Gbêhi, 2021; Cederman et al., 2022). Conflicts can be classified as either inter-ethnic, involving multiple ethnic groups, or intra-ethnic, involving disputes within the same ethnic group (Corvalan & Vargas, 2015). Factors such as competition over scarce resources, differences in values and beliefs, and political power struggles can all contribute to

the emergence and escalation of conflicts (Bukari et al., 2021). Cultural practices can create a sense of in-group and out-group identity, leading to the exclusion and oppression of certain groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Wimmer, 2013). They can also contribute to conflicts over the ownership and control of resources, as well as create a sense of loyalty and allegiance to particular groups (Aasoglenang et al., 2024; Britannica, 2016). In many contexts around the world, cultural practices have been identified as a significant contributor to conflicts, including in the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America (Cederman et al., 2022; Corvalan & Vargas, 2015; Gbêhi, 2021). In the Ghanaian context, the country's diverse cultural heritage and over 100 ethnic groups have contributed to a complex web of cultural practices that have, at times, led to conflicts within and between communities (Bukari et al., 2021). Disputes over chieftaincy succession, land ownership, and the distribution of resources have been particularly prevalent in Northern Ghana, with the Dagbon community being a prime example of how cultural practices can shape intra-tribal conflicts (Aasoglenang, 2023; Bukari et al., 2021). In conclusion, the existing literature highlights the significant role that cultural practices can play in shaping conflicts, both within and between communities. Understanding the complex interplay between cultural practices and conflicts is crucial for developing effective strategies for conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

2.2 Culture and Cultural Practices

Culture is a foundational concept in the social sciences, capturing the complex web of shared values, beliefs, norms, customs, and practices that guide social behavior and give meaning to social life within a community. According to Geertz (1973), culture is best understood as a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by which people communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and

attitudes toward life. Theoretical perspectives on culture emphasize both its role in shaping human behavior and its dynamic, evolving nature. Structural-functionalists view culture as a system of shared values and practices that maintain social order and cohesion, while interpretive anthropologists, such as Geertz, highlight the symbolic and meaning-making aspects of culture. Culture is not static; it evolves over time in response to social, economic, and political changes yet retains core elements that sustain group identity and continuity. For example, modernization, urbanization, and globalization have all influenced the transformation of cultural practices across African societies, including Dagbon, while traditional values and customs continue to shape community life and interpersonal relations.

Cultural practices are the observable expressions of culture through patterned actions, rituals, norms, and institutions that structure everyday life. These practices encompass customary laws, rites of passage, ceremonies, language, music, dress, and traditional governance systems. In African societies, cultural practices are closely intertwined with systems of traditional authority, such as chieftaincy institutions, lineage structures, and customary land tenure arrangements (Tonah, 2012). These practices regulate social conduct, maintain social order, and reinforce group identity and legitimacy. Within the Dagbon community, for instance, chieftaincy installation rites, customary land allocation procedures, and ritual observances serve not only administrative functions but also symbolic ones, reinforcing legitimacy, continuity, and a sense of belonging. Culture, therefore, is both a set of shared understandings and a repertoire of practices that shape social life, ensure the transmission of values across generations, and provide mechanisms for resolving disputes and adapting to change.

The evolution of culture is evident in the ways communities adapt traditional practices to new circumstances while retaining elements that affirm collective identity. In Dagbon, for example, the institution of chieftaincy has persisted despite colonial and postcolonial transformations, continuing to play a central role in governance, social organization, and resource management. However, cultural practices may also become sources of contestation when interpretations differ or when social change challenges established norms (Bukari et al., 2021). The dual character of culture, as a source of cohesion and a potential locus of conflict, highlights its significance in understanding social dynamics, particularly in settings where tradition and modernity intersect. This study, therefore, situates the analysis of intra-tribal conflict within the broader framework of cultural practices, emphasizing their centrality in shaping authority, regulating access to resources, and mediating social relations in Dagbon and other African contexts.

2.3 Intra-Tribal Conflict

Intra-tribal conflict refers to disputes and tensions that occur within a single ethnic or cultural group, distinguishing it from inter-ethnic conflict, which involves separate groups. This form of conflict is shaped by internal social structures, norms, and cultural frameworks that both facilitate and constrain contestation. Boege (2011) emphasizes that intra-tribal conflicts often arise from competition over authority, resources, or status, and are embedded within shared cultural understandings. Unlike inter-ethnic conflicts, which frequently center on identity and boundaries between groups, intra-tribal conflicts are characterized by struggles over leadership succession, land ownership, and the interpretation of customary practices within a common heritage.

The causes and dynamics of intra-tribal conflict are multifaceted. Key drivers include contestation over chieftaincy succession, disputes over land and resource allocation, generational tensions, and divergent interpretations of tradition. In the Dagbon context, the most prominent and recurrent intra-tribal conflicts revolve around succession to traditional authority and access to land. These disputes are not merely about material interests but are deeply rooted in the symbolic and normative dimensions of culture. For example, rival factions within Dagbon often draw on different versions of history or customary law to legitimize competing claims to chieftaincy or land, leading to cycles of contestation and violence (Mahama & Longi, 2013). Cultural practices such as lineage-based entitlement, ritual observances, and the authority of elders play dual roles serving both as sources of legitimacy and as points of contention.

The cultural underpinnings of intra-tribal conflict are especially salient in African societies, where traditional authority structures retain significant influence. In Dagbon, for instance, the rotational system of chieftaincy succession between royal families is intended to ensure continuity and prevent monopolization of power; however, disputes often arise when the rules are contested or manipulated, as seen in the protracted chieftaincy crises. Similarly, land tenure systems based on patrilineal inheritance and communal ownership can become flashpoints when demographic and economic pressures challenge established arrangements. Intra-tribal conflicts thus reflect broader struggles for power, identity, and resources, mediated through cultural logics and institutions.

2.4 Conflict Resolution in Traditional Societies

Conflict resolution in traditional societies encompasses culturally embedded processes through which disputes are managed and resolved using customary norms,

institutions, and practices. Rather than relying solely on punitive sanctions or adversarial procedures, these mechanisms prioritize reconciliation, restoration of social harmony, and reaffirmation of shared values (Zartman, 2000). The principles underlying traditional conflict resolution include consensus-building, the restoration of relationships, and the reintegration of disputing parties into the communal fold. These processes are deeply rooted in the moral and symbolic order of the community, reflecting a collective commitment to social cohesion and continuity.

The mechanisms and actors involved in traditional conflict resolution are diverse and based on context. Typically, elders, chiefs, lineage heads, and other respected community figures play central roles as mediators and arbitrators. Their authority derives from their knowledge of customary law, moral standing, and symbolic position within the community. Dispute resolution often involves public hearings, negotiation, mediation, and the use of rituals, ceremonies, or symbolic acts to legitimize outcomes and facilitate reconciliation (Bukari & Schareika, 2015). In the Dagbon community, for example, the chieftaincy institution and council of elders are central to the mediation of disputes related to succession and land. These actors draw on oral traditions, precedents, and communal values to guide their decisions, seeking solutions that restore harmony and reinforce group solidarity.

The strengths of traditional conflict resolution mechanisms lie in their accessibility, cultural legitimacy, and emphasis on restorative justice. They are often more attuned to local realities and capable of addressing the underlying social relationships at stake in disputes. However, these mechanisms also face limitations. Rigid adherence to tradition may hinder adaptation to new challenges or exclude marginalized voices, while the coexistence of customary and formal legal systems can create tensions and ambiguities regarding authority and enforcement. In Dagbon, the effectiveness of

traditional mechanisms is sometimes constrained by politicization, generational change, or competition with state institutions. Nevertheless, understanding the operation of traditional conflict resolution is essential for any analysis of intra-tribal conflict, as these practices continue to shape both the persistence of disputes and the prospects for sustainable peace in Dagbon and other African societies.

2.5 Theoretical Framework: Access and Symbolism Theories

This study draws on access theory and symbolism theory to explain how cultural practices shape intra-tribal conflict and conflict resolution within the Dagbon community in Yendi Municipality, Northern Ghana. The use of these theories provides an analytical basis for understanding how material resources and symbolic authority interact to influence conflict dynamics in traditional societies. By integrating these theories, the study acknowledges that intra-tribal conflicts are not solely driven by tangible interests such as land and resources but are also deeply entwined with the intangible aspects of culture, such as beliefs, rituals, and the meanings attached to authority and identity.

Access theory, by Ribot and Peluso (2003), is commonly employed in the analysis of conflicts linked to the control and use of resources. The theory emphasizes that access to resources is determined not only by formal rights but also by social relations, authority structures, and cultural norms that regulate who can benefit from resources and under what conditions (Ribot & Peluso, 2003; Addison et al., 2019). In the Dagbon context, the allocation and control of land, a central resource, exemplifies these dynamics. For instance, land ownership disputes in Dagbon are often rooted in customary laws and patrilineal inheritance, where chiefs and lineage heads play critical roles in mediating access (Aasoglenang et al., 2024). The contestation of land rights between clans or families can be exacerbated by shifting interpretations of

tradition, especially as economic pressures intensify competition for arable land (Bukari et al., 2021).

A concrete example is the conflict surrounding the creation of Mole National Park, which led to the annexation of communal lands traditionally managed by Dagbon authorities. This disruption of customary access arrangements not only sparked disputes between local communities and park management but also highlighted the fragility of traditional conflict resolution mechanisms when external actors intervene (Aasoglenang et al., 2024). Furthermore, chieftaincy succession disputes such as the longstanding rivalry between the Abudu and Andani royal gates often center on the control of land and resources, demonstrating how access theory can throw light on the interplay between material interests and cultural authority (Issifu & Bukari, 2022; Bukari et al., 2021).

In traditional settings such as Dagbon, access to land and other communal resources is embedded within customary institutions, particularly chieftaincy and lineage systems. Conflicts may emerge when competing groups contest access, ownership, or control of these resources, especially where customary arrangements are interpreted differently or challenged by changing social conditions (Garrett & Piccinni, 2012; Aasoglenang et al., 2024). For example, the attempt by the Abudu family to introduce a primogeniture system to replace the rotational succession arrangement was not only a bid for exclusive access to the kingship, but also for control over the resources and privileges that come with it (Issifu & Bukari, 2022). Such moves often provoke resistance and violence, as rival groups perceive threats to their own access and entitlements.

Additionally, access theory can be applied to disputes over other communal resources, such as water sources, grazing lands, and market spaces, which are often regulated by traditional leaders. Changes in population, migration, and economic activities can strain these arrangements, leading to new forms of conflict as groups seek to renegotiate access under evolving social conditions (Bukari et al., 2021; Brake, 2017).

Within the Dagbon community, customary land tenure and succession to traditional authority are closely linked. Control over land is often mediated through chiefs and traditional authorities, whose legitimacy is derived from established cultural practices. Access theory therefore provides a useful lens for examining how disputes over land and resource allocation become sources of intra-tribal conflict when claims to authority and entitlement overlap or conflict. For instance, the authority of a chief to allocate land is both a material and symbolic source of power, and disputes over this prerogative can escalate into broader conflicts, especially if rival factions challenge the legitimacy of the chief or the process of succession (Anamzoya & Gariba, 2022).

The significance of access theory in Dagbon is further reflected in the intersection between land disputes and chieftaincy conflicts, where the struggle for control over resources is inseparable from the contest for authority. This dynamic has been observed in other parts of Northern Ghana as well, where traditional leaders are often drawn into disputes that simultaneously affect resource distribution and social cohesion (Issifu & Bukari, 2022).

Symbolism theory complements this perspective by focusing on the cultural meanings attached to authority, institutions, and practices. Symbolism theory emphasizes that symbols, rituals, and ceremonial practices are not merely decorative but serve to communicate power relations, legitimacy, and social hierarchy within a community

(Turner, 1967; Mahama & Longi, 2013). In the Dagbon context, chieftaincy is a deeply symbolic institution, and disputes over succession are often rooted in competing interpretations of symbols, rituals, and customary procedures associated with kingship and authority (Mahama & Longi, 2013; Bukari et al., 2021).

For example, the installation of the Ya Naa, the paramount chief, is accompanied by elaborate rituals and the use of regalia such as the king's drum, sword, and palace symbols. These artefacts are not only markers of status but also embody historical narratives and legitimacy. Disputes over who has the right to perform certain rituals or possess key symbols can become flashpoints for conflict, as rival factions seek to assert their claims through control of these cultural artefacts (Anamzoya & Gariba, 2022; Longi, 2014). The assassination of Ya Naa Yakubu Andani II in 2002, for example, was preceded by intense contestation over the symbols and rituals of kingship, reflecting the centrality of symbolic authority in the escalation of intra-tribal violence (Bukari et al., 2021).

