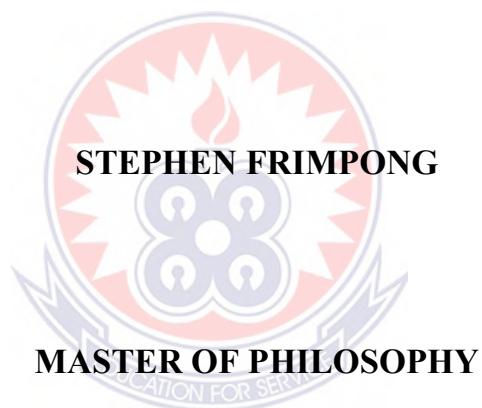


UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA



**INTER-RELIGIOUS CONFLICT BETWEEN CHRISTIANITY AND
AFRICAN INDIGENOUS RELIGIONS IN THE GA TRADITIONAL
AREA**



2024

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA



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AFRICAN INDIGENOUS RELIGIONS IN THE GA TRADITIONAL AREA**



**A thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the award of the degree of
Master of Philosophy
(Human Rights, Conflict and Peace Studies)**

**CENTRE FOR CONFLICT, HUMAN RIGHTS AND PEACE STUDIES,
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA**

DECEMBER, 2024

DECLARATION

Student's Declaration

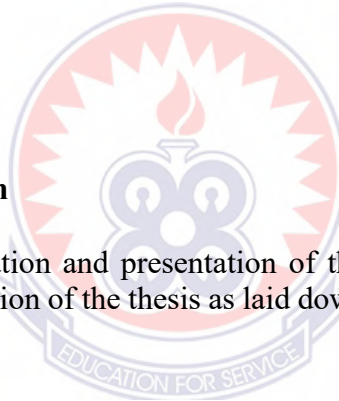
I, Stephen Frimpong, hereby declare that this thesis, except for quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my original work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

Signature:

Date:

Supervisor's Declaration

I declare that the preparation and presentation of this thesis were supervised by the guidelines on the supervision of the thesis as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.



Name of Supervisor: PROF. ALFRED KURANCHIE

Signature:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "Alfred Kuranchie", is written over a light blue grid background.

Date:

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my mother, Mrs. Theresah Afia Korsaa.



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I am highly indebted to my supervisor, Prof. Alfred Kuranchie, for his selfless dedication and tireless support, guidance, and expert advice that he extended to me through discussions, interactions, corrections, and constructive criticism throughout the study.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Contents	Page
DECLARATION	iii
DEDICATION	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	ix
ABSTRACT	x
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background of the Study	1
1.2 Statement of the Problem	12
1.3 Purpose of the Study	15
1.4 Research Objectives	15
1.5 Research Questions	16
1.6 Delimitations of the Study	16
1.7 Significance of the Study	17
1.8 Definition of Terms	18
1.9 Organization of the Study	19
1.10 Summary	21
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE	22
2.0 Introduction	22
2.1 Conceptualizing Conflict	22
2.2 Religious Conflict	32
2.3 Inter-Religious Conflict	32
2.4 The Concept of Religion	22
2.5 History of Region in Ghana	25

2.6	The Concept of Indigenous Religion(s) (IRs)	25
2.7	Identity of Africans in Indigenous Religion	27
2.8	Africans at the Crossroads	37
2.9	Integration of Indigenous Religion and Christianity	39
2.10	Dynamisms in Conflict	39
2.11	Conflict Reoccurrence	41
2.12	Conflict Actors	44
2.13	Threats to Conflict Resolution	47
2.14	Human Rights Conventions on Religion (Worship)	49
2.15	The 1992 Republican Constitution of Ghana on Religion	52
2.16	Theoretical Framework	54
2.17	Empirical Review	57
2.18	Summary of the Literature Review	57
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY		63
3.0	Overview	63
3.1	Philosophical Underpinning	63
3.2	Research Approach	65
3.3	Research Design	67
3.4	Setting or Study Area	68
3.5	Population	70
3.6	Sample and Sampling Techniques	71
3.7	Research Methods	72
3.8	Data Collection Procedure	73
3.10	Data Analysis	75
3.11	Ethical Consideration	76
3.12	Trustworthiness	77

3.13	Positionality	78
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION		80
4.0	Introduction	80
4.1	Causes of the Conflict	80
4.2	Effects of the Conflict	92
4.3	Actors Involved in the Conflict	99
4.4	Threats to the Resolution of the Conflict	110
4.5	Measures for the Resolution of the Conflict	117
4.6	Summary	124
CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS		125
5.0	Introduction	125
5.1	Summary	125
5.1.1	Major Findings	126
5.2	Implications	130
5.3	Conclusion	132
5.4	Recommendations	133
5.5	Limitations of the Study	135
5.6	Suggestions for further studies	136
REFERENCES		138
APPENDIX A: Interview Guide		161
APPENDIX B: Analysis Template		163



LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ATR	African Traditional Religion
CAC	Christ Apostolic Church
CHR	Christianity
CHT	Contact Hypothesis Theory
CRC	Constitutional Review Commission
EHRC	Equality and Human Rights Commission
EU	European Union
GED	Global Education Digest
GSS	Ghana Statistical Service
IR	Indigenous Religion
MCRA	Ministry of Chieftaincy and Religious Affairs
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
SIPRI	Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
SIT	Social Identity Theory
TRA	Traditional
UCDP	Uppsala Conflict Data Program
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNPF	United Nations Population Fund
WASCI	West Africa Civil Society Institute

ABSTRACT

This research aimed to understand the inter-religious conflict between Christianity and Indigenous Religions in the Ga Traditional Area of the Greater Accra Region of Ghana, focusing on their shared quest for spiritual fulfilment. This was done by exploring the causes, effects, dynamics, actors, threats to the resolution, and measures to resolve the conflict. The study was approached qualitatively and designed as a case study. A total of twenty (20) key informants participated in the study. Data was collected through in-depth interviews and observation. Data was analysed using thematic template analysis. The study unearthed that the introduction of Christianity into the area, coupled with the settlement of different ethnic groups in the area, was the immediate cause of the conflict. The conflict had degenerated into a fierce struggle some years ago. However, the area is relatively calm. The introduction of ‘minority’ and ‘majority’ rhetoric and the subsequent disobedience by the non-Ga settlers for their Indigenous Religious celebrations served as some of the reasonable causes of the conflict. The study revealed that the conflict has strong socio-political, economic, security, and religious implications for the people in the Ga Traditional Area, irrespective of one’s religious affiliation. The study further found that apart from the primary conflict parties, there were state actors, traditional actors, group actors, and independent actors in the conflict. The dynamics of the conflict were informed by the continuous disrespect from the Christians, especially where the Akans are mostly dominated, actor interaction, and the conflict parties’ commitment to the conflict. Threats to the resolution of the conflict exist at the system level, actor level, political level, and traditional level. The study recommended that trust and confidence building in conflict parties by intervening parties should be ensured, politics should be decoupled from the conflict, respect for one’s religious belief must be prioritised, there should be non-interference of political figures in the conflict, sensitisation of the people in the Ga Traditional Area (both Christians and Indigenous Religious Believers) on the need to be peaceful and continuous security surveillance of the Ga community should be ensured. The study contributes to the understanding of conflict dynamics, actor interaction in conflict processes, and the possible measures for resolving the conflict in the area.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Smart (1996) defines religion as a system of beliefs and practices centred on the recognition and worship of supernatural or divine powers. The *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (2018) describes religion as belief in and devotion to a superhuman power, particularly a God or gods. Similarly, the *Collins Dictionary* (2020) defines religion as belief in a deity or deities, together with associated practices such as prayer and worship, often conducted in designated sacred spaces like churches or temples. Expanding on these definitions, Augustyn (2024) explains religion as the relationship human beings establish with what they consider sacred, holy, divine, or worthy of profound reverence. This relationship often addresses fundamental questions about human existence, meaning, and life after death. While many religious traditions express these concerns through interactions with gods or spiritual beings, more humanistic or naturalistic traditions frame religion in terms of ethical relationships with the wider human community or the natural environment (Augustyn, 2024).