Symbols associated with traditional palaces, titles, and rituals play a central role in legitimizing authority and reinforcing social order. However, when such symbols are contested or interpreted differently by rival factions, they may contribute to the escalation of intra-tribal conflict (Anamzoya & Gariba, 2022). At the same time, symbolism theory also helps to explain how rituals and ceremonial practices can facilitate reconciliation by reaffirming shared values and restoring social harmony following conflict (Abdulai & Glikpoe, 2023). For instance, peace-building ceremonies, joint festivals, and the public reaffirmation of kinship ties are often used to heal divisions and restore unity after periods of conflict. The symbolic act of sharing kola nuts or attending funerals together can signal the restoration of relationships and the reaffirmation of communal bonds (Abdulai & Glikpoe, 2023).

Further, symbolism theory has been applied in other African societies to understand how the manipulation or re-interpretation of cultural symbols can either fuel conflict or promote peace. For example, in the Ashanti chieftaincy system, disputes over the interpretation of traditional proverbs and regalia have been known to spark intra-ethnic tensions, but the same symbols can also be mobilized to mediate disputes and promote reconciliation (Owusu-Ansah, 2015).

Taken together, access theory and symbolism theory provide a complementary framework for understanding intra-tribal conflict in Dagbon. While access theory highlights material dimensions of conflict related to land and resource control, symbolism theory explains how cultural meanings and symbolic authority shape perceptions of legitimacy and justice. The integration of these perspectives enables a more comprehensive analysis of how cultural practices simultaneously generate conflict and support culturally grounded mechanisms for conflict resolution within the Dagbon community. This dual approach is particularly relevant in contexts where material interests and cultural identities are tightly interwoven, and where effective conflict resolution must address both the tangible and intangible dimensions of dispute (Bukari et al., 2021; Aasoglenang et al., 2024; Abdulai & Glikpoe, 2023).

In summary, the application of access theory and symbolism theory to the Dagbon context not only advances scholarly understanding of intra-tribal conflict but also provides practical insights for policymakers, traditional leaders, and peacebuilders seeking to address and resolve disputes in culturally appropriate ways. It underscores the importance of considering both resource-based and symbolic dimensions of conflict, and the need for solutions that respect the intricate cultural fabric of the community.

2.6 Cultural Practices and Intra-Tribal Conflict in African Contexts

Cultural practices play a central role in shaping patterns of intra-tribal conflict across many African societies. In traditional settings, institutions such as chieftaincy, customary land tenure, and ritual authority regulate access to power and resources. While these institutions provide mechanisms for social order, they also generate conflict when cultural norms are contested or when competing interpretations of tradition emerge. Empirical studies across Africa consistently show that intra-tribal conflicts are deeply embedded in cultural and institutional arrangements rather than being purely economic or political phenomena (Boege, 2011).

2.6.1 Chieftaincy Succession and Conflict

Chieftaincy succession constitutes one of the most persistent sources of intra-tribal conflict in the Dagbon traditional area. As a deeply embedded cultural practice, succession to the skin of Ya Naa is governed by a rotational system between the Abudu and Andani royal gates. This arrangement originated from an agreement reached in 1824, which sought to prevent violent succession struggles by establishing an orderly alternation of kingship between the two lineages (Issifu & Bukari, 2022). Despite its intention to promote stability, the rotational system has instead become a central source of contestation within the Dagbon community.

Disputes have frequently emerged over the interpretation and implementation of the rotational arrangement, particularly regarding which gate is legitimately entitled to occupy the skin at a given time. These disputes reflect not only disagreements over customary norms but also struggles over authority and legitimacy within the chieftaincy institution (Bukari et al., 2021). The Dagbon chieftaincy crisis, which culminated in the killing of Ya Naa Yakubu Andani II in 2002, illustrates how

contested succession practices can escalate into large-scale violence when cultural rules are perceived to be manipulated or disregarded (Bukari et al., 2021).

Attempts to alter established succession practices have further intensified intra-tribal tensions. The effort by the Abudu gate to introduce a primogeniture system, which would have conferred exclusive succession rights, represented a significant departure from the accepted rotational norm and was widely viewed as an attempt to monopolize traditional authority (Issifu & Bukari, 2022). Such actions undermined trust in customary procedures and contributed to deepening divisions within the community. As Anamzoya and Gariba (2022) observe, while succession customs are intended to regulate competition and maintain order, weak enforcement and selective adherence to these norms have often resulted in violent confrontations.

Empirical studies on chieftaincy disputes in Northern Ghana indicate that succession conflicts extend beyond leadership selection and are closely tied to broader struggles over power, identity, and access to resources (Aasoglenang, 2023). In Dagbon, the chieftaincy institution is highly symbolic, and the Ya Naa embodies both cultural authority and political influence. Control over land allocation, the authority to enskin subordinate chiefs, and the prestige associated with kingship all heighten the stakes of succession contests (Anamzoya & Gariba, 2022; Issifu & Bukari, 2022). As a result, cultural practices surrounding chieftaincy succession become intertwined with material and political interests, making intra-tribal conflicts difficult to resolve through customary mechanisms alone.

2.6.2 Customary Land Tenure and Conflict

Customary land tenure constitutes another significant cultural practice contributing to intra-tribal conflict within the Dagbon community. Traditionally, land in Dagbon is

held communally and administered through customary institutions, with inheritance governed largely by patrilineal norms. Under this system, land is regarded not merely as an economic asset but as a collective resource tied to lineage, identity, and traditional authority (Aasoglenang et al., 2024). Historically, disputes over land ownership and use were addressed through culturally embedded mechanisms involving traditional authorities, family heads, and religious leaders, reflecting a conflict management system rooted in customary practice.

However, increasing pressure on land has altered the functioning of these traditional arrangements. Population growth, expanding agricultural activity, and the rising economic value of land have intensified competition for access and control, thereby straining communal ownership systems (Aasoglenang et al., 2024). As land has become increasingly commodified, disputes have emerged over inheritance rights and boundary claims, often grounded in competing interpretations of customary norms. Conflicts have arisen between clans and lineages within Dagbon, with rival groups invoking historical ties and lineage-based claims to legitimize their assertions of ownership. These disputes demonstrate how cultural practices that once regulated access to land have become sources of contestation under changing social and economic conditions.

The establishment of Mole National Park further complicated customary land tenure arrangements affecting communities within and around the Dagbon Traditional Area. The annexation of land for conservation purposes resulted in the exclusion of local communities from areas previously used for farming, hunting, and other livelihood activities (Aasoglenang et al., 2024). The loss of access to ancestral land and resources generated resentment and reinforced perceptions of dispossession among affected groups. This development heightened tensions between local communities

and external authorities, while also exacerbating intra-tribal disputes as competing claims emerged over remaining land resources.

Land disputes in Dagbon are closely intertwined with chieftaincy and traditional authority. Chiefs, as custodians of communal land, play a central role in land allocation, and disagreements over land often draw traditional leaders into conflict. As Issifu and Bukari (2022) note, land disputes in Northern Ghana frequently intersect with chieftaincy conflicts, reinforcing existing power struggles within traditional institutions. In Dagbon, challenges to land allocation practices may undermine the legitimacy of chiefs, while disputes over chieftaincy succession can, in turn, intensify conflicts over land control.

The consequences of customary land tenure conflicts extend beyond immediate ownership disputes. Empirical studies indicate that such conflicts disrupt agricultural production, weaken social cohesion, and contribute to economic hardship within affected communities (Bukari et al., 2021). These outcomes underscore the broader social and economic implications of land-related intra-tribal conflicts and highlight the central role of cultural practices in shaping both conflict dynamics and community well-being in Dagbon.

2.6.3 Rituals, Norms, and Resource-Related Tensions

Cultural norms and ritual practices play an important role in shaping patterns of resource allocation within the Dagbon community. Access to resources such as land and water is not determined solely by economic considerations but is regulated through culturally defined rules that reflect lineage, status, and traditional authority. These norms influence who is entitled to use communal resources and under what

conditions, thereby structuring patterns of inclusion and exclusion within the community (Aasoglenang et al., 2024).

In Dagbon, traditional practices often allocate resources on the basis of lineage affiliation and social position. While such arrangements are intended to preserve order and continuity, they may result in unequal access when certain families or groups are accorded preferential treatment. These disparities can generate grievances, particularly when marginalized groups perceive cultural norms as legitimizing inequitable distribution. Prior to the establishment of Mole National Park, access to land and natural resources within the area was governed largely by customary practices, which shaped patterns of resource use among different groups within the Dagbon community (Aasoglenang et al., 2024).

Resource-related tensions intensified following the creation of Mole National Park, which involved the annexation of land traditionally used by surrounding communities. The exclusion of local populations from resources that had previously supported their livelihoods was widely perceived as an injustice, reinforcing feelings of marginalization and loss (Aasoglenang et al., 2024). These grievances have contributed to tensions between affected communities and external authorities, while also deepening intra-tribal disputes as competition over remaining resources increased.

Conflicts over resource allocation in Dagbon are closely linked to broader social hierarchies and power relations. Traditional authorities, whose legitimacy is grounded in cultural practices, play a central role in regulating access to resources. As a result, disputes over resource distribution often intersect with chieftaincy and land conflicts, reinforcing existing inequalities and contestations over authority (Anamzoya &

Gariba, 2022; Bukari et al., 2021; Issifu & Bukari, 2022). Economic pressures such as population growth and environmental change further strain traditional allocation systems, increasing the likelihood of conflict as resources become scarcer.

These dynamics highlight the dual role of cultural practices in Dagbon. While norms and rituals provide a framework for managing communal resources, they may also entrench inequalities when applied rigidly in changing economic contexts. Understanding how cultural practices shape resource allocation is therefore essential for explaining the emergence of intra-tribal conflict and for identifying pathways toward more inclusive and sustainable conflict management within the Dagbon community.

2.7 Cultural Practices and Intra-Tribal Conflict Resolution

Cultural practices in Dagbon do not only contribute to the emergence of intra-tribal conflict. They also provide the primary mechanisms through which such conflicts are managed and resolved. Traditional conflict resolution processes in Dagbon are embedded in customary norms and institutions that emphasize reconciliation, social harmony, and the restoration of relationships rather than punitive outcomes. These processes are widely regarded as legitimate because they are grounded in shared cultural values and collective history (Abdulai & Glikpoe, 2023).

2.7.1 Traditional Conflict Resolution Mechanisms

Traditional conflict resolution mechanisms in Dagbon are largely administered by chiefs, elders, and other respected community figures who are regarded as custodians of customary law and moral authority. These mechanisms are generally preferred to formal legal systems because they align more closely with local values, social expectations, and cultural norms (Aasoglenang, 2023). Their legitimacy derives not from statutory authority but from cultural acceptance and trust within the community.

Commonly employed mechanisms include mediation, arbitration, and negotiation. Mediation involves the facilitation of dialogue between disputing parties by a neutral and respected intermediary. Arbitration entails the hearing of grievances and evidence by traditional authorities, whose decisions are accepted as binding based on customary norms. Negotiation allows disputing parties to engage directly in dialogue to reach mutually acceptable compromises. These approaches are embedded in long-standing Dagbon traditions and are reinforced through the use of oral history, proverbs, and precedents drawn from past disputes (Abdulai & Glikpoe, 2023).

An important feature of these mechanisms is their inclusive and participatory nature. Disputes are often addressed in open forums where affected parties and community members can express grievances and contribute to the resolution process (Aasoglenang, 2023). The emphasis on reconciliation and consensus-building reflects a cultural preference for restoring social relationships and preventing the escalation or recurrence of conflict. By framing disputes within narratives of shared ancestry and kinship, traditional leaders encourage disputants to view conflicts as collective challenges rather than purely individual grievances.

Despite their strengths, traditional mechanisms face limitations in addressing contemporary conflicts. Rigid adherence to customary procedures may reduce flexibility when disputes involve external actors, statutory institutions, or complex legal issues. Conflicts related to land annexation, conservation policies, or resource commodification often extend beyond the scope of customary authority, creating tensions between traditional and formal legal systems (Aasoglenang, 2023). These challenges suggest the need for adaptive approaches that allow traditional mechanisms to complement, rather than compete with, formal dispute resolution structures.

2.7.2 Role of Elders and Community Leaders

Elders and community leaders occupy a central position in the resolution of intra-tribal conflicts in Dagbon. Their authority is rooted in their perceived wisdom, impartiality, and deep knowledge of cultural norms and traditions. Leadership within the Dagbon context extends beyond the exercise of power and entails a moral responsibility to preserve peace, social cohesion, and communal stability (Abdulai & Glikpoe, 2023).

Elders often employ pre-mediation strategies to manage conflicts, including private consultations with disputing parties before convening broader deliberations. This approach allows tensions to be diffused and helps establish trust and openness prior to formal mediation (Bukari et al., 2021). As custodians of oral tradition, elders draw on historical narratives and proverbs to contextualize disputes and guide deliberations. By situating conflicts within the collective memory of the community, they frame resolution as a shared responsibility rather than an imposed outcome (Anamzoya & Gariba, 2022).

However, generational differences in attitudes toward conflict resolution present emerging challenges. Younger members of the Dagbon community may perceive traditional mechanisms as slow or insufficiently responsive to modern socio-economic realities. This generational tension highlights the need to balance respect for cultural authority with the evolving expectations of younger populations. Adapting traditional leadership practices while preserving their cultural foundations may be essential for sustaining their relevance and effectiveness (Aasoglenang, 2023).

2.7.3 Ceremonial and Ritualistic Approaches to Conflict Resolution

Ceremonial and ritual practices form an integral component of conflict resolution in Dagbon. These practices serve symbolic and spiritual functions that mark the formal

end of disputes and restore moral and social balance within the community. Rituals such as libation pouring, gift exchanges, and communal meals are commonly used to signify reconciliation and renewed social bonds (Aasoglenang, 2023).

Cleansing rituals are particularly significant, as they are believed to remove spiritual contamination associated with conflict and to secure ancestral approval for peace agreements. Such practices reinforce the moral authority of settlements reached through mediation and arbitration and are intended to prevent the recurrence of disputes (Bukari et al., 2021). By reaffirming shared beliefs and values, ritual practices contribute to the reintegration of disputing parties into the social order.

Nevertheless, the effectiveness of ritual-based approaches has been questioned where symbolic reconciliation is not accompanied by structural change. Critics argue that rituals may fail to address underlying issues such as unequal access to resources, political manipulation, or social exclusion (Brake, 2017). Concerns have also been raised regarding inclusivity, particularly the limited participation of women and marginalized groups in ritual decision-making processes (Abdulai & Glikpoe, 2023).

Overall, cultural practices play a dual role in conflict resolution in Dagbon. While traditional mechanisms, leadership structures, and ritual practices provide culturally legitimate pathways for restoring peace, their effectiveness depends on their capacity to adapt to changing social conditions and to address the root causes of conflict. Understanding this balance is essential for assessing the role of cultural practices in sustaining long-term intra-tribal peace within the Dagbon community.

2.8 Empirical Studies on Cultural Practices and Conflict Resolution in Ghana

Empirical studies in Ghana demonstrate that cultural practices play a central role in shaping both the management and resolution of intra-tribal conflicts, particularly in

areas where traditional authority remains influential. Research consistently shows that conflicts linked to chieftaincy, land tenure, and customary governance are addressed primarily through culturally embedded mechanisms rather than formal judicial systems, especially in northern Ghana (Bukari & Schareika, 2015; Issifu & Bukari, 2022).

Studies on chieftaincy conflicts provide clear evidence of the role of cultural practices in conflict resolution. Mahama and Longi (2013), in their analysis of the Dagbon chieftaincy crisis, show that attempts to resolve the conflict through state-centric or legalistic approaches were largely ineffective when they failed to engage the customary norms governing succession and authority. Their findings indicate that durable de-escalation occurred only when resolution processes incorporated traditional authorities and culturally sanctioned procedures, including ritual reconciliation and reaffirmation of customary hierarchy. This underscores the importance of cultural legitimacy in resolving intra-tribal conflicts rooted in tradition.

Empirical research by Bukari and Schareika (2015) further demonstrates that traditional conflict resolution mechanisms in northern Ghana are widely perceived as legitimate because they are grounded in shared cultural values and collective identity. Their study shows that mediation by chiefs and elders, supported by customary norms and symbolic practices, often succeeds in restoring social relations even when disputes involve complex political or economic dimensions. However, they also note that the effectiveness of these mechanisms depends heavily on the perceived neutrality and moral authority of traditional leaders.

Land-related conflicts offer additional insight into the interaction between cultural practices and conflict resolution. Ubink (2008) shows that customary land disputes in

Ghana are frequently resolved through negotiations mediated by traditional authorities rather than through statutory courts. These processes rely on customary norms and oral history to determine legitimacy and entitlement. Issifu and Bukari (2022) extend this analysis by demonstrating that land disputes in northern Ghana often intersect with chieftaincy conflicts, thereby complicating resolution efforts. When chiefs are themselves parties to disputes or are perceived as biased, customary mechanisms may lose credibility, leading to prolonged conflict.

Empirical studies focusing specifically on Dagbon further highlight the role of cultural practices in post-conflict reconciliation. Anamzoya and Gariba (2022) show that reconciliation processes following chieftaincy disputes in Dagbon relied heavily on ritual practices, symbolic gestures, and the involvement of traditional authorities. These practices were critical in restoring social order and enabling coexistence between rival factions. At the same time, their findings indicate that symbolic reconciliation alone is insufficient where underlying political and resource-related grievances remain unresolved.

Aasoglenang (2023) provides empirical evidence on resource-related conflicts in northern Ghana, illustrating how customary conflict resolution mechanisms are challenged by contemporary pressures. The study shows that conflicts arising from land annexation and restricted access to natural resources were initially addressed through traditional mediation processes. However, the involvement of external actors and statutory institutions weakened the authority of customary mechanisms, resulting in protracted disputes. This highlights the limits of culturally grounded conflict resolution when conflicts extend beyond the immediate social and institutional boundaries of the community.

Overall, empirical studies in Ghana indicate that cultural practices play a dual role in intra-tribal conflict resolution. On one hand, traditional mechanisms rooted in cultural norms and symbolism are effective in restoring social harmony and legitimacy, particularly in chieftaincy-related disputes. On the other hand, their effectiveness is constrained when conflicts involve external institutions, legal pluralism, or persistent structural inequalities (Bukari & Schareika, 2015; Issifu & Bukari, 2022). These findings provide a strong empirical foundation for examining how cultural practices shape conflict resolution processes within the Dagbon community in Yendi Municipality.

2.9 Conceptual Framework for the Study

The framework is grounded in the assumption that cultural practices constitute the primary social mechanisms through which authority, resources, and social relations are regulated in traditional societies. In the Dagbon context, cultural practices such as chieftaincy succession norms, customary land tenure arrangements, and culturally defined resource allocation systems form the core explanatory variables. These practices shape access to power and resources and influence how legitimacy is constructed and contested within the community (Issifu & Bukari, 2022; Aasoglenang, 2023).

Within the framework (see Figure 1), cultural practices are conceptualized as the independent variables. They include chieftaincy succession rules, customary land ownership and inheritance practices, and ritual norms governing resource allocation. These practices influence the likelihood and nature of intra-tribal conflict, which constitutes the central phenomenon of interest. Intra-tribal conflict is manifested through disputes over traditional authority, land ownership, and access to communal resources. The literature indicates that such conflicts arise when cultural norms are

ambiguously defined, selectively applied, or challenged by changing social and economic conditions (Bukari et al., 2021; Anamzoya & Gariba, 2022).

The framework further recognizes conflict dynamics as an intervening process linking cultural practices to conflict outcomes. These dynamics include contestation over legitimacy, mobilization of factional support, and the symbolic interpretation of authority and entitlement. Drawing on symbolism theory, the framework acknowledges that cultural meanings attached to chieftaincy, rituals, and tradition influence how conflicts escalate or de-escalate within the Dagbon community (Mahama & Longi, 2013).

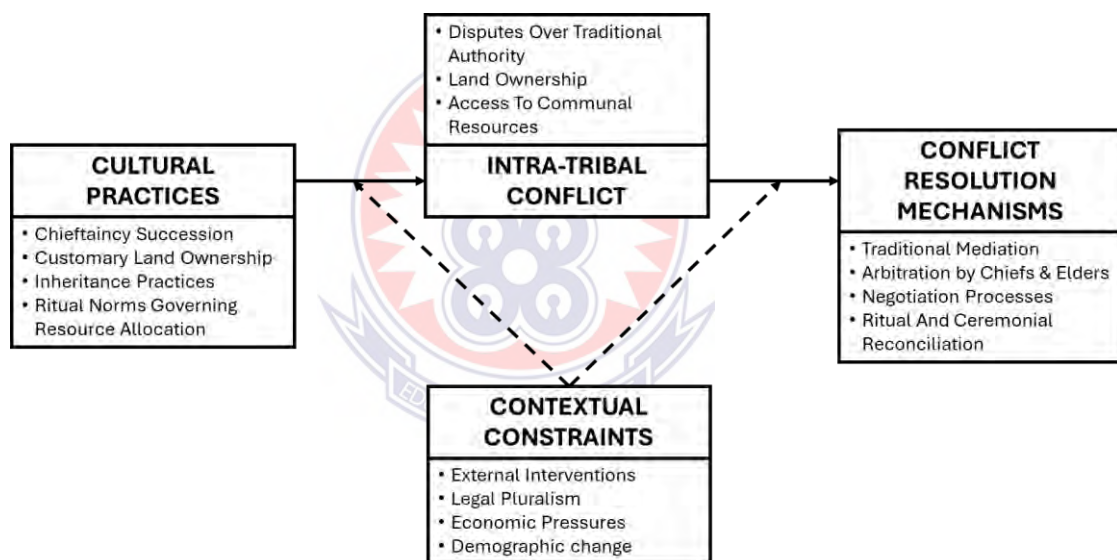


Figure 1. Conceptual framework for the study

Conflict resolution mechanisms constitute the dependent dimension of the framework. These mechanisms include traditional mediation, arbitration by chiefs and elders, negotiation processes, and ritual and ceremonial reconciliation practices. Empirical studies indicate that the effectiveness of these mechanisms depends on their cultural legitimacy, inclusivity, and the perceived neutrality of traditional authorities (Bukari & Schareika, 2015; Abdulai & Glikpoe, 2023). Where these conditions are met,

conflict resolution processes are more likely to restore social harmony and sustain peace.

The framework also incorporates contextual constraints that moderate the relationship between cultural practices and conflict resolution outcomes. These include external interventions, legal pluralism, economic pressures, and demographic change. The involvement of state institutions, conservation initiatives such as land annexation, and increasing resource scarcity may weaken the authority of customary institutions and complicate traditional conflict resolution processes (Aasoglenang, 2023).

In summary, the conceptual framework posits that cultural practices shape intra-tribal conflict through their regulation of authority, resources, and legitimacy, while also providing culturally grounded mechanisms for conflict resolution. The interaction between cultural practices, conflict dynamics, and contextual constraints determines whether conflicts are escalated, managed, or sustainably resolved within the Dagbon community. This framework guides the analysis of empirical data in subsequent chapters by clarifying the relationships among key variables examined in the study.

2.10 Conclusions

The literature review provided valuable perceptions into the complex relationship between cultural practices and intra-tribal conflicts within the Dagbon community in the Yendi Municipality of Northern Ghana. It is evident that cultural practices, such as chieftaincy succession and land ownership, have played a significant role in shaping the dynamics of conflicts within the community. The review highlighted how these cultural practices can create a sense of in-group and out-group identity, leading to the exclusion and oppression of certain groups. Additionally, cultural practices can contribute to conflicts by creating a sense of entitlement and ownership over resources, as well as a sense of loyalty and allegiance to certain groups.

The review also discussed the negative impacts that intra-tribal conflicts can have on the social, economic, and political development of communities such as the Dagbon community and the nation at large. Conflicts can lead to the displacement of people, the destruction of property, and the disruption of social and economic activities. Moreover, conflicts can undermine the authority of traditional leaders and weaken the social fabric of the community.

Despite the rich cultural heritage of the Dagomba people, the review highlighted the need to investigate the specifics of the role played by cultural practices in shaping intra-tribal conflicts within the community. By understanding how these cultural practices influence conflict dynamics, it is possible to develop more effective strategies for promoting social cohesion and stability within the Dagbon community and society at large.

The findings of this study will be significant for various stakeholders, including traditional authorities, community leaders, policymakers, government agencies, conflict resolution practitioners, researchers, local communities, and civil society organizations. By providing valuable insights into the role of cultural practices in shaping intra-tribal conflicts, the study can inform the development of more nuanced and culturally sensitive policies and interventions for conflict resolution and community development in Ghana.

In conclusion, this literature review laid the foundation for a comprehensive investigation into the influence of cultural practices on intra-tribal conflicts within the Dagbon community by examining the specific cultural practices that contribute to these conflicts and their impact on conflict resolution processes.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Overview

This chapter looks at the research methodology employed by the researcher in conducting this study. Specifically, this chapter explores the research design and approaches adopted for the study, the population studied for the research, the sample selected for the study and the sampling procedures used, instruments designed, and the methods used for collecting data for the study, and the analysis of the data collected.

3.1 Study Setting

The study was conducted in Yendi Municipality, located in the Northern Region of Ghana. Yendi Municipality is the traditional capital of the Dagbon Kingdom and serves as the seat of the Ya-Na, the paramount chief of Dagbon. The municipality occupies a central position within the Dagbon traditional area and is of significant cultural, political, and historical importance (Fuseini & Daniel, 2020; Owusu-Mensah, 2022).

Yendi Municipality is characterized by a strong presence of traditional institutions, particularly chieftaincy and customary land administration, which continue to play a central role in local governance and social organization. The chieftaincy institution in Yendi is highly influential, and disputes relating to succession, land ownership, and traditional authority have featured prominently in the area's recent history. These characteristics make the municipality an appropriate setting for examining the role of cultural practices in intra-tribal conflict and conflict resolution within the Dagbon community (Abdulai & Glikpoe, 2023).