Embarking on a journey through the rich and diverse landscape of religion, there is an encounter with a myriad of beliefs and practices. According to Bowker (2003), Wilkinson (2008), and Prothero (2010), the thirteen most popular and influential religions that treat central and historical religious traditions are Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, Shinto, Islam, Sikhism, Confucianism, Jainism, Hinduism, Taoism, Baha'i, Zoroastrianism, and African Traditional Religion (s). Each religion has unique beliefs and practices, yet some may share certain common elements, showcasing human spirituality's rich and complex diversity.

First, Christianity, which centres on Jesus Christ and critical beliefs such as the Holy Trinity, resurrection, and salvation through faith, has significantly influenced human history (McGrath, 2017). These practices, as expounded by Augustine of Hippo (397), Thomas Aquinas (1265), Martin Luther (1525), John Calvin (1559), C.S. Lewis (1952), and N.T. Wright (2006) is integral to the Christian way of life. Similarly, Islam, based on the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad, as recorded in the Qur'an, has left a profound mark on history (Esposito, 2011; Lapidus, 2014). Core practices include the Five Pillars of Islam (Al-Ghazali, 1096; Muhammad, 1930; Qutb, 1965; Armstrong, 1991, 2000).

Another religion to consider is Hinduism, which is a diverse religion with no single founder (Klostermaier, 2010). It focuses on Dharma, Karma, Samsara, and Moksha. Practices include rituals, meditation, yoga, and worship (puja) of various deities (Vivekananda, 1902; Aurobindo, 1940; Radhakrishnan, 1948; Doniger, 2009; Pattanaik, 2010). Again, Buddhism was founded by Siddhartha Gautama (the Buddha), and critical concepts include the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path (Thich, 1998; Lama, 2016; Chödrön, 2001). In addition, Judaism is based on the Hebrew Bible and the Talmud, with beliefs in the covenant and the coming of the Messiah (Maimonides, 1180; Heschel, 1955; Fackenheim, 1982; Buber, 1947).

Also, Sikhism was founded by Guru Nanak, emphasising the teachings of the ten Gurus and practices like Naam Japna, Kirat Karni, and Vand Chakna (Macauliffe, 1909; Singh, 1977; Singh, 1963; McLeod, 1997; Singh, 2006; Oberoi, 1994). Furthermore, Shinto is an indigenous spirituality of Japan, focusing on the worship of the kami society (Genchi, 1926; Williams, 1962; Earhart, 1982; Breen & Teeuwen, 2010; Hardacre, 1989; Kasulis, 2004).

Confucius founded Confucianism, a religion that emphasises morality, social relationships, and sincerity (Confucius, 2003). Key concepts include Ren, Li, Xiao, Yi, and Junzi (Weiming, 1985; Schwartz, 1985; Gardner, 2007). Another is Jainism, which emphasises non-violence, truth, and asceticism, which Mahavira founded (Jaini, 1979; Kailash, 1974; Long, 2009; Granoff, 2009). Also, Taoism emphasises living harmoniously with the Tao, with key concepts like Wu Wei, Yin and Yang, and Ziran (Cleary, 1991; Wong, 1997; Hoff, 1982). The Bahá'í Faith was founded by Bahá'u'lláh, emphasizing the spiritual unity of humankind (Hatcher & Martin, 1984; Moojan Momen, 1981; Smith, 2008).

Besides, Zoroastrianism was founded by Zoroaster, focusing on the duality of good and evil and the worship of Ahura Mazda's judgment (Boyce, 1982; Mehr, 1991; Choksy, 1989; Rose, 2011). Practices include prayer, fire rituals, and community participation. Lastly, Indigenous Religions are diverse and localised but share common elements like belief in a supreme being, veneration of ancestors, and ritual significance (Mbiti, 1990; Gyekye, 1996; Asare-Opoku, 1978; Olupona, 2000). Practices involve divination, healing rituals, ceremonies, symbols, and music.

Smart (1996) believes that with their rich cultural and spiritual heritage, these religions offer various paths to understanding the world and finding meaning. More importantly, they play a crucial role in fostering community and individual well-being, making each member feel connected and valued. However, due to their differences in beliefs and practices, they sometimes clash and engage in inter-religious conflict.

Inter-religious conflict is any conflict conducted, involving, or existing between two or more religious groups or movements (Juergensmeyer, 2000; Fox, 2004; Appleby, 2000). In other words, most inter-religious conflicts usually develop into inter-ethnic

conflicts, even where and when they start as purely religious disagreements, such as between Muslims and Christians or between traditional religions and Christianity (Appleby, 2000; Basedau, Pfeiffer & Vüllers, 2016). Religious conflicts can be complex and deeply rooted, as they often intertwine with cultural, historical, and political factors. Religious conflicts arise as followers of one religion take their beliefs to extremes and impose their beliefs on others with different faiths (GED, 2017).

Inter-religious conflict significantly affects societies, impacting various aspects of life, including politics, social cohesion, economic development, and human rights (Juergensmeyer, 2000). The effects of this conflict are multifaceted, impacting social cohesion, cultural heritage, and the overall well-being of communities (Fox, 2002; Brian, 2011). Instances of discrimination, stigmatisation, and occasionally violent clashes have been reported, and these clashes jeopardise social cohesion and have implications for individual freedoms, community relationships, and the harmonious coexistence of diverse religious groups (Barro & McCleary, 2003; Appleby, 2000; Putnam, 2000). Additionally, conflict raises questions about the role of globalisation, modernisation, and external influences in shaping religious dynamics within the community.

Inter-religious conflict is a phenomenon that affects many multicultural societies globally. Virtually every society has experienced inter-religious conflict at some point: Asia - Israel, Palestine, Iraq 2003, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Lebanon 1975-90, India 1974, Pakistan 1974; Europe - Northern Ireland 1960-98, Bosnia 1992-95; Africa - Nigeria, Central African Republic (Juergensmeyer, 2003; Appleby, 2000). The number of inter-religious conflict cases explains why inter-religious conflict is described as a global and devastating phenomenon (Hegre, 2013; Malik & Kusi, 2012; Polachek & Sevastianova,

2010; Duker, 2018; Lund, 2003). Even though most of these conflicts are classified as civil wars, traces of inter-religious conflicts underpin them.

In Africa, inter-religious conflicts profoundly affect the continent's political, social, and economic landscapes (Esposito & Ayoob, 2008; Collier & Hoeffler, 2004). The continent's religious diversity, together with historical and contemporary socio-political issues, has often led to conflicts among religious communities. Africa has been heavily affected by numerous inter-religious conflicts, which have left many societies devastated (Ukiwo, 2003; Basedau et al., 2016). Africa's history is intertwined with the trajectories of wars and conflicts that have plagued the continent (Adebajo, 2010; Aning & Lartey, 2011). The conflicts in Sierra Leone, Mali, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Guinea-Bissau, Rwanda, Somalia, and Chad, among others, are integral to discussions of development, peace, and security (Gberie, 2005; Kandeh, 1999). Annan (2020, p. 1) expresses concern that "internal and regional inter-religious violent conflicts" may recur, emphasising that they "remain a major social problem of the world" (Hegre et al., 2017, p. 243).

A significant challenge in the West African sub-region is 'ending violent conflicts' (Annan, 2020). The introduction and spread of Christianity have sometimes resulted in friction with indigenous spiritual practices. Religious sects often disagree on beliefs, practices, dogma, doctrines, and theology (Fuseini, 2018), leading to conflicts. The persistent inter-religious conflicts erode social cohesion, creating deep-seated distrust among different religious groups. This fragmentation hinders collective community action and development (Mahmood Mamdani, 2004). John S. Mbiti (1996) states that these conflicts often result in human rights abuses, including persecution, discrimination, and forced displacement of minority religious groups. These conflicts,

driven by religious tension, disrupt economic activities, destroying infrastructure, reducing investment, and losing livelihoods (Herbst, 2000).

According to Sanneh (1989), inter-religious conflicts can negatively impact the education system in Africa, leading to biased curricula, decreased access to education for certain groups, and disrupted schooling. Isichei (1995) agrees that individuals and communities affected by inter-religious conflict often experience psychological trauma, leading to long-term mental health issues. Nigeria, for instance, has experienced significant inter-religious conflict in the Sub-Saharan Region, particularly between its Muslim-majority North and Christian-majority South. This has resulted in violence, economic disruptions, and political instability (Ostien, 2007). Deng (2010) believes that the prolonged civil war in Sudan was significantly influenced by inter-religious conflicts between the predominantly Muslim North and the largely Christian and Animist South, tensions that ultimately culminated in the secession of South Sudan in 2011. Religious conflict between Muslim Seleka rebels and Christian anti-Balaka militias has led to severe violence, human rights abuses, and a humanitarian crisis (Lombard, 2016). Inter-religious conflicts have significantly impacted the African continent, manifesting in various forms of violence, political instability, social fragmentation, and economic disruption.

Marked by its religious diversity, West Africa has experienced significant inter-religious conflicts. These conflicts have profoundly impacted the region's socio-political and economic fabric. Inter-religious conflicts in countries like Nigeria have often escalated into violent conflicts, resulting in loss of lives, destruction of properties, and displacement of people (Esposito & Derya, 2019). These religious conflicts contribute to political instability in the West African Region. They weaken

governmental structures and create an environment of mistrust and division (Ousmane, 2016). Countries like Mali, Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria, and Ghana have faced religious conflicts, particularly with the rise of Islamist groups in the North (West Africa Conflict Reports, 2023). This has led to violence, displacement, and significant humanitarian challenges (Susanna, 2008; Schatzberg, 2001). Inter-religious conflicts in West Africa have had wide-ranging effects, including violence, political instability, social fragmentation, human rights abuses, economic disruption, impact on education, and psychological trauma (Aning et al., 2011; Basedau et al., 2016)

While Ghana is often seen as a model of religious tolerance, religious diversity, and peaceful coexistence, there have been instances of violence and conflicts, particularly between Christians and Muslims or between Christians and Indigenous Religious believers in certain areas (Meyer, 2004). According to Obadare (2014), politicians sometimes exploit religious differences for political gain, leading to heightened tensions during election periods. Inter-religious conflicts have led to social fragmentation in Ghana, where communities become divided along religious lines, affecting national unity (Gifford, 2004).

Aning et al. (2015) argue that Ghana is grappling with numerous inter- and intra-religious conflicts. Despite several years of independence and multiple attempts at resolution, new conflicts emerge in various forms. Insurgencies in regions such as Northern Ghana (Muslims and Christians), Kumasi (Muslims and Christians), and Accra (Christians and African Traditional Religion) have disrupted the nation's peace and stability, tarnishing Ghana's international image (Aning et al., 2015). Many of these conflicts are tied to faith struggles and are particularly prevalent in the northern part of the country (Seini & Tsikata, 2004; Jönsson, 2007; Meyer, 2015). These conflicts in

Northern Ghana, especially in the Northern region, are notably recurrent (Debrah et al., 2016). The Northern Region of Ghana has seen episodes of religious conflict between Muslims and Christians, often linked to ethnic conflicts (Owusu-Ansah, 2013). Kumasi, with its significant Muslim population, has also experienced inter-religious conflicts, particularly around issues of land use and religious practices (Osseo-Asare, 2014). The capital city of Accra has generally maintained religious harmony. However, occasional conflicts arise between Christians and Indigenous Religions, often around noise pollution from places of worship and desecration of sacred places (Meyer, 2015).

It is worrying that while inter-religious conflicts are declining globally due to interfaith dialogue, globalisation, education, legal frameworks, peacebuilding initiatives, and economic development (Szayna et al., 2017; Einsiedel et al., 2017; Annan, 2020), low-scale inter-religious conflicts are increasing at national levels (Annan, 2020; Duker, 2018). Previously stable states are now plagued with various forms of inter-religious conflict (Annan, 2020). Thus, there are pockets of inter-religious conflict cases that are recorded in multiple homes and communities, some of which have yet to be brought to light, due mainly to the stigma involved or ignorance about the appropriate place to address them. Some marriages have collapsed primarily owing to differences in faith, beliefs, and practices. These pockets of inter-religious conflict cases that are recorded in multiple homes and communities underscore the pressing need for proposed measures to resolve inter-religious tension and promote peaceful coexistence.

However, despite efforts to address these inter-religious conflict cases, new conflicts continue to arise, evolving in complexity and proving difficult to resolve (Adu-Gyamfi, 2012). Ghana is culturally diverse, with five major ethnic groups and a history of religious diversity (Ammah, 2007; Owusu, 2010; Ata-Aidoo, 2004). Despite the rich

cultural and religious diversity, inter-religious conflicts persist. This conflict is rooted in historical, social, spiritual, and cultural factors. The spread of Christianity, particularly among the youth, has led to conflicts with ATR adherents (Ocran, 2015; Appiah, 2013; Agyeman, 2009; Bentil, 2011; Opoku, 2008; Yankah, 2016). Religious intolerance, motivated by one's beliefs or against another's, manifests culturally and formally in some religious groups' dogma and doctrines.

The Greater Accra Region, the capital area of Ghana, is a microcosm of the country's religious diversity. According to Amponsah (2009), the history of the world can only be complete if a chapter or so is devoted to the story of religion. Similarly, the history of the Ga Traditional Area in the Greater Accra Region can only be complete when a chapter or so is dedicated to the story of religion, considering its religious narrative due to its significant attachment to it. Religion permeates all spheres of life, infusing them with profound meaning and significance (Ejizu, 2017, p. 7). John Mbiti's *African religions and philosophy* emphasise that “the African is notoriously religious” (Mbiti, 1969, p. 1), and the Ga people are no exception. Mbiti (1991, p.2) notes, “African Religion is very pragmatic and realistic,” adding that “to be an African in the traditional setting is to be truly religious”. Mbiti (1991) believes that religion is featured in every aspect of their culture, including beliefs, practices, ceremonies, festivals, objects, places, values, morals, and religious officials.