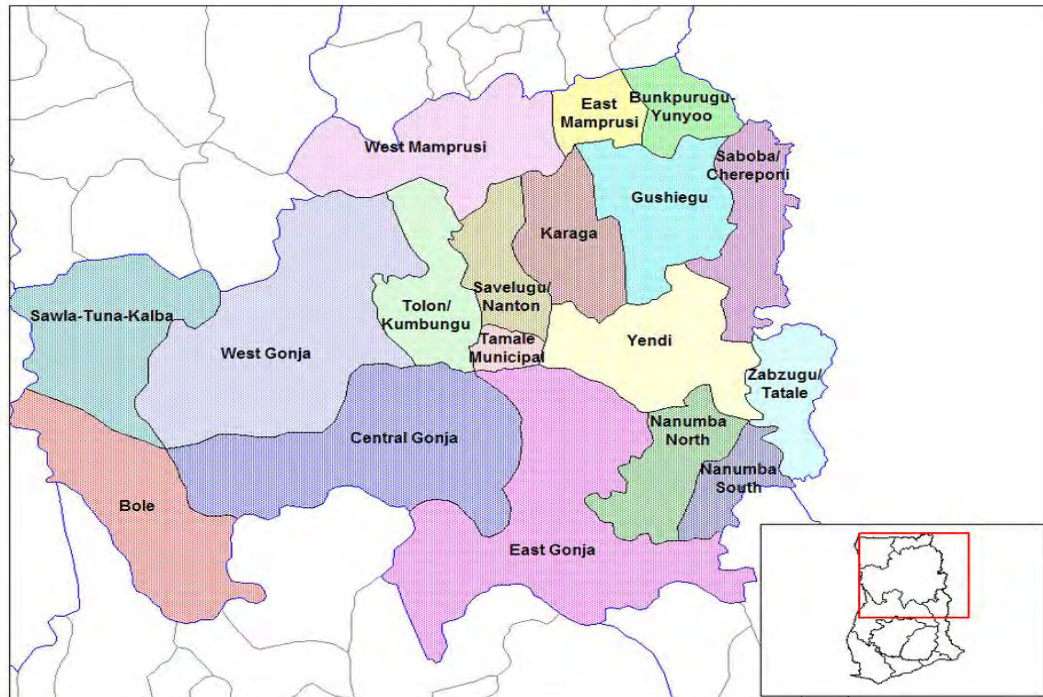


Figure 2. Map of the study area

The population of Yendi Municipality is predominantly Dagomba, although other ethnic groups are present. Livelihood activities within the municipality are largely agrarian, with the majority of residents engaged in subsistence agriculture, livestock rearing, and related economic activities. Agriculture remains central to social relations and land use patterns, reinforcing the importance of customary land tenure systems and traditional authority structures (Ghana Statistical Service, 2021; Fuseini & Daniel, 2020). Culturally, the Dagomba of Yendi Municipality are predominantly Muslim, reflecting the long historical influence of Islam in the area. At the same time, traditional beliefs and practices continue to shape social life, particularly in matters relating to chieftaincy, inheritance, land ownership, and conflict resolution. Festivals such as Damba and Bugum remain important expressions of cultural identity and communal cohesion (Fuseini & Daniel, 2020; Cohen-Khani, 2024).

The concentration of traditional authority, the persistence of culturally grounded governance structures, and the recurrence of intra-tribal conflicts related to chieftaincy and land make Yendi Municipality a suitable and relevant site for investigating how cultural practices shape intra-tribal conflict and conflict resolution within the Dagbon community.

3.2 Philosophical Worldview

A philosophical worldview in research holds the fundamental beliefs and assumptions that guide research studies and influence the choice of research methods and the overall design of a study (Creswell, 2017). The philosophical worldview that underpinned this study on cultural practices and intra-tribal conflict in the Yendi Municipality of Northern Ghana was pragmatism. This worldview is appropriate for a mixed-methods study as it focuses on the research problem and uses all available approaches to understand the problem and find solutions (Creswell & Clark, 2017, p. 27). The pragmatic worldview assumes that there are multiple realities and that the most important determinant of the research philosophy adopted is the research question (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010, p. 45). In this study, the research questions focused on understanding the cultural practices and intra-tribal conflicts among the people of Dagbon in Yendi Municipality. A pragmatic worldview allows the researcher to use both quantitative and qualitative methods to answer these questions and gain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon.

The pragmatic worldview also assumes that research always occurs in social, historical, political, and other contexts (Creswell & Clark, 2017, p. 28). In this study, the cultural practices and intra-tribal conflicts in the Dagbon community are situated within the broader context of Ghanaian society and culture. A pragmatic worldview allows the researcher to consider these contextual factors in the research process and

to develop practical solutions to the research problem. Furthermore, the pragmatic worldview assumes that knowledge is both constructed and based on the reality of the world we experience and live in (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010, p. 46). In this study, the knowledge gained from the research was based on the experiences and perceptions of the participants, as well as the objective data collected through surveys and questionnaires. A pragmatic worldview allowed me to integrate these different forms of knowledge to develop a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon.

To this end, the pragmatic worldview is an appropriate philosophical foundation for this mixed-methods study on cultural practices and intra-tribal conflict in the Dagbon community in the Yendi Municipality of Northern Ghana as it allows the researcher to use multiple approaches to answer the research questions, consider the contextual factors that shape the phenomenon, and develop practical solutions to the research problem.

3.3 Research Approach

The research approach of a study refers to the philosophical foundation that guides the overall direction of a research study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). There are several research approaches commonly used in social science research, each with its own underlying assumptions and implications for the research process. The quantitative approach, which is rooted in the positivist paradigm and assumes that reality is objective and can be measured and studied using scientific methods (Bryman, 2016), typically involves the collection and analysis of numerical data to test hypotheses and establish causal relationships. On the other hand, the qualitative approach, which is based on the interpretivist paradigm and emphasizes the subjective nature of reality and the importance of understanding the meanings and experiences of research participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) usually involves the collection and analysis of

non-numerical data, such as interviews, observations, and textual materials, to explore complex phenomena in depth.

The mixed methods approach was adopted for this study, combining elements of both quantitative and qualitative research (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). This approach recognizes that both numerical and non-numerical data can provide valuable insights, and integrating the two can lead to a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem.

This approach was considered appropriate for this study because it allows for the triangulation of data, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the cultural practices and intra-tribal conflicts in the Dagbon community (Creswell & Clark, 2017). Quantitative data can help identify the prevalence and patterns of the phenomenon, while qualitative data can provide insights into the underlying causes, perceptions, and experiences of the community members. The mixed methods approach also allowed me to address the research questions from multiple perspectives, leading to a more robust and nuanced understanding of the cultural practices and intra-tribal conflicts in the Dagbon community (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). By integrating both quantitative and qualitative data, the researcher can develop a more holistic understanding of the phenomenon and generate practical solutions to address the identified issues.

3.4 Research Design

Research design in research refers to the plan that integrates quantitative and/or qualitative data collection and analysis methods to address a research problem (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). There are several types of research designs commonly used in mixed methods research, each with their unique characteristics and applications.

The explanatory sequential design was selected for this study on cultural practices and intra-tribal conflict in the Dagbon community in the Yendi Municipality of Northern Ghana. This design is well-suited for situations where the goal is to explain and interpret quantitative results using qualitative data (Toyon, 2021). In the context of this study, starting with quantitative data collection to quantify participants' perceptions of cultural practices and their effects on conflicts, followed by qualitative data collection to delve deeper into the underlying reasons and interpretations of these quantitative findings, aligns well with the complexity of the research problem. The Explanatory Sequential Design will, therefore, allow for a more comprehensive understanding of the role of cultural practices in intra-tribal conflicts in the Dagbon community.

3.5 Research Population

In research, the population refers to the total set of individuals who possess the characteristics relevant to a particular study and from whom a sample is drawn (Bryman, 2016). The definition of the research population must be clearly bound by geographic, social, and contextual criteria in order to ensure methodological coherence and avoid unwarranted generalization.

The population for this study comprised adult members of the Dagbon community residing within Yendi Municipality in the Northern Region of Ghana. This included traditional authorities such as chiefs and elders, opinion leaders, and community members with lived experience or knowledge of intra-tribal conflicts and conflict resolution processes within the municipality. The population was therefore defined both geographically, by residence within Yendi Municipality, and culturally, by affiliation with the Dagbon traditional area.

This population was considered appropriate because Yendi Municipality is the traditional seat of Dagbon and has experienced recurrent intra-tribal conflicts related to chieftaincy, land ownership, and customary authority. Members of the population were therefore well positioned to provide relevant information on cultural practices and conflict dynamics within the study context.

3.6 Sample and Sampling Technique

A sample refers to a subset of a defined population selected for participation in a research study in order to generate data relevant to the study objectives (Babbie, 2010). In mixed-methods research, sampling techniques are often combined to address different analytical purposes, such as obtaining in-depth qualitative insights and generating quantitative data from a broader segment of the study population.

The study employed a mixed sampling approach involving purposive sampling and simple random sampling techniques. This approach was considered appropriate given the study's focus on both culturally grounded perspectives and broader community-level experiences of intra-tribal conflict within Yendi Municipality. Purposive sampling was used to select key informants for the qualitative component of the study. A total of 20 participants, comprising chiefs, elders, and opinion leaders, were selected based on their roles in traditional governance, conflict mediation, and community leadership. These individuals were selected because of their direct involvement in or knowledge of cultural practices and intra-tribal conflict resolution processes within the Dagbon community in Yendi. Purposive sampling is appropriate in qualitative research where the objective is to obtain detailed, contextual information from individuals with specialized knowledge or experience (Etikan et al., 2016; Palinkas et al., 2015). For the quantitative component of the study, community members were selected using a simple random sampling technique. A total of 364

respondents were drawn from selected communities within the Yendi Municipality to capture various perspectives on cultural practices and intra-tribal conflict. Random sampling was used at the community level to ensure that eligible adult residents had an equal chance of selection within the defined study area. This approach supported the collection of quantitative data suitable for descriptive and inferential analysis within the municipality (Babbie, 2010).

The overall sample size for the study was 384 respondents, comprising both key informants and community members. The sample size was determined based on practical considerations related to field accessibility and the need to obtain sufficient responses for meaningful statistical analysis within the study context. Purposive and random sampling techniques were employed to generate rich qualitative data from key actors while also capturing broader patterns of perception and experience among community members. This sampling strategy ensured alignment between the research objectives, the mixed-methods design, and the defined study population.

3.7 Research Instruments

Data is material gathered in the progression of a study. According to Abdulai and Owusu-Ansah (2014), there are two main data types collected for the purposes of research. These are primary and secondary data. This study uses both primary data, which is information collected directly from participants during a research study such as data from surveys, interviews and observation, and secondary data, which is data that is obtained from existing data collections such as data gathered from publications such as books, articles and internet sources; as well as repositories of data such as learning management system logs or any form of database containing data (Abdulai & Owusu-Ansah, 2014).

This study employs a mixed methods approach, utilizing both quantitative and qualitative research instruments to gather comprehensive data. Specifically, a structured questionnaire and an interview guide are the primary tools used for data collection. These instruments were chosen to provide a balanced view of the research problem, combining the breadth of quantitative data with the depth of qualitative insights.

3.7.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaire is a structured instrument designed to collect quantitative data from a large number of respondents from the Dagbon community in the Yendi Municipality. It comprised closed-ended questions aimed at capturing specific information about participants' experiences, perceptions, and attitudes towards cultural practices and intra-tribal conflicts. The use of a questionnaire is justified by its ability to gather standardized data that can be easily analyzed statistically, enabling the researcher to identify patterns and relationships among variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Questionnaires are particularly useful in research for their efficiency in reaching a wide audience, their ability to ensure anonymity, and their facilitation of straightforward data analysis. They allow for the collection of data from a diverse demographic, enhancing the generalizability of the findings within the target population. Moreover, the structured nature of questionnaires helps in maintaining consistency across responses, which is crucial for comparative analysis (Bryman, 2016).

3.7.2 Interview guide

In addition to the questionnaire, an interview guide was used to collect qualitative data through in-depth interviews with selected participants. The interview guide includes open-ended questions designed to explore participants' detailed experiences

and insights into the cultural practices and conflicts within the Dagbon community in the Yendi Municipality. This qualitative instrument is essential for capturing the complexity and richness of the issues under study, allowing for a deeper understanding of the contextual factors influencing intra-tribal conflicts (Patton, 2015). Interviews provide flexibility for the researcher to probe deeper into responses, clarifying and expanding on initial answers. This is particularly valuable in exploratory research where the aim is to uncover underlying motivations, beliefs, and attitudes that are not easily quantified. The interview guide facilitates a semi-structured format, ensuring that all relevant topics are covered while allowing for natural flow and spontaneity in participants' responses (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

The combination of a questionnaire and an interview guide in a mixed methods design is justified by the complementary strengths of both instruments. While the questionnaire provides quantitative data that can be used to identify trends and generalize findings to the larger population, the interview guide offers qualitative insights that add depth and context to the quantitative results. This triangulation enhances the validity and reliability of the research findings by addressing the research problem from multiple perspectives (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

3.8 Data Collection Procedure

The data collection for this study involved a systematic approach to gather comprehensive information using both quantitative and qualitative research instruments. The two primary instruments employed were a structured questionnaire and an interview guide. These tools facilitated the collection of both broad quantitative data and in-depth qualitative insights. The data collection procedure began with the administration of the structured questionnaire. The researcher first conducted a pilot test to ensure the reliability and validity of the questionnaire.