Kreamer (1995) indicates that religion is evident in rituals, ceremonies, festivals, shrines, sacred places, religious objects, art, symbols, music, dance, proverbs, riddles, wise sayings, names, myths, legends, beliefs, and customs. The Ghanaian Akan proverb captures the profound presence of religion in African life: “Obi nkyerε abofra nyame,” meaning “no one teaches the child to know God”; Mbiti (1969) argues that the

consciousness of God is considered inherent from birth. Before colonialism and missionary activities, the idea of the Supreme Being (God) was already present in their lives. Names like “Onyame dua” (“God’s tree”) and “Onyame bekyere” (“God will show the way”) existed before Christianity’s implantation in Africa and Ghana. This shows that Ghana has been home to various indigenous belief systems that form the foundation of IRs, deeply ingrained in the cultural fabric of different ethnic groups nationwide.

While largely peaceful, the Greater Accra Region has experienced inter-religious conflict. These conflicts are often linked to broader social, economic, and political issues (Gifford, 2004; Abamfo, 2013; Obadare, 2014; Lauterbach, 2016). Conflicts between different religious communities have been reported, often arising from disagreements over public religious expressions and the use of communal spaces (Meyer, 2015; Asamoah-Gyadu, 2013). In the Ga Traditional Area of the Greater Accra Region, traditional religion still holds a firm grip on society, often co-existing with formal religions. Many Christians and Muslims, for instance, maintain traditional religious beliefs alongside their adherence to mainstream religious doctrines or practices (Samwini, 2007).

Some scholars like Eller (2007) and Girard (1977) argue that religion sometimes plays a significant role in instigating conflicts, violence, social unrest, and cultural conflict. Eller (2007, p. 230) asserts that there is an essential connection between religion and conflict. Appleby (2000, p.60) affirms that religion invariably plays a role in conflict situations. The marginalisation of traditional religious and cultural values by early missionaries sets a confrontational tone rather than a mutual dialogue between Christianity and ATR (Acquah, 2011; Ekem et al., 2008; Debrunner, 1967; Williamson,

1974; Abiola, 2009). This act of discrimination accounted for inter- and intra-religious conflicts, such as the clashes between charismatic churches and ATR worshippers in Ghana in May 1999 (2000 Annual Report on International Religious Freedom: Ghana).

It was reported that in June 2018, members of the Christ Apostolic Church (CAC) and the Ga traditional authority physically confronted each other after CAC violated the annual ban on drumming imposed by Ga authorities (News24, 2018). This use of drumming in their services has been a source of conflict and resulted in violence in 2000, which resurfaced in 2018.

Various literature (Akwetteh, 2017; Anquandah-Arthur, 2018; Acquah et al., 2020; Anum, 2014; Asante, 2011) reveals that the inter-religious conflict between Christianity and Indigenous Religion(s) in the Ga Traditional Area can be attributed to some factors. Firstly, there is the doctrinal dissonance between the two religions. Christianity, with its monotheistic tenets, often clashes with the polytheistic and animistic elements of Indigenous Religion(s). Secondly, the conversion of individuals from Indigenous Religion(s) to Christianity has sometimes been perceived as a betrayal of cultural heritage and identity, fostering resentment and conflict. Certain Christian practices and teachings have been viewed as denigrating or demonising traditional beliefs. The competition for followers and social influence wielded by religious leaders has also contributed to inter-religious conflict.

The inter-religious conflict in the Ga Traditional Area has significant socio-cultural implications. It affects social harmony and can lead to conflicts that disrupt everyday life. Religious disagreements sometimes mar ritual practices, festivals, and community gatherings. Individuals may face identity crises, especially those caught between the two religious paradigms, leading to psychological and social strain. The conflict

impacts the intergenerational transmission of cultural knowledge. Younger generations, influenced by Christian teachings, may distance themselves from traditional practices, leading to the erosion of cultural heritage.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The Ga Traditional Area in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana is characterised by a rich mosaic of religious beliefs (Assimeng, 1999; Bediako, 2004), prominently featuring Christianity, Islamic Religion, and Indigenous Religions (IRs). While this diversity can be a source of cultural richness, it has also led to significant inter-religious conflicts. The introduction and rapid growth of Christianity in the region have often resulted in conflicts with the long-established IRs, manifesting in both subtle and overt forms of social discord.

Despite numerous interventions by the Ga Traditional Council, the National Peace Council, Youth Groups, Government Institutions, Christian Leaders, and the Police Institution to resolve these conflicts and restore peace to the area, the conflict has seen no significant resolution. Various stakeholders have made multiple attempts to mediate the dispute between IR practitioners and Christians, but their efforts have yet to be successful. Pockets of inter-religious conflict cases are still detected in the community and in various homes (Adu-Gyamfi, 2012; Ammah, 2007; Owusu, 2010). Thus, the absence of public outcry or violence does not suggest there is no conflict (Bentil, 2011; Opoku, 2008; Yankah, 2016). The pockets of inter-religious conflict cases in various homes and communities indicate that the root causes still need to be fully understood and the issues involved still need to be resolved. The ongoing conflicts suggest that the conflict has significant meaning for the Ga people and the Christian community.

This conflict is rooted in several complex factors. Assimeng (1999) argues that one of the causes is the doctrinal conflicts between the monotheistic framework of Christianity and the polytheistic or animistic elements of IRs, which often result in mutual misunderstandings and mistrust. Bediako (2004) also believes that the portrayal of IR practices as 'pagan' or 'demonic' by some Christian groups exacerbates these conflicts, leading to feelings of disrespect and marginalisation among IR practitioners. Moreover, the conversion of individuals from IRs to Christianity is frequently perceived as an abandonment of cultural heritage, further deepening the divide.

These inter-religious conflicts have profound implications for the social fabric of the Ga Traditional Area. They disrupt community cohesion, leading to conflicts that affect social harmony and everyday life. Traditional festivals, rituals, and communal activities become contested grounds where religious disagreements arise (Assimeng, 1999). Additionally, the conflict affects the intergenerational transmission of cultural knowledge, with younger generations often caught in the crossroads between the two belief systems.

Various efforts have been made to address and mitigate the inter-religious conflict in the Ga Traditional Area, including dialogue initiatives, interfaith councils, collaborative efforts between traditional leaders and Christian clergy, and educational programs to foster mutual respect and understanding (Adu-Gyamfi, 2012; Ammah, 2007). Despite these efforts, challenges remain, necessitating a continuous and adaptive approach to conflict resolution.

Existing measures, such as leadership and role models, promoting religious freedom, media and communication, dialogue, and community engagement, have needed more success, often hindered by deep-seated prejudices, lack of trust, and sustained

engagement. A comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the underlying causes of this conflict and the practical and strategic measures to resolve the conflict are critical. Research needs to adequately document the successes and failures of the inter-religious conflict resolution in the Ga Traditional Area. Crucial questions still needed to be answered: Why does the conflict appear too challenging to resolve? What are the dynamics involved? Who are the actors in the conflict? What are their interests, and who are their allies? What measures could help bring a lasting solution to the conflict? These questions demanded attention for effective conflict resolution.

Although a substantial body of literature exists on conflicts in Ghana (Tsikata & Seini, 2004; Tonah, 2012; Osei-Kufuor et al., 2016; Mbowura, 2012; Anamzoya, 2010; Mumuni, 2016; Mbowura & Longi, 2016; Anamzoya & Tonah, 2012; Mohammed, 2018; UNDP, 2020; Brukum, 2001; Ibrahim et al., 2019; Sulemana, 2009; Bukari, 2013; Lund, 2003; Kendie & Bukari, 2012; Ahiave, 2013; Mahama & Longi, 2013; Jönsson, 2007; Debrah et al., 2016) as well as on conflict dynamics within the country (Penu, 2016; Gati, 2008; Ayee et al., 2011), these studies provide limited insight into the specific dynamics of inter-religious conflict between Indigenous Religion(s) and Christianity. In particular, they inadequately examine the key actors involved, the obstacles to conflict resolution, and the strategies necessary for achieving sustainable and long-term peace. Furthermore, existing studies on conflicts in the Ga Traditional Area have largely concentrated on chieftaincy and succession disputes (Lentz, 1993; 2000) as well as issues related to decentralisation and land ownership (Lentz, 2001), while paying minimal attention to inter-religious tensions.

The inter-religious conflict between Christianity and Indigenous Religion(s) in the Ga Traditional Area is not just a religious issue but a threat to the social stability of the region. It underscores the inadequacies of existing measures to foster genuine understanding and peaceful coexistence. The conflict poses a serious threat to the city's peace, security, stability, and social cohesion. To date, research has not adequately captured the perspectives of local residents, leaving their experiences and voices largely unrepresented. As Gates et al. (2016, p. 1) note, "recurring conflict is a symptom of unaddressed grievances." This raises the critical question: Is there genuine interest in addressing the underlying issues driving the conflict, or is such engagement largely absent?

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to understand the inter-religious conflict between Christianity and Indigenous Religion in the Ga Traditional Area by exploring the causes, the effects, the actors involved, the threat to the resolution, and the measures for the resolution of the conflict.

1.4 Research Objectives

The objectives of this research were to:

1. identify the causes of the conflict between Christianity and Indigenous Religion(s) in the area
2. examine the effects of the conflict on Christianity and Indigenous Religion(s).
3. determine the actors involved in the conflict.
4. identify the threats to the resolution of the inter-religious conflict between Christianity and Indigenous Religion(s) in the area.

5. investigate the measures that can help resolve the conflict between Christianity and Indigenous Religion(s).

1.5 Research Questions

This study, therefore, sought to address the following questions:

1. what are the causes of the conflict between Christianity and Indigenous Religion(s) in the area?
2. what are the effects of the conflict on Christianity and Indigenous Religion(s)?
3. who are the actors involved in the conflict?
4. what are the threats to the resolution of the inter-religious conflict between Christianity and Indigenous Religion(s) in the area?
5. how can the conflict between Christianity and IRs be resolved?

1.6 Delimitations of the Study

The scope of this research was primarily confined to the study of Christianity and Indigenous Religion within the Ga Traditional Area in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. It aimed to assess the conflicts between these two religious systems and their impacts on their respective members. While the primary focus was on this specific geographic and cultural/religious context, the study occasionally referenced relevant events and examples from other cultural/religious settings within and outside Ghana to provide a broader perspective.

The research was scheduled between January and November 2024, allowing for an in-depth examination of the subject matter within this timeframe. This period enabled the researcher to gather extensive data and insights, ensuring a thorough analysis of the coexistence and conflicts between Christianity and Indigenous Religion in the Ga Traditional Area.

1.7 Significance of the Study

The significance of this research was manifold, with implications for policymakers, spiritual leaders, and communities aiming to foster tolerance, dialogue, and peaceful coexistence between different religious traditions in Ghana. The study was poised to contribute substantially to knowledge by elucidating strategies for harmonious coexistence between Christianity and Indigenous Religion(s) regarding their beliefs and practices. Additionally, this research sought to encourage believers to re-examine and adapt to each other's beneficial practices, promoting mutual understanding and respect.

By addressing these critical issues, the research provided valuable insights that can guide local leaders, policymakers, and community stakeholders in the Ga Traditional Area and similar contexts within Ghana. It highlighted strategies for fostering tolerance, dialogue, and peaceful coexistence among adherents of diverse religious traditions. Moreover, the study aimed to aid opinion leaders, particularly religious and community leaders, in developing policies that protect and respect all religious groups' beliefs, practices, and human rights. This work was intended to provide some strategies that will help to resolve existing conflicts and prevent future ones, thereby enhancing the growth and harmony of religious communities.

Ultimately, this research's findings served as a valuable resource for other communities experiencing similar religious conflicts, providing practical methods to eliminate them and promote growth within their religious sectors.

1.8 Definition of Terms

Tradition: Tradition refers to customs, beliefs, or practices passed down from generation to generation within a particular society or community. These can encompass a wide range of elements, such as rituals, celebrations, values, and methods of doing things considered essential and worth preserving by a group of people.

Conflict: Conflict is a state of opposition or disagreement between individuals, groups, or entities, often arising from differing interests, values, goals, or perspectives. Conflicts can manifest in various forms, including interpersonal, organisational, societal, or even internal conflicts within an individual.

Religious Conflict: Religious conflict refers to disputes between individuals, groups, or nations due to differences in religious beliefs, practices, or ideologies. These conflicts often involve disagreements over religious doctrines, rituals, symbols, or territories and can manifest at different levels, from interpersonal to international.

Supreme Being: The term "Supreme Being" refers to a concept of an ultimate, transcendent, and all-powerful deity or divine entity considered the source and creator of the universe. This concept is found in various religious and philosophical traditions, with different belief systems using different names and attributes to describe this ultimate being.

Christianity: Christianity is a monotheistic Abrahamic religion centred on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ as presented in the New Testament. Christians believe Jesus to be the Son of God and the Messiah prophesied in the Old Testament.

Indigenous Religion(s): Indigenous Religions (IRs) refer to the various Indigenous belief systems and practices historically followed by diverse ethnic groups across the African continent. These religions are deeply rooted in the respective communities'

cultural, social, and historical contexts and often involve a complex interplay of spiritual, ritualistic, and communal elements.

Beliefs: Beliefs are the mental acceptance and conviction in the truth, actuality, or validity of something. This term also refers to specific tenets or a body of tenets accepted by a group of persons as accurate or true.

Theology: Theology is the study of the nature of the divine, religious beliefs, and the practice of religion. The term "theology" is derived from the Greek words "theos," meaning "God," and "logos," meaning "word" or "reason."

Doctrines: Doctrines are sets of beliefs or principles that form the core of a particular system of thought, ideology, philosophy, or religious faith.

Ga: The term "Ga" can mean two things: the people and the language they speak. The "Ga" people are an ethnic group primarily located in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. The "Ga" language is a member of the "Kwa" language family in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana.

1.9 Organisation of the Study

The study was organised into five main chapters:

Chapter One – Introduction: This chapter provided the background information, the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the objectives of the study, and the research questions that guided the investigation. It also outlined the scope and delimitations, the significance of the study, definitions of relevant terms, and the organisation of the chapters.