Feedback from the pilot test was used to refine the questions, ensuring clarity and relevance. Following this, the final version of the questionnaire was distributed to a purposive sample of participants from the Dagbon community. Participants were selected based on their knowledge and involvement in cultural practices and intra-tribal conflicts, ensuring that the data collected was rich in relevant information.

Questionnaires were administered both in person and electronically, depending on the accessibility and preference of the respondents. In-person administration allowed the researcher to provide immediate clarification on any ambiguous questions, thereby improving the quality of responses. For electronic distribution, an online survey platform was used, enabling broader reach and convenience for participants who were geographically dispersed. Respondents were given a specified period to complete and return the questionnaires, ensuring that ample time was provided for thoughtful responses. Upon completion of the questionnaire phase, the researcher proceeded with the qualitative data collection using the interview guide. In-depth interviews were conducted with a subset of the questionnaire respondents who were identified as key informants. These individuals were selected based on their extensive knowledge and experience related to the research topic. The interviews were scheduled at times and locations convenient for the participants to ensure their comfort and willingness to engage.

Each interview followed a semi-structured format, guided by the interview guide but allowing for flexibility to explore emerging topics and insights. Interviews were conducted face-to-face whenever possible, providing an opportunity to observe non-verbal cues and build rapport with the participants. In cases where face-to-face interviews were not feasible, telephone or video conferencing tools were used to conduct the interviews. All interviews were audio-recorded with the participants'

consent, ensuring an accurate and complete record of the conversations. The recorded interviews were then transcribed verbatim, and the transcripts were reviewed and verified for accuracy. The researcher maintained a reflective journal throughout the data collection process, noting any observations, thoughts, and potential biases. This practice ensured that the data collection remained rigorous and transparent, enhancing the credibility of the findings.

3.9 Data Analysis

The data analysis for this study involved a systematic approach to handle both quantitative and qualitative data collected through the structured questionnaire and the interview guide. This approach ensured that the findings were comprehensive and provided a deep understanding of the research problem.

3.9.1 Quantitative data analysis

The quantitative data collected from the structured questionnaires were analyzed using statistical software, specifically the IBM SPSS version 20. Initially, the data were entered into the software and checked for accuracy and completeness. Descriptive statistics, such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were calculated to summarize the demographic characteristics of the respondents and their responses to key questions. This step provided a clear overview of the data distribution and highlighted any patterns or trends.

The results from the quantitative analysis were presented in tables and charts, which provided a visual representation of the data and facilitated easier interpretation of the findings. This method ensured that complex data were effectively communicated and understood, supporting the overall conclusions of the study (Pallant, 2020).

3.9.2 Qualitative data analysis

The qualitative data from the interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis. The first step involved transcribing the audio-recorded interviews verbatim to create detailed and accurate transcripts. These transcripts were then reviewed for accuracy and completeness, ensuring that they faithfully represented the participants' responses.

The researcher employed an iterative process to code the data, identifying key themes and patterns that emerged from the participants' narratives. Open coding was used initially to break down the data into meaningful segments, followed by axial coding to organize these segments into broader categories based on their relationships and connections (Naeem et al., 2023).

Themes were identified by examining recurring ideas, phrases, and concepts that provided insights into the cultural practices and intra-tribal conflicts within the Dagbon community. The thematic analysis allowed for the exploration of nuanced and complex issues, revealing the deeper meanings and contexts behind the participants' experiences and perceptions (Caulfield, 2023).

To enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the qualitative analysis, member checking was conducted. This involved sharing the preliminary findings with a few participants to verify the accuracy and authenticity of the interpretations. Their feedback helped to refine the themes and ensure that the analysis accurately reflected their views.

The final themes were organized into a coherent narrative, highlighting the key findings and their implications for understanding intra-tribal conflicts in the Dagbon

community. Direct quotes from the participants were used to illustrate the themes and provide a rich, contextualized understanding of the data.

The integration of quantitative and qualitative data was achieved through a triangulation approach, which involved comparing and contrasting the findings from both data sets. This mixed methods analysis provided a more comprehensive and robust understanding of the research problem, allowing for the validation and corroboration of results (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

The combined analysis highlighted how the quantitative trends and patterns aligned with the qualitative insights, offering a holistic view of the cultural practices and intra-tribal conflicts within the Dagbon community. This integration enriched the overall findings and provided a deeper understanding of the complexities involved.

3.10 Trustworthiness of Data

Ensuring the trustworthiness of data is crucial for the credibility and reliability of research findings. In this study, several strategies were employed to enhance the trustworthiness of both quantitative and qualitative data.

For the quantitative component, ensuring the reliability and validity of the questionnaire was paramount. Reliability, referring to the consistency of the measurement, was assessed through a multi-step process. First, a pilot test was conducted involving 30 respondents from the Dagbon community, who were similar to the main study participants. Their feedback was used to refine the questionnaire items, ensuring clarity and relevance. This initial step helped identify any ambiguous or confusing questions that needed revision. Second, internal consistency was measured using Cronbach's Alpha. The overall Cronbach's Alpha for the scale was 0.69, indicating a high level of reliability (Field, 2018). This value was very close to

the acceptable threshold of 0.70, confirming that the questionnaire items were relatively consistent in measuring the intended constructs.

Validity, which refers to the accuracy of the measurement, was ensured through content and construct validation processes. For content validity, subject matter experts, including the researcher's supervisor and two other academic experts in the field, reviewed the questionnaire. They evaluated whether the items adequately covered the research objectives and were representative of the constructs being measured. Suggestions from these experts were incorporated to enhance the comprehensiveness of the questionnaire. Then, construct validity was assessed using factor analysis. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted to determine the underlying structure of the data and to ensure that the questionnaire items clustered into coherent factors representing different dimensions of the construct. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was 0.72, and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant ($p < 0.001$), indicating that the data were suitable for factor analysis (Bryman, 2016). Through these rigorous steps, the reliability and validity of the quantitative data were meticulously ensured, leading to robust and credible research findings.

For the qualitative data, trustworthiness was ensured through credibility, transferability, and dependability. Credibility was enhanced by employing member checking, where preliminary findings were shared with a few participants to verify the accuracy and authenticity of the interpretations. Triangulation was also used, comparing data from different sources and methods to ensure consistency and robustness of the findings (Bans-Akutey & Tiimub, 2021). Transferability, the extent to which the findings can be applied to other contexts, was addressed by providing detailed descriptions of the research setting, participants, and processes. This detailed

contextual information allows other researchers to determine the applicability of the findings to their own contexts (Ahmed, 2024). Dependability was ensured by maintaining a detailed audit trail, documenting all research decisions, processes, and methodological changes. This transparency allows others to follow the research steps and assess the study's consistency and repeatability (Bans-Akutey & Tiimub, 2021).

3.11 Ethical Issues

Ethical considerations are fundamental to conducting research, particularly when involving human participants. This study adhered to strict ethical guidelines to ensure the protection and respect of participants.

Informed consent was a primary ethical concern. Participants were fully informed about the purpose of the study, the procedures involved, their rights as participants, and any potential risks or benefits. They were provided with an information sheet and a consent form, which they signed voluntarily before participating in the study. This process ensured that participation was entirely voluntary and based on an informed understanding of the research (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Maintaining confidentiality and anonymity of participants was another critical ethical issue. Personal identifiers were removed from the data, and unique codes were used instead to protect participants' identities. All data were securely stored, with access restricted to the researcher. Participants were assured that their responses would be used solely for research purposes and that their anonymity would be preserved in any publications or presentations resulting from the study (Patton, 2015).

The study took measures to minimize any potential harm or discomfort to participants. The interview questions were designed to be respectful and sensitive to cultural norms and values. Participants were informed that they could withdraw from

the study at any time without any consequences. Additionally, the researcher was prepared to provide support or referrals to appropriate services if participation in the study caused any distress. Prior to data collection, ethical approval was obtained from the University of Education, Winneba. The study was reviewed to ensure that it complied with ethical standards and guidelines for research involving human subjects. This approval process ensured that all ethical considerations were addressed and adhered to throughout the research (Resnik, 2018).



CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Overview

This chapter presents the findings from the research conducted on the influence of cultural practices on intra-tribal conflict within the Dagbon community in the Yendi Municipality of Northern Ghana. The data was collected through a structured questionnaire and an interview guide, which facilitated a comprehensive exploration of the key themes related to the research questions. The study included a sample size of 384 participants, comprising 20 chiefs and opinion leaders selected purposively, and 364 community members chosen through random sampling. This diverse sampling approach enables a nuanced understanding of the perspectives across different strata of the Dagbon community.

The questionnaire utilized for this study comprised four distinct sections:

1. **Demographic Data:** This section collected essential demographic information from respondents, including their positions within the community, gender, age group, educational qualifications, and years of experience in relevant roles.
2. **Perceptions of Cultural Practices:** The second section explored the perceptions of community members regarding specific cultural practices and their associations with conflict dynamics in Dagbon.
3. **Influence of Cultural Practices on Intra-Tribal Conflicts:** This section looked at how cultural practices influence intra-tribal conflicts in the Dagbon community.

4. Impact of Cultural Practices on Conflict Resolution: The final section examined how cultural practices influence conflict resolution mechanisms employed within the community.

4.1 Socio-Demographic Characteristics

This section provides an overview of the results from the section used to collect data on the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants involved in the study on cultural practices and intra-tribal conflict within the Dagbon community in the Yendi Municipality of Northern Ghana. The results are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of respondents (N = 384)

Variable	Sub-scale	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	180	46.9
	Female	204	53.1
Age Range	18-24	90	23.4
	25-34	150	39.1
	35-44	80	20.8
	45 and above	64	16.7
Educational Level	Primary	30	7.8
	Secondary	130	33.9
	Tertiary	224	58.3
Community Role	Chief/Opinion Leader	20	5.2
	Community Member	364	94.8
Total		384	100.0

Source: Field work (2024)

Among the respondents, females constituted a slightly higher proportion (53.1%) compared to males (46.9%). This gender distribution may influence perspectives on cultural practices and conflict resolution strategies within the Dagbon community, as women often play critical roles in maintaining social cohesion and cultural traditions (Ibrahim et al., 2022). The age distribution indicates a diverse range of participants, with the largest group falling within the age range of 25-34 years (39.1%). This demographic is likely to be actively engaged in community affairs and may have varying experiences with cultural practices that contribute to intra-tribal conflicts. Notably, younger individuals (18-24 years) represented 23.4%, suggesting an opportunity to incorporate fresh perspectives into discussions about cultural practices and conflict dynamics.

The educational background of participants varied significantly, with a notable majority (58.3%) having attained tertiary education. This high level of education may enhance respondents' ability to articulate their views on cultural practices and conflicts, aligning with findings from other studies that indicate educated individuals are more likely to engage critically with community issues (Osei & Agyeman, 2023). The study included a small but significant number of chiefs and opinion leaders (5.2%), providing insights from traditional authority figures who are pivotal in conflict resolution processes within the Dagbon community to add context and understanding to the findings made from the quantitative aspect of the data analysis. The majority of participants identified as general community members (94.8%), allowing for a broad representation of views regarding cultural practices and their impact on intra-tribal conflicts.

From the results, the socio-demographic characteristics outlined above provide a foundational understanding of the participants involved in this study, setting the stage

for deeper analysis of how these factors may influence perceptions of cultural practices and their relationship with intra-tribal conflicts within the Dagbon community. The following sections will further explore these dynamics through qualitative insights gathered from the questionnaire responses.

4.2 RQ1: Perspectives on Cultural Practices and Conflicts in Dagbon

Research Question One examined the cultural practices that are associated with intra-tribal conflict within the Dagbon community in Yendi Municipality. To address this question, respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with statements relating to key cultural practices and conflict dynamics.