Chapter Two – Review of Related Literature: This chapter sought to review existing literature about the study, comparing and analysing contributions from various scholars. It provided a context for the research questions and identified gaps this study aimed to fill.

Chapter Three – Methodology: This chapter described the research design, including the philosophical paradigm, research approach, population of the study, and the context of the study. It detailed the research methods, including sampling and data collection methods, such as interviews with a total of 20 respondents. The chapter also covered the ethical considerations and the researcher's positionality. The methodology employed a narrative method for historical overviews and a descriptive method for reviewing religious objects and practices. The analytical method examined and interpreted data, creating a foundation for comparing Christianity and IRs.

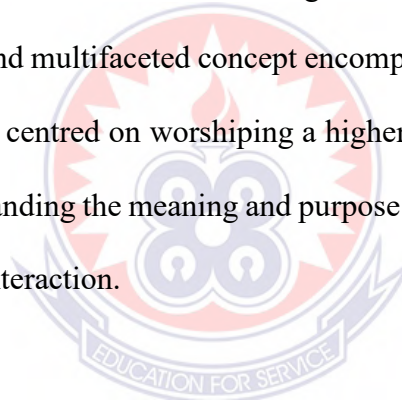
Chapter Four – Comparative Study: This chapter presented the findings from interviews with Christian denominations and African Traditional believers (Fetish Priests/Priestesses). It discussed the similarities and differences between Christianity and IRs regarding theology, dogmas, beliefs, practices, and philosophy in the Ga Traditional Area. The chapter also proposed remedial steps to address identified problems and discussed issues related to promoting peaceful religious coexistence and their influences on community members.

Chapter Five—Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations: This final chapter summarized and compared the research findings with the literature review. It highlighted the research's contributions to knowledge, presented the study's conclusions, and offered recommendations for resolving the conflict between

Christianity and IRs in the Ga Traditional Area. Finally, it presented suggestions for further studies.

1.10 Summary

Religion, a rich and intricate domain, encompasses beliefs, rituals, practices, and moral values, often revolving around the veneration of a higher power. It serves as a lens through which we comprehend the essence and direction of life, as well as a compass guiding ethical conduct and social engagement. The diversity of religion across cultures and societies is vast, with Christianity, African Traditional Religion, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and numerous others being practiced worldwide. This study, therefore, holds immense significance in the realm of religious studies and social sciences. Thus, religion is a complex and multifaceted concept encompassing beliefs, practices, rituals, and moral values often centred on worshiping a higher power or powers. It provides a framework for understanding the meaning and purpose of life and guidelines for ethical behaviour and social interaction.



CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.0 Introduction

This chapter reviewed the research-related literature. It was done with the hope that previous works related to this study would be gathered to assist in forming and enhancing the study. Understanding previous work on the subject matter was crucial in clarifying concerns. The following headings were used to group the literature for this study:

2.1 Conceptualizing Religion

Amponsah (2009) describes religion as inherently problematic because of its multifaceted nature, which includes elements that may not appear religious in isolation. For instance, religion involves group gatherings, communal meals, and theoretical discussions about the universe, making it difficult to pinpoint a universally accepted definition. James (1902) defines religion as individuals' feelings, acts, and experiences in solitude, as they perceive themselves as the divine. This implies an understanding of a Supreme Being worthy of reverence. However, James's broad inclusion of any godlike object opens the concept of religion to encompass anything, from trees to stones, as potential deities, and this creates complexity in understanding what religion is. Omoregbe (1999) offers a different perspective, defining religion as an interpersonal relationship between a man and a transcendent personal being believed to exist, emphasising the core element of belief.

Many scholars and theologians (Mbiti, 1991; Otto, 1958; Smart, 1996; Harper, 2026) have proposed numerous concepts of religion, reflecting its complexity. They agree that the etymology of the word "religion" offers some insight. It may derive from the Latin

"religare," meaning "to tie or bind," or from the Anglo-French "religiun," meaning a state of life bound by monastic vows (Harper, 2026). The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2018) notes that the word's etymology is uncertain, with early writers, such as Cicero, associating it with "relegere," meaning "to read over again," which may highlight the ritualistic nature of religions.

Assimeng (1999) argues succinctly that in many societies, the line between culture and religion is blurred. For example, in African societies, the concept of God is integral to cultural practices; however, not all cultural practices are inherently religious. Mbiti (1991) believes that this integration of religion into cultural life further complicates the definition of religion. Thus, Emile and Weber (1912) state that religion is "a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them. Eliade (1957) sees religion as "the sacred and the profane, the real and the unreal. Geertz (1973) said religion is a system of symbols that establishes powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence.

All the above definitions of religion either focus too narrowly, excluding belief systems that most agree are religious, or are too vague, suggesting that almost anything can be a religion. Jones (2006) looks at religion from a multifaceted perspective, which encompasses theological, philosophical, anthropological, sociological, and psychological dimensions. Jones (2006) argues that recognising this complexity is crucial for understanding religion's acceptable and comprehensive definition.

Amponsah (2009) also considers religion from its teleological, normative, and orienting aspects. Thus, religions aim at practice or a way of life (teleological), provide standards of morality and purpose (normative), and offer an understanding of human beings' nature and their relationship to the universe (orienting).

However, McGrath (2017) argues succinctly that religion encompasses the sociological, psychological, and historical factors integral to religion, offering a broad yet specific framework for understanding religious systems. Thus, different religious traditions offer varying conceptions of the divine. In Christianity, God is the Creator who is loving and approachable. In Judaism, He is known as Yahweh, the existing one (Smart, 1996). Buddhism generally denies any deity, while Islam believes in a powerful but unknowable God (Adamson, 2026). In African cultures, God is recognised by various names, all reflecting a belief in a supreme being (Mbiti, 1991). Defining religion remains challenging due to these diverse expressions and deep entwinement with culture and personal beliefs.

Smart (1996) believes that religious adherence reflects the profound diversity of belief systems and practices across the globe. These significant groups encompass numerous denominations and sects, contributing to the rich tapestry of global spirituality. As John Mbiti (1991) noted, "Africans are notoriously religious," emphasising the deep integration of religious belief into everyday life in many cultures. This not only brings to forth the various religions in Africa, but also how religions permeate every aspect of African life. As Eck (2001) highlighted in her work "A New Religious America," the increasing pluralism of religious beliefs in many countries especially underscores the need for more excellent interfaith dialogue and cooperation to foster mutual respect and understanding. By recognising the varied and complex nature of the world's religious

traditions, there can be a better appreciation of how these belief systems influence individual lives and collective histories. This perspective enriches the understanding of global spirituality and promotes a more inclusive and harmonious world.

2.2 Religion in Ghana

Ghana, a West African sub-Saharan country, is characterised by significant religious diversity, with a population of approximately 32 million people (Ghana Statistical Service, 2021). Christianity, Islam, and African Traditional Religion (ATR) constitute the dominant religious traditions in the country. According to official census figures, about 65% of the population identifies as Christian, 16% as Muslim, and 13% as adherents of African Traditional Religion, with the remainder belonging to other religious groups (Azumah, 2001; Ghana Statistical Service, 2021).

However, the reliability of these figures has been the subject of scholarly debate. Some scholars (Gyimah-Boadi & Prempeh, 2012; Kudadjie, 1992; Omenyo, 2006) argue that census data on religious affiliation may not accurately reflect lived religious realities in Ghana. They contend that factors such as syncretism, commonly described as “double faith” and declining institutional commitment, complicate religious categorisation. Many Ghanaians simultaneously engage in Christian, Islamic, and traditional religious practices, thereby blurring rigid religious boundaries. This fluid religious identity challenges the statistical precision of census classifications and highlights the complexity of religious life in Ghana.

Christianity was introduced to the area now known as Ghana during the period of European contact with the Gold Coast. Bartels (1965) notes that “*The Roots of Ghana Methodism*,” the earliest contact occurred in 1482 when Portuguese merchants, led by Don Diego D’Azambuja, arrived at Elmina. However, Kimble (1963) suggests other

earlier interactions through Portuguese traders who landed at Shama along the western coast as early as 1471. It is worthy to note that these early encounters did not signify the absence of religion in Ghana; rather, they took place within a deeply religious society grounded in African Indigenous belief systems. Mbiti (1969) and Asante et al. (2015) agree conveniently that African Indigenous Religion has historically constituted the foundational worldview of Ghanaian societies, permeating all spheres of life, including social organisation, governance, morality, economic activity, and cultural practices. Thus, it functioned not merely as a system of belief but as an integrated way of life that shaped individual and collective existence.

Obeng (1996) suggests a subsequent encounter of the catholic missionary from France in 1572, but failed to establish enduring Christian institutions. Nonetheless, these early initiatives laid the foundation for more sustained missionary activity in the nineteenth century (Obeng 1996). Notable among these were the Basel Mission from Germany in 1828, the Wesleyan Methodist Mission from Britain in 1835, and renewed Catholic missionary efforts in 1881 (Schweizer, 2000). These missions benefited from earlier groundwork and achieved more lasting success.

Kudadjie (1992) and Omenyo (2006) agree that missionary activities in Ghana were often organised along ethnic and linguistic lines. For example, the Wesleyan Methodists focused primarily on the coastal Mfantse communities, while missionaries of the Reformed tradition worked among the Akwapim and Ewe populations. Munala (2002) and Gyimah-Boadi et al. (2012) argue that this approach contributed to the creation of spheres of religious influence that intersected with ethnic and cultural identities, thereby shaping social segmentation within Ghanaian society.

Asamoah-Gyadu (2005) and Gifford (2004) opine that from the mid-twentieth century onward, newer Christian movements, particularly Pentecostal, African Independent, and Charismatic churches, expanded rapidly, especially from the 1950s and 1970s. Omenyo (2006) agrees that these developments reflected broader socio-political changes, urbanisation, and evolving religious expressions, further diversifying the Christian landscape in Ghana.

2.3 The Concept of Indigenous Religion(s) (IRs)

Ndlovu et al. (1995) define Indigenous Religion (IR) as a religious system practiced across Africa before the arrival of Western missionaries and Abrahamic religions. Thus, its central focus lies in the preservation of African cultural values and worldviews, with a strong emphasis on ancestor veneration and ritual practices that express loyalty to the departed. Quarcoopome (1987) argues that rather than functioning solely as a belief system, IR operates as a comprehensive way of life, shaping attitudes toward the universe, human existence, morality, and social relations.

Kimmerle (2006) elaborates that the key features of Indigenous Religions include polytheism, animism, and belief in a spiritual hierarchy comprising gods, spirits, and ancestors. Again, ancestors are believed to maintain an active influence over the living, serving as intermediaries between humans and the spiritual realm. Many traditions affirm belief in an afterlife, spirit worlds, and, in some cases, reincarnation within one's family lineage (Sage, 2009). Ndlovu et al. (1995) believe Indigenous Religious beliefs encompass concepts such as magic, witchcraft, the hereafter, and indigenous healing practices.

Juergensmeyer (2006), Mbiti (1991), and Nweke (2022) agree that indigenous Religions are predominantly oral traditions, transmitted across generations through storytelling, songs, rituals, and festivals rather than written scriptures. These religions are deeply intertwined with nature, with deities and rituals associated with natural elements such as rivers, mountains, trees, and animals (Kimmerle, 2006; Clemmont, 2005). Rituals involving music, dance, drumming, and symbolic actions play a crucial role in maintaining harmony between the natural and supernatural realms (Sage, 2009).

Chitando (2010) elaborates how, throughout history, Indigenous Religion has been labeled “*traditional*” to distinguish it from Christianity and Islam; however, this terminology has increasingly been questioned. Colonial narratives often falsely portrayed Africa as lacking religion; however, Achebe (1958) and Mbiti (1969) challenge this misconception. Contemporary scholarship, like Chitando (2010) and Asante et al. (2015), recognises IR as a legitimate and complex religious system that promotes social cohesion, ethical conduct, and communal identity. Despite shared characteristics, Indigenous Religions are highly diverse, reflecting Africa’s rich cultural plurality.

2.4 Identifying Africans in Indigenous Religion

Asante et al. (2015) observe that the term “*African traditional religion*” has historically been used to describe religious practices in Africa before the arrival of Christianity and Islam. They believe that this description is part of the efforts to define African identity, or “Africanness,” through cultural and religious expressions (Ahmadou, n.d.). However, Ahmadou (n.d.) and Achebe (1958) contend that these characteristics often associated with Africanness, such as ancestry, community orientation, shared history, and marginalisation, are not unique to Africa. They believe that similar cultural practices exist in other societies, such as Christianity and Islam. As a result, Asukwo et

al. (2013) criticize the blanket categorisation of African religions as “traditional” and see it as both inaccurate and potentially derogatory.

Mbiti (1969) and Idowu (1973) argue that Africans historically possessed knowledge of a supreme Creator (God), before external religious influences, and sporadic practices such as witchcraft should not be conflated with Indigenous Religion. These seem to suggest that historical and comparative examples from Western societies demonstrate that practices such as witchcraft or magic were not considered part of the mainstream religious life, and Opoku (1978) illustrates that such isolated practices do not define a society’s religion.

Asukwo et al. (2013) argue that labeling African religions as “traditional” is an oversimplification and can perpetuate racist or biased assumptions. They advocate for the term “*Indigenous Religion (IR)*”, which emphasises religion as an integral part of African identity while acknowledging cultural dynamism. Asukwo et al. (2013) argue that identity formation (religion as cultural and personal identity) is one of the roles of Indigenous Religion. Sarpong (n.d.) believes that indigenous religion unites communities around shared goals while reflecting local ecological and cultural contexts

Asukwo et al. (2013) believe that in indigenous religion, moral codes prohibit murder, theft, adultery, and disrespect toward elders, illustrating a uniform ethical foundation across diverse cultures. Asukwo and Etta (2012) agree that while religion can incite conflict, many African cultures historically condemned war except in cases of survival. Thus, religion transmits values and heritage across generations, preserving collective memory even amid linguistic or societal changes (Asukwo et al., 2013). Sarpong (n.d.) and Asukwo et al. (2013) observe that religion shapes Africans’ understanding of

existence and the divine, with core beliefs in God's existence remaining resilient despite modernisation and intercultural influences.

2.5 Conceptualising Conflict

Amponsah (2020) conceptualises conflict as differences or dissimilarities between individuals or groups, viewing it as a natural outcome of human behavior and an inherent aspect of social life. Similarly, Dunlop (2002) describes conflict as a disagreement between two or more parties, each attempting to persuade the other to accept its perspective or position. Adebile et al. (2012) further argue that conflict arises whenever activities or actions are incompatible, noting that such incompatibilities can obstruct or diminish the effectiveness of certain actions.

Afful-Broni (2012) argues that conflicts are inevitable in human relationships, manifesting in various settings such as families, workplaces, and nations. As Afful-Broni (2012) further asserts, most conflicts are associated with adverse outcomes, and inter-religious conflicts are no exception. These conflicts often stem from misunderstandings about doctrines, dogmas, and practices. Maill et al. (2011), Bercovitch et al. (2009), and Fisher et al. (2011) agree that recognising the inevitability of conflicts is the first step towards developing effective conflict resolution strategies, underscoring the importance of this research.

Scholarly literature (Aremu, 2010; Mayer, 2012; Avis, 2019) demonstrates that conflict is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon arising from incompatibilities among ideas, beliefs, values, interests, goals, and resources. These writers' diverse definitions and explanations highlight the inherent nature of conflict in human interaction, and Aremu (2010) and Avis (2019) admit that these varied definitions make it difficult to arrive at a single or universally accepted definition. As Avis (2019) observes, no consensus exists

on a definitive definition of conflict, while the UNDP (2012) emphasises that conflict cannot be completely eliminated; however, it can be effectively managed or contained.

Conflict manifests at multiple levels, including intrapersonal, interpersonal, group, community, organisational, national, and international contexts. Mayer (n.d.) conceptualises conflict as a combination of perception, emotion, and action, underscoring its dynamic and sometimes contradictory nature. Galtung (1996) further frames conflict as a triadic interaction of attitudes, behaviours, and goals, illustrating how tensions evolve into confrontation.

Stewart (2008) and Murshed et al. (2009) conveniently link conflict to unmet needs, grievances, and inequalities. That is, Gurr (1970) agrees that conflict often emerges when there is a perceived gap between expectations and actual outcomes or when disparities exist between aspirations and achievements (Murshed and Tadjoeeddin, 2009). Galtung (1969) maintains that structural and cultural inequalities can also generate conflict even in the absence of physical violence. These dynamics explain why no society, regardless of development or prosperity, has been entirely free from conflict. Lund (2003), Polachek et al. (2010), Hegre (2013), Duker (2018), and Avis (2019) believe that contemporary conflicts are increasingly complex and protracted, with far-reaching consequences such as health challenges, underdevelopment, insecurity, and the emergence of new forms of violence. Given its global prevalence across all continents, conflict remains a universal concern requiring sustained scholarly and practical engagement.

For the purpose of this study, conflict is defined as a form of human interaction that results in strained relationships. Recognising the diverse theoretical perspectives on conflict is essential for effective conflict analysis and management. Against this

background, the study focuses specifically on religious conflict and tension, situating it within the broader discourse on conflict dynamics and resolution.

2.6 Religious Conflict

Appleby (2000) and Fox (2004) see religious conflict as a complex and enduring phenomenon deeply embedded in cultural, historical, political, and social contexts. According to the *Global Education Digest* (GED, 2017), religious conflicts often emerge when adherents of one faith attempt to impose their beliefs on others. However, such conflicts presuppose the existence of social relationships; where no interaction exists, conflict cannot occur. This underscores the relational nature of inter-religious conflict.

Hornby (2006) affirms the historical persistence of religious conflict and offers diverse definitions that reflect its multifaceted character. Hornby (2006) conceptualises religious conflict as serious disagreements among religious adherents arising from opposing ideas, values, and desires, often manifesting across contested domains such as ideology, morality, power, identity, and sacred space. Thus, these conflicts are influenced by enabling political, economic, social, cultural, and psychological conditions.

Huntington (1996) also links religious conflict to clashes rooted in differences in religious beliefs and practices, while Juergensmeyer (2000) highlights the role of religiously motivated violence in generating social and political instability. Fox (2002) argues that religious conflict occurs when religious differences significantly shape the causes or outcomes of disputes. Similarly, Appleby (2000), and Fearon and Laitin (2003) stress the role of religious identity in group mobilisation and elite manipulation. Jenkins (2002) associates religious conflict with ideological motivations that sustain

prolonged violence, whereas Gurr (1970) situates it within broader social conflict over incompatible goals and values. Varshney (2002) further links religious violence to socioeconomic inequalities, political manipulation, and historical grievances.

Despite definitional variations, these perspectives converge on the understanding that religious conflict fundamentally involves disagreement and contestation between religious groups. A comprehensive analysis, therefore, requires recognising its multidimensional nature and distinguishing between its various forms, including inter-religious, intra-religious, and sectarian conflicts.

2.7 Inter-Religious Conflict

Varshney (2002), Mathew (2014), and Amponsah (2020) acknowledge inter-religious conflict as an inevitable aspect of social and religious life. Mathew (2014) asserts that inter-religious conflict is a natural occurrence, particularly where religious beliefs and practices intersect or compete. Amponsah (2020) similarly argues that such conflicts often arise from competition rooted in divergent belief systems and religious practices, indicating that conflict is inherent within and between religious institutions.

Galtung (1996) argues that despite its inevitability, inter-religious conflict is not inherently destructive. That is, when approached constructively, conflict resolution processes can serve as opportunities for growth, transformation, and positive change at both individual and institutional levels. This shows that a religion's capacity to address and resolve conflicts through collaborative and dialogical means significantly influences its internal cohesion, public credibility, and overall effectiveness.

Annan-Prah et al. (2015) categorise the causes of inter-religious conflict into broadly *structural* and *interpersonal* factors. They believe that structurally induced conflicts stem from the fundamental doctrines, belief systems, and ritual practices of

religions themselves. In contrast, interpersonal conflicts arise from tensions, attitudes, and interactions among adherents of different religious traditions (Annan-Prah et al., 2015). Mba (2013) argues that the growing prevalence and complexity of inter-religious conflicts have prompted sustained scholarly engagement, leading to diverse conceptualisations and analyses of their causes and dynamics.

2.7.1 Causes of Inter-religious Conflict

Doctrinal Differences

Huntington (1996) indicates that divergences in religious doctrines and beliefs can create fundamental disagreements between religious groups, leading to conflict. These relate to beliefs and practices, and the inability to resolve conflicting interests is predominant in most religions. Obasan (2011) agrees that differences in doctrines between religions can cause conflict. In addition, there can be dogmatic clashes, which some religions hold an entrenched position on. Thus, conflict can arise over beliefs and practices, doctrines, theological teachings, and dogmas, and varying views on seeking the Supreme Being. According to Sobia (2012), conflict may arise in religions due to the beliefs and practices that the believers hold onto. This situation creates an environment in which the faiths may clash with one another. Umar (2000) further agrees that if the relationship goes awry, one party may seek revenge on the other. That is, conflicts can occur when people have opposing beliefs or hold differing ideas. It may arise when people have differing views about the order and sequence in which tasks must be completed. Religions can also clash when disagreeing on the best way to seek the Supreme Being.

Historical Grievances and Trauma

Juergensmeyer (2000) indicates that long-standing historical grievances and collective trauma from past conflicts can fuel ongoing hostility between religious groups. Thus, Juergensmeyer (2000) explores how historical traumas and grievances, often dating back centuries, continue