Table 2: Respondents' perspectives on cultural practices and conflicts in Dagbon

	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	St. Dev
Disputes over chieftaincy succession are a common source of conflict in my community	113	86	26	14	3.24	0.87
Traditional land ownership practices often lead to disagreements among community members	82	82	55	22	2.93	0.96
Cultural rituals and ceremonies can sometimes create divisions among different factions	94	127	17	2	3.3	0.64
Inheritance practices based on cultural norms contribute to conflicts within families	127	98	9	6	3.45	0.68
The interpretation of cultural norms varies among community members, leading to misunderstandings	57	43	75	65	2.38	1.12
Conflicts arising from resource allocation are influenced by cultural practices in my community	135	92	7	6	3.48	0.68
The role of women in cultural practices sometimes leads to tensions regarding decision-making	24	19	123	74	1.97	0.89
Cultural celebrations can exacerbate existing tensions between different groups in the community	59	122	57	2	2.99	0.71

Source: Fieldwork (2024)

As seen in Table 2, disputes over chieftaincy succession were widely recognized as a common source of conflict, as reflected in the mean score of 3.24 and a standard deviation of 0.87. This indicates a high level of agreement among respondents that succession practices constitute a major source of intra-tribal tension. Qualitative interview data reinforces this perception. One chief explained that chieftaincy succession is deeply tied to communal identity and legitimacy, noting that “when disputes develop over who should ascend to the throne, it feels as if the foundation of our culture is being challenged, and this often leads to divisions that tear families and clans apart” (Chief interview, 2024). This perception is consistent with the documented Dagbon chieftaincy crisis of 2002 in Yendi, which culminated in the killing of Ya Naa Yakubu Andani II following prolonged contestation between the Abudu and Andani gates. Scholarly analyses of this crisis show that competing interpretations of customary succession rules and symbolic authority were central to the escalation of violence, rather than mere personal rivalries (Anamzoya & Gariba, 2022; Bukari et al., 2021; Mahama & Longi, 2013). The survey results therefore reflect not abstract opinions but collective memory of a historically grounded conflict shaped by cultural institutions.

Traditional land ownership and inheritance practices were also identified as important conflict-associated practices. Respondents moderately agreed that traditional land ownership practices often lead to disagreements, while inheritance practices based on cultural norms recorded a higher mean score of 3.45, indicating strong agreement that they contribute to conflicts within families. Interview responses suggest that land and inheritance are perceived as extensions of lineage identity and entitlement. One opinion leader observed that “land in Dagbon is not only an economic resource but a symbol of heritage and belonging, and when claims based on lineage are challenged,

tensions quickly arise” (Opinion leader interview, 2024). These findings are consistent with empirical studies showing that communal land tenure and patrilineal inheritance systems in Dagbon frequently generate disputes when access, control, and entitlement are contested (Aasoglenang et al., 2024). Bukari et al. (2021) further demonstrate that such disputes often extend beyond households to involve chiefs and elders, thereby linking land conflicts to broader struggles over authority and legitimacy. The findings therefore indicate that land and inheritance practices operate as culturally structured mechanisms through which conflict emerges and persists.

Cultural rituals and ceremonies were also strongly associated with conflict, with a mean score of 3.30 and a relatively low standard deviation of 0.64, suggesting consensus among respondents. While rituals are central to Dagbon identity, respondents recognized their potential to create divisions, particularly when participation or symbolic recognition is perceived as unequal. This perception aligns with documented post-2002 tensions in Dagbon, where disputes over the performance of funerary rites for deceased Ya Naas became sources of renewed conflict and delayed reconciliation efforts. The literature shows that ritual performance in Dagbon is not merely ceremonial but constitutes a public affirmation of legitimacy and hierarchy, making rituals highly sensitive in periods of political contestation (Anamzoya & Gariba, 2022; Mahama & Longi, 2013). Respondents’ views therefore reflect an awareness that rituals can function both as instruments of cohesion and as arenas of factional competition.

Conflicts arising from resource allocation were strongly endorsed as culturally influenced, recording a mean score of 3.48 and a standard deviation of 0.68. This indicates that respondents perceive access to resources as being governed by cultural norms and traditional authority structures. In Dagbon, chiefs and lineage heads play

key roles in regulating access to land and other resources, and allocation decisions are often interpreted through the lens of cultural entitlement. Empirical work by Aasoglenang et al. (2024) demonstrates how conflicts in northern Ghana are shaped by culturally mediated access and authority arrangements, particularly where resources become scarce or politically salient. The survey results suggest that respondents recognize these culturally embedded allocation systems as significant contributors to intra-tribal conflict.

Two items recorded comparatively lower endorsement and greater variability. The statement regarding differing interpretations of cultural norms recorded a mean score of 2.38 and a high standard deviation of 1.12, indicating divergent experiences among respondents. This suggests that while some individuals perceive interpretive differences as a source of misunderstanding, others do not encounter such conflicts directly. This variation likely reflects differences in proximity to chieftaincy, lineage leadership, and ritual responsibilities, which shape exposure to interpretive disputes. Similarly, the item concerning women's roles recorded a low mean score of 1.97, suggesting that respondents do not generally perceive women's involvement in cultural practices as a major driver of conflict. This finding is consistent with the male-dominated structure of formal chieftaincy institutions in Dagbon, where women's contributions to peacebuilding tend to occur informally and are often overlooked in public conflict narratives (Doke, 2021).

Overall, the findings demonstrate that intra-tribal conflict in the Dagbon community of Yendi Municipality is closely associated with culturally embedded practices that structure authority, entitlement, and identity. Chieftaincy succession, land and inheritance norms, ritual practices, and culturally mediated resource allocation are not peripheral traditions but central institutions through which conflict is produced and

experienced. The alignment between respondents' perceptions, interview accounts, and documented conflict episodes in Dagbon underscores the empirical validity of these findings and establishes a strong foundation for examining, in subsequent sections, how these practices influence conflict dynamics and shape conflict resolution outcomes.

4.3 RQ2: Influence of Cultural Practices on Dagbon Intra-Tribal Conflicts

To address the second objective of this study, participants were asked to respond to various statements regarding how these practices impact conflict dynamics. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Respondents' views on influence of cultural practices on Dagbon intra-tribal conflict

	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	St. Dev
Cultural practices often lead to misunderstandings between different factions in my community	98	125	14	3	3.33	0.64
The way cultural norms are interpreted can create divisions among community members	92	82	45	22	3.02	0.96
Conflicts over resource allocation are influenced by cultural practices and beliefs	59	122	57	2	2.99	0.71
Cultural practices dictate how conflicts are resolved in my community	135	92	7	6	3.48	0.68
The emphasis on traditional roles in cultural practices can lead to power struggles within families or clans	88	119	18	14	3.16	0.82
Cultural celebrations can sometimes heighten existing tensions among different groups	127	98	9	6	3.45	0.68
The interpretation of cultural practices varies significantly among indigenes, leading to conflicts	24	19	123	74	1.97	0.89
Cultural values surrounding loyalty and allegiance can exacerbate conflicts between factions	101	122	17	0	3.35	0.61

Source: Fieldwork (2024)

A strong majority of respondents agreed that cultural practices often lead to misunderstandings between different factions in the community, as reflected in a mean score of 3.33 and a standard deviation of 0.64. This finding suggests that conflict dynamics in Dagbon are frequently driven by interpretive disagreements rather than by material grievances alone. Interview evidence illustrates this mechanism clearly. One chief explained that “when different gates or families interpret our traditions in ways that favour their own position, communication breaks down and suspicion grows, and this is usually how conflicts begin to escalate” (Chief interview, 2024). This observation aligns closely with the literature on Dagbon conflicts, particularly analyses of the 2002 chieftaincy crisis in Yendi, which show that rival factions mobilized competing interpretations of customary succession rules to legitimize their claims and discredit opponents (Anamzoya & Gariba, 2022; Mahama & Longi, 2013). In this context, cultural practices influenced conflict dynamics by providing symbolic resources that intensified factional rivalry.

Closely related to this, respondents agreed that the interpretation of cultural norms can create divisions among community members, with a mean score of 3.02 and a standard deviation of 0.96. This result reflects variability in how individuals experience the consequences of cultural interpretation, but it nonetheless confirms that selective or strategic interpretation of norms is a significant driver of division. An opinion leader noted that “our customs are sometimes used to justify exclusion, especially when powerful families interpret them in ways that serve their interests, leaving others feeling marginalized” (Opinion leader interview, 2024). Empirical studies support this dynamic. Ratner et al. (2017) argue that cultural norms often function as boundary-making tools, producing in-group and out-group identities that deepen conflict. In Dagbon, Aasoglenang et al. (2024) show that disputes over

authority and entitlement frequently arise when actors invoke culture selectively to support competing claims, thereby intensifying conflict trajectories.

The influence of cultural practices on conflict dynamics is further evident in disputes over resource allocation. Respondents moderately agreed that conflicts over resources are shaped by cultural practices and beliefs, with a mean score of 2.99 and a standard deviation of 0.71. Although economic scarcity plays a role, respondents recognized that access to resources in Dagbon is governed by culturally sanctioned authority structures. This finding is consistent with access-based analyses of conflict in northern Ghana, which demonstrate that disputes escalate when culturally legitimized allocation decisions are perceived as unjust or exclusionary (Aasoglenang et al., 2024). In Dagbon, land and resource allocation disputes often become intertwined with chieftaincy authority, thereby transforming material disagreements into culturally charged conflicts that are harder to resolve.

Respondents strongly agreed that cultural practices dictate how conflicts are handled within the community, as indicated by a mean score of 3.48 and a standard deviation of 0.68. This suggests that once conflicts emerge, their trajectory is shaped by culturally defined expectations regarding appropriate responses. Interview data illustrate this influence. One respondent stated that “once a conflict starts, everyone knows it must go through elders and chiefs, and that process itself shapes how long the conflict lasts and whether tempers cool or rise” (Community member interview, 2024). This finding is supported by Bukari et al. (2021), who argue that culturally embedded conflict management institutions in Dagbon influence escalation and de-escalation by controlling access to dialogue and mediation. During the prolonged Dagbon chieftaincy dispute following the 2002 crisis, the absence of an agreed

culturally legitimate resolution mechanism contributed to sustained tension and intermittent violence, demonstrating how cultural frameworks shape conflict trajectories (Mahama & Longi, 2013).

The emphasis on traditional roles within cultural practices was also perceived as contributing to power struggles within families and clans, with a mean score of 3.16 and a standard deviation of 0.82. This finding suggests that culturally defined hierarchies influence conflict dynamics by structuring authority and entitlement. In Dagbon society, seniority, lineage, and gender roles shape who may speak, decide, or mediate, and these structures can intensify conflict when authority is contested. An opinion leader observed that “many conflicts worsen because people feel disrespected when traditional roles are challenged or ignored, and that disrespect quickly turns into confrontation” (Opinion leader interview, 2024). This perception aligns with Geertz’s (1973) argument that cultural systems organize social relations and meaning, and that disruptions to these systems can generate instability and conflict.

Cultural celebrations were perceived as capable of heightening existing tensions, recording a mean score of 3.45 and a standard deviation of 0.68. Respondents recognized that festivals and ceremonies, while intended to reinforce unity, can become flashpoints when participation or recognition is contested. This finding corresponds with documented Dagbon experiences following the 2002 crisis, where disagreements over ritual performance and festival participation became symbolic extensions of chieftaincy rivalry and delayed reconciliation efforts (Anamzoya & Gariba, 2022; Mahama & Longi, 2013). Cultural practices thus influence conflict dynamics by providing public arenas in which latent tensions are expressed and amplified.

In contrast, the statement that variation in interpretation of cultural practices significantly leads to conflict recorded a lower mean score of 1.97 and a standard deviation of 0.89, indicating disagreement among respondents. This suggests that not all community members experience interpretive variation as a frequent source of conflict. This divergence likely reflects differences in social position and exposure to traditional authority structures. Individuals less involved in chieftaincy, land administration, or ritual leadership may perceive cultural interpretation as less contentious than those directly engaged in these domains. Rather than weakening the findings, this variation highlights the uneven distribution of cultural power and conflict exposure within the community.

Finally, respondents strongly agreed that cultural values surrounding loyalty and allegiance exacerbate conflicts between factions, as shown by a mean score of 3.35 and a standard deviation of 0.61. This finding captures a central dynamic in Dagbon conflicts, where allegiance to lineage, gate, or faction often overrides broader communal considerations. Interview evidence supports this interpretation. One chief remarked that “once loyalty is declared to a gate or family, it becomes difficult for people to compromise, even when peace is in everyone’s interest” (Chief interview, 2024). The literature confirms that factional loyalty in Dagbon has historically prolonged disputes by hardening positions and limiting willingness to negotiate (Bukari et al., 2021; Anamzoya & Gariba, 2022).

Taken together, the findings demonstrate that cultural practices influence intra-tribal conflict in Dagbon by shaping interpretive frameworks, legitimizing claims, structuring authority, and intensifying factional allegiance. Cultural norms do not merely accompany conflict but actively shape its dynamics, determining how disputes

are framed, how they escalate, and how long they persist. The convergence between respondents' perceptions, interview accounts, and documented Dagbon conflict experiences provides strong empirical support for the conclusion that cultural practices play a decisive role in influencing intra-tribal conflict dynamics in Yendi Municipality.

4.4 RQ3: Impact of Cultural Practices on Conflict Resolution in Dagbon

Research Question Three examined the impact of cultural practices on conflict resolution within the Dagbon community in Yendi Municipality. The findings presented in Table 4 indicate strong agreement among respondents that culturally grounded practices significantly shape how conflicts are resolved, the durability of peace outcomes, and the restoration of social relationships after disputes.

Table 4: Respondents' perceptions on impact of cultural practices

	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	St. Dev
Cultural practices provide effective frameworks for resolving conflicts in my community	120	105	10	5	3.42	0.67
Traditional dispute resolution mechanisms are preferred over formal legal systems	143	90	5	2	3.56	0.58
Cultural rituals play a significant role in conflict resolution processes	101	122	17	0	3.35	0.61
The involvement of community elders in conflict resolution is influenced by cultural practices	94	136	4	6	3.33	0.63
Conflicts are often resolved through negotiation based on cultural norms and values	88	119	18	14	3.16	0.82
Cultural practices can sometimes hinder effective conflict resolution due to rigid adherence to tradition	59	122	57	2	2.99	0.71
The role of women in conflict resolution is shaped by cultural practices in my community	24	19	123	74	1.97	0.89
Cultural beliefs about forgiveness and reconciliation affect how conflicts are resolved	127	98	9	6	3.45	0.68

Source: Fieldwork (2024)

Respondents widely agreed that cultural practices provide effective frameworks for resolving conflicts, as reflected in a mean score of 3.42 and a standard deviation of 0.67. This suggests that customary mechanisms are perceived as legitimate and functional tools for managing disputes. Interview evidence supports this interpretation. One chief stated that “our traditions give us the tools to resolve disputes amicably, because they are embedded in our way of life and remind us of our shared responsibility to maintain peace” (Chief interview, 2024). This perception reflects the long-standing reliance on customary institutions in Dagbon, where conflict resolution is embedded in social norms that prioritize reconciliation and communal stability over adversarial outcomes.

A concrete illustration of this impact is the post-2002 Dagbon peace process, which relied heavily on culturally sanctioned mechanisms. Following the violent chieftaincy crisis in Yendi, several attempts at resolution failed until traditional authority structures were mobilized through the Otumfuo Committee of Eminent Chiefs. The eventual enskinment of Ya Naa Abukari II in 2019 was preceded by culturally grounded negotiations, ritual reconciliations, and symbolic acts of forgiveness that restored legitimacy to the chieftaincy institution (Issifu & Bukari, 2022). This process demonstrates how cultural practices can produce durable conflict resolution outcomes when they are perceived as legitimate by competing factions.

Traditional dispute resolution mechanisms were strongly preferred over formal legal systems, recording the highest mean score of 3.56 and a low standard deviation of 0.58. This indicates a strong consensus that customary processes are more effective and culturally appropriate than state courts. An opinion leader explained that “elders understand the history and relationships behind disputes, so their decisions are

accepted more easily than judgments from formal courts” (Opinion leader interview, 2024). This finding aligns with empirical studies showing that traditional mediation and arbitration are trusted in Dagbon because they are rooted in shared values and social accountability (Aasoglenang et al., 2024; Bukari et al., 2021).

The role of cultural rituals in conflict resolution was also strongly endorsed, with a mean score of 3.35 and a standard deviation of 0.61. Respondents recognized rituals as mechanisms that facilitate reconciliation, healing, and closure after disputes. This perception is consistent with documented Dagbon practices, where rituals such as libation pouring, symbolic apologies, and communal feasting mark the formal end of conflict and signal the restoration of social harmony. During the Dagbon reconciliation process leading to the 2019 enskinment, ritual performance played a central role in legitimizing peace agreements and reintegrating rival factions (Issifu & Bukari, 2022). One respondent captured this sentiment by noting that “rituals allow people to forgive openly and move forward without fear of renewed conflict” (Community member interview, 2024).

The involvement of community elders in conflict resolution was also perceived as strongly influenced by cultural practices, with a mean score of 3.33 and a standard deviation of 0.63. Elders are culturally sanctioned mediators whose authority derives from age, lineage, and moral standing. Their involvement shapes conflict resolution outcomes by fostering dialogue, compromise, and reconciliation. However, experiences with negotiation based on cultural norms varied, as indicated by a mean score of 3.16 and a standard deviation of 0.82. This suggests that while negotiation is generally effective, its success depends on the willingness of parties to engage in good faith and respect customary authority.

At the same time, respondents acknowledged that cultural practices can sometimes hinder effective conflict resolution due to rigid adherence to tradition, reflected in a mean score of 2.99 and a standard deviation of 0.71. Interview evidence illustrates this tension. One chief cautioned that “strictly following tradition can sometimes prevent us from adapting to new realities, especially when conflicts involve modern economic pressures or external actors” (Chief interview, 2024). This finding reflects concerns raised in the literature that customary mechanisms may struggle to address conflicts involving legal, economic, or political complexities beyond traditional frameworks (Doke, 2021).

The role of women in conflict resolution recorded a low mean score of 1.97 and a relatively high standard deviation of 0.89, indicating limited recognition of women’s formal involvement. This suggests that cultural norms continue to marginalize women’s participation in official conflict resolution processes in Dagbon. While women often contribute informally to peacebuilding within households and social networks, their roles are rarely acknowledged in formal mediation structures. This finding aligns with research showing that gendered cultural norms constrain women’s visibility and authority in conflict resolution, despite their contributions to social cohesion (Aasoglenang et al., 2024; Doke, 2021).

Finally, cultural beliefs surrounding forgiveness and reconciliation were strongly endorsed, with a mean score of 3.45 and a standard deviation of 0.68. Respondents viewed forgiveness as essential for restoring relationships and preventing the recurrence of conflict. This finding is supported by the Dagbon reconciliation experience, where forgiveness rituals and public acts of reconciliation were central to rebuilding trust after prolonged violence (Issifu & Bukari, 2022). Bukari et al. (2021)

similarly emphasize that reconciliation-oriented practices enable disputing parties to reintegrate into the community and sustain peace beyond formal settlements.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that cultural practices have a profound impact on conflict resolution in the Dagbon community of Yendi Municipality. They provide legitimate, trusted frameworks that facilitate reconciliation, elder mediation, and ritual closure, while also presenting challenges related to rigidity and gender exclusion. The convergence between respondents' perceptions, interview accounts, and documented Dagbon peace processes confirms that cultural practices are central to understanding both the successes and limitations of intra-tribal conflict resolution in the community.

4.5 Conclusions

This chapter presented and discussed the results of the data analysis based on responses obtained through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics and presented in tabular form, while qualitative data were analysed thematically to provide contextual explanations that complemented and deepened the quantitative findings.

The findings demonstrate that intra-tribal conflict in the Dagbon community of Yendi Municipality is closely associated with culturally embedded practices that structure authority, entitlement, and identity. Chieftaincy succession, customary land ownership and inheritance norms, ritual practices, and culturally mediated resource allocation emerged as the most salient practices associated with conflict. Respondents' perceptions align with documented historical experiences in Dagbon, particularly chieftaincy-related disputes and land conflicts, indicating that these practices are not abstract traditions but active institutions through which conflict is generated and experienced.

The analysis further revealed that cultural practices significantly influence the dynamics of conflict by shaping how disputes are interpreted, how factions form, and how conflicts escalate or persist. Competing interpretations of cultural norms, strong allegiance to lineage and gate affiliations, and culturally defined hierarchies were shown to intensify misunderstandings and harden positions during disputes. Cultural practices therefore influence conflict not only as background conditions but as mechanisms that actively shape conflict trajectories within the community.

With regard to conflict resolution, the findings indicate that cultural practices exert a substantial impact on how disputes are managed and resolved. Traditional dispute resolution mechanisms, elder mediation, and ritual reconciliation were widely perceived as effective, legitimate, and preferable to formal legal systems. These practices were found to facilitate reconciliation, restore relationships, and promote social cohesion. At the same time, respondents acknowledged limitations associated with rigid adherence to tradition, particularly in addressing contemporary conflicts that involve modern economic pressures, legal complexities, or external actors. The marginal recognition of women's roles in formal conflict resolution further highlights structural limitations within existing cultural frameworks.

Overall, the findings underscore the dual role of cultural practices in the Dagbon community of Yendi Municipality. While they provide trusted and culturally legitimate frameworks for managing and resolving conflicts, they also create conditions under which disputes can emerge, escalate, and persist. This chapter therefore establishes an empirical foundation for understanding how cultural practices simultaneously enable and constrain peacebuilding efforts. The insights generated here inform the subsequent chapter, which integrates these findings with existing

theory and literature to draw broader conclusions and implications for conflict management and peacebuilding within culturally grounded contexts.



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Overview

This chapter presents a comprehensive summary of the study's findings, conclusions, and recommendations regarding the influence of cultural practices on intra-tribal conflicts within the Dagbon community in the Yendi Municipality of Northern Ghana. The primary aim of this research was to explore how cultural practices shape conflict dynamics and resolution strategies within this community, which is characterized by a rich cultural heritage and complex social structures. The study employed a mixed methods design, utilizing both quantitative and qualitative methods to gather data from chiefs, opinion leaders, and community members.

The research objectives were clearly defined to guide the investigation: first, examine the major cultural practices associated with intra-tribal conflicts within the Dagbon community in Yendi Municipality, examine the ways in which selected cultural practices shape the occurrence and persistence of intra-tribal conflicts within the study area, and examine the role of cultural practices in the resolution of intra-tribal conflicts. A structured questionnaire was administered to a sample of participants, supplemented by qualitative interviews that provided deeper insights into the community's perspectives on cultural practices and conflict dynamics.

This chapter summarizes the main findings derived from the data analysis, draws conclusions based on these findings, and provides actionable recommendations aimed at stakeholders within the Dagbon community. These recommendations will focus on enhancing conflict resolution strategies by fostering dialogue and inclusivity while respecting cultural traditions.

5.1 Summary of Findings

The findings from this study on the influence of cultural practices on intra-tribal conflicts within the Dagbon community reveal several key insights based on the responses gathered from participants.

1. With respect to the first research question, the findings indicate that several culturally embedded practices are closely associated with the occurrence of intra-tribal conflict in the Dagbon community. Chieftaincy succession emerged as the most salient conflict-associated practice, reflecting widespread recognition that customary succession rules and their interpretation play a central role in generating tensions. Respondents' perceptions align with documented experiences in Dagbon, where disputes over succession have historically escalated into violent conflict. Customary land ownership and inheritance practices were also identified as important sources of conflict, particularly where culturally defined entitlement and lineage-based claims intersect with increasing land scarcity. In addition, cultural rituals and ceremonies were recognized as practices that can contribute to factional divisions when symbolic recognition, participation, or legitimacy is contested. Collectively, these findings show that cultural practices function as institutional frameworks through which authority, identity, and entitlement are negotiated, making them significant sources of intra-tribal conflict.
2. Findings related to the second research question demonstrate that cultural practices significantly influence the dynamics of intra-tribal conflict in Dagbon. Respondents indicated that misunderstandings arising from differing interpretations of cultural norms frequently intensify disputes and deepen divisions between factions. Cultural values related to loyalty, allegiance, and respect for traditional roles were also found to shape how conflicts escalate, often

hardening positions and limiting compromise. Moreover, the findings show that cultural practices structure the processes through which conflicts unfold by determining acceptable forms of engagement, authority, and response. While these practices provide a shared framework for interaction, respondents also acknowledged that rigid adherence to tradition can constrain dialogue and prolong disputes, particularly in contexts shaped by contemporary economic, political, or social pressures.

3. Regarding the third research question, the findings reveal that cultural practices exert a substantial impact on conflict resolution within the Dagbon community. Traditional dispute resolution mechanisms, including mediation and arbitration led by elders and chiefs, were widely perceived as effective and preferable to formal legal systems. Respondents emphasized the legitimacy, contextual sensitivity, and reconciliatory orientation of customary mechanisms. Cultural rituals were also identified as critical to conflict resolution, serving as symbolic processes that facilitate forgiveness, reconciliation, and the restoration of social relationships. At the same time, the findings highlight important limitations. Rigid adherence to tradition was perceived as potentially hindering effective resolution in some cases, particularly where conflicts involve modern challenges beyond the scope of customary frameworks. In addition, the limited recognition of women's roles in formal conflict resolution points to structural exclusions within existing cultural practices.

5.2 Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of cultural practices on intra-tribal conflict within the Dagbon community of Yendi Municipality in Northern Ghana. Specifically, the study examined the cultural practices associated with intra-

tribal conflict, analysed how these practices influence conflict dynamics, and assessed their impact on conflict resolution processes. The findings provide a nuanced understanding of the role of culture in shaping both conflict and peace within the community.

The study concludes that cultural practices in the Dagbon community play a fundamentally dual role in relation to intra-tribal conflict. On one hand, these practices constitute the core of communal identity, authority, and social organisation. Chieftaincy succession, land ownership and inheritance norms, ritual practices, and culturally mediated resource allocation serve as institutional frameworks through which legitimacy, entitlement, and belonging are defined. These practices therefore play a central role in structuring social relations within the community. On the other hand, the findings demonstrate that these same practices are closely associated with the emergence of conflict, particularly when interpretations of tradition differ, authority is contested, or access to culturally valued resources is perceived as unequal. Cultural practices thus function not only as sources of cohesion but also as potential sources of division and tension.

The study further concludes that cultural practices significantly influence the dynamics through which intra-tribal conflicts unfold. Conflicts in the Dagbon community are shaped by culturally defined norms of loyalty, allegiance, hierarchy, and respect for authority. Differing interpretations of cultural norms, strong factional affiliations, and expectations surrounding traditional roles contribute to misunderstandings and the escalation of disputes. At the same time, cultural practices structure how conflicts are managed by determining acceptable channels of engagement, negotiation, and mediation. While these culturally grounded frameworks provide shared reference points for interaction, rigid adherence to tradition can

constrain flexibility and limit the capacity to respond effectively to contemporary challenges.

With regard to conflict resolution, the study concludes that cultural practices exert a substantial and generally positive impact on resolving disputes within the Dagbon community. Traditional dispute resolution mechanisms led by elders and chiefs are widely perceived as legitimate, trusted, and effective, and are preferred over formal legal systems. Cultural rituals play a critical role in reconciliation by facilitating forgiveness, restoring relationships, and reinforcing shared values. These practices contribute to the durability of peace outcomes by emphasizing social harmony and collective responsibility. However, the findings also highlight important limitations. Strict adherence to tradition may hinder effective resolution in cases involving modern economic, legal, or political complexities, and the marginalization of women in formal conflict resolution processes points to enduring structural exclusions within customary frameworks.

Overall, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the complex relationship between cultural practices and intra-tribal conflict in the Dagbon community of Yendi Municipality. It demonstrates that cultural practices are central to both the production and resolution of conflict, functioning simultaneously as sources of stability and contestation. The findings underscore the importance of engaging with cultural practices critically and constructively in efforts to promote peace. Approaches to conflict management that respect cultural heritage while allowing for adaptation and inclusivity are essential for fostering sustainable peace and social cohesion within the Dagbon community.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research study, the following recommendations are put forward to address the influence of cultural practices on intra-tribal conflicts within the Dagbon community:

1. **Cultural Practices and Conflict Dynamics:** Given that cultural practices play a dual role in fostering unity and creating divisions within the Dagbon community, it is recommended that community leaders facilitate ongoing dialogues about these practices. This can be achieved through workshops and community forums that encourage inclusive discussions about cultural norms and their interpretations. By promoting understanding and collaboration among different factions, these dialogues can help mitigate misunderstandings and reinforce social cohesion, ultimately fostering a more harmonious community environment.
2. **Flexibility in Cultural Practices:** The findings indicate that cultural practices can lead to misunderstandings and rigid adherence may limit flexibility in addressing modern issues. Therefore, it is recommended that the Dagbon community adopt adaptive conflict resolution strategies that respect traditional practices while also allowing for contemporary interpretations. This could involve integrating modern conflict resolution techniques with traditional methods, ensuring that the community can effectively address current challenges without compromising its cultural identity. Training programs for elders and community leaders on adaptive conflict management could further enhance this approach.
3. **Balancing Tradition with Modernity:** The study highlights that while cultural practices provide effective frameworks for conflict resolution, strict adherence to traditions can hinder flexibility in addressing contemporary issues. It is recommended that the Dagbon community engage in a reflective process to

evaluate the relevance of traditional dispute resolution mechanisms in today's context. This could involve creating a task force comprising various stakeholders, including women and youth, to explore innovative solutions that blend traditional values with modern approaches to conflict resolution. By doing so, the community can enhance the effectiveness of its conflict management strategies while preserving its rich cultural heritage.

5.4 Limitations of the Study

This study was subject to several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. The most significant limitation relates to language and translation. Although data collection was conducted with sensitivity to the linguistic context of the Dagbon community, many respondents were more comfortable expressing complex ideas in Dagbani than in English. As a result, questionnaire items and interview responses required translation and interpretation during administration and transcription. This process may have affected the precision with which certain culturally nuanced concepts, such as customary authority, ritual meaning, and entitlement, were conveyed. Subtle meanings embedded in local expressions may not have been fully captured in their English equivalents, potentially influencing respondents' interpretations of questions and the researcher's interpretation of responses.

Relatedly, differences in literacy levels among respondents may have influenced how questionnaire items were understood, even when explanations were provided. Some concepts associated with cultural practices and conflict dynamics are abstract and context dependent, and variations in comprehension could have affected the consistency of responses. While efforts were made to clarify items and probe

responses during interviews, the possibility of misinterpretation cannot be entirely ruled out.

The study is also limited in terms of scope. The findings are specific to the Dagbon community in Yendi Municipality and reflect the cultural practices, conflict experiences, and resolution mechanisms within this context. As such, the results should not be generalized to all Dagbon areas or to other ethnic groups in Ghana without caution, as cultural institutions and conflict dynamics vary across settings.

Finally, although qualitative interviews with chiefs and opinion leaders provided rich contextual insights, the number of interview participants resulted from practical constraints. This may have limited the range of perspectives captured, particularly those of women and younger community members, whose voices are often less prominent in formal discussions of conflict. Future studies could address this limitation by employing more extensive qualitative designs and incorporating translation protocols that further minimize language-related distortions.

Despite these limitations, the study provides credible and contextually grounded insights into the influence of cultural practices on intra-tribal conflict in the Dagbon community, and the findings remain valuable for understanding conflict dynamics within similar culturally structured settings.

5.5 Suggestions for Further Studies

Due to limitations encountered during this research, including a restricted sample size and the focus on a specific community within Northern Ghana, further studies are warranted to expand upon the findings of this investigation. The current study was limited to the Dagbon community, and while it provided valuable insights into the

influence of cultural practices on intra-tribal conflicts, a broader approach could yield more comprehensive results.

It would be beneficial for future research to include larger and more diverse samples from various communities across different regions of Ghana. This would help to create a more accurate picture of how cultural practices influence conflict dynamics not only in Dagbon but also in other ethnic groups. By comparing findings across different contexts, researchers can identify common patterns and unique challenges related to cultural practices and conflict resolution.

Additionally, future studies could explore the role of specific cultural practices in greater detail, such as the impact of rituals, ceremonies, and community gatherings on conflict dynamics. Investigating how these practices are perceived by different demographic groups within the community – such as youth, women, and marginalized factions – could provide deeper insights into the complexities of intra-tribal conflicts.

Moreover, examining the effectiveness of modern conflict resolution strategies in conjunction with traditional practices would be valuable. Research that assesses how these approaches can be integrated to address contemporary issues within communities could lead to more effective conflict management frameworks.

Finally, longitudinal studies that track changes in cultural practices and their effects on conflict over time would contribute significantly to understanding the evolving nature of these dynamics. Such research could inform policymakers and community leaders about adaptive strategies that promote peace and cohesion in an increasingly complex social landscape.

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APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE

I am a graduate (M.Phil.) student at the University of Education, Winneba who is conducting a study on **the impact of cultural practices on intra-ethnic conflicts among the Dagbon community**. Please be assured that all information given to the researcher will be held in strict confidence and will only be used for research and academic purposes. No names of participants will be included in the study. Please read each question carefully. Indicate your responses by either a tick in the box or by writing in the spaces provided after the item.

Section A: Demographic Characteristics

1. Gender:

- Male []
- Female []

2. Age (in years):

- 18 - 24 []
- 25 - 34 []
- 35 - 44 []
- 45 and Above []



3. Highest academic/professional qualification:

- SSSCE []
- Certificate "A" []
- Diploma []
- Bachelor's Degree []
- Master's Degree []
- Other (please specify)

Section B: Key Cultural Practices Contributing to Intra-Tribal Conflicts

This section aims to identify specific cultural practices that may contribute to intra-tribal conflicts within the Dagbon community. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements by selecting one of the options provided: SA-Strongly Agree, A-Agree, D-Disagree, SD-Strongly Disagree.

	SA	A	D	SD
Disputes over chieftaincy succession are a common source of conflict in my community				
Traditional land ownership practices often lead to disagreements among community members				
Cultural rituals and ceremonies can sometimes create divisions among different factions				
Inheritance practices based on cultural norms contribute to conflicts within families				
The interpretation of cultural norms varies among community members, leading to misunderstandings				
Conflicts arising from resource allocation are influenced by cultural practices in my community				
The role of women in cultural practices sometimes leads to tensions regarding decision-making				
Cultural celebrations can exacerbate existing tensions between different groups in the community				

Section C: Influence of Cultural Practices on Intra-Tribal Conflicts

This section aims to ascertain how cultural practices influence intra-tribal conflicts among the Dagbon community. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements by selecting one of the options provided: SA-Strongly Agree, A-Agree, D-Disagree, SD-Strongly Disagree.

	SA	A	D	SD
Cultural practices often lead to misunderstandings between different factions in my community				
The way cultural norms are interpreted can create divisions among community members				
Conflicts over resource allocation are influenced by cultural practices and beliefs				
Cultural practices dictate how conflicts are resolved in my community				

The emphasis on traditional roles in cultural practices can lead to power struggles within families or clans				
Cultural celebrations can sometimes heighten existing tensions among different groups				
The interpretation of cultural practices varies significantly among community members, leading to conflicts				
Cultural values surrounding loyalty and allegiance can exacerbate conflicts between factions				

Section D: Impact of Cultural Practices on Conflict Resolution

This section aims to analyze the impact of cultural practices on the resolution of conflicts among the Dagbon community. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements by selecting one of the options provided: SA-Strongly Agree, A-Agree, D-Disagree, SD-Strongly Disagree.

	SA	A	D	SD
Cultural practices provide effective frameworks for resolving conflicts in my community				
Traditional dispute resolution mechanisms are preferred over formal legal systems				
Cultural rituals play a significant role in conflict resolution processes				
The involvement of community elders in conflict resolution is influenced by cultural practices				
Conflicts are often resolved through negotiation based on cultural norms and values				
Cultural practices can sometimes hinder effective conflict resolution due to rigid adherence to tradition				
The role of women in conflict resolution is shaped by cultural practices in my community				
Cultural beliefs about forgiveness and reconciliation affect how conflicts are resolved				

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Introduction

Hello, I am a graduate student at the University of Education, Winneba. I am conducting a study on **the impact of cultural practices on intra-ethnic conflicts in the Dagbon community**. Your participation is very important, and I appreciate your willingness to share your experiences and insights. Please be assured that all information you provide will be kept confidential and used only for academic purposes.

Before we begin, I would like to confirm that you have received and understood the consent form, and that you agree to participate in this interview.

Background Information

1. Can you tell me a little about yourself and your background?
 - Prompt: “How long have you lived in the Dagbon community?”
 - Prompt: “What is your role or occupation within the community?”

Section A: Cultural Practices

2. Can you describe some of the key cultural practices that are significant in the Dagbon community?
 - Prompt: “Which rituals, ceremonies, or traditions are most important?”
 - Prompt: “How are these practices observed and maintained?”
3. In what ways do these cultural practices influence social interactions and relationships within the community?
 - Prompt: “Do these practices affect how people interact with each other on a daily basis?”
 - Prompt: “Can you provide an example?”
4. How are inheritance and succession determined in your community, and what role do cultural practices play in this?
 - Prompt: “Are there specific cultural rules or norms that guide these processes?”
 - Prompt: “How do people in the community feel about these rules?”

Section B: Intra-Ethnic Conflict

5. Have there been any conflicts within the Dagbon community that you believe are related to cultural practices? Can you describe one?
 - Prompt: “What were the main issues or causes of the conflict?”

- Prompt: “How was the conflict resolved?”
6. In your opinion, what are the primary factors that contribute to intra-ethnic conflicts in this community?
- Prompt: “Are disputes over chieftaincy succession common?”
 - Prompt: “How about conflicts over land ownership?”
7. How do these conflicts impact the community, both socially and economically?
- Prompt: “What are some of the immediate effects you have observed?”
 - Prompt: “Are there any long-term consequences?”

Section C: Conflict Resolution Mechanisms

8. What traditional conflict resolution mechanisms exist in the Dagbon community?
- Prompt: “Can you describe a situation where these mechanisms were used?”
 - Prompt: “Who are the key figures involved in these processes?”
9. How effective do you believe these traditional methods are in resolving conflicts?
- Prompt: “What are the strengths of these methods?”
 - Prompt: “Are there any weaknesses or challenges?”
10. What role do external interventions (e.g., government, NGOs) play in conflict resolution here?
- Prompt: “Can you provide an example of such an intervention?”
 - Prompt: “How do community members perceive these external efforts?”
11. What improvements or changes would you suggest to enhance conflict resolution in your community?
- Prompt: “Are there any specific strategies or approaches you think would be more effective?”
 - Prompt: “How can cultural sensitivity be incorporated into these strategies?”

Closing

12. Is there anything else you would like to share about cultural practices or conflicts in the Dagbon community that we haven't discussed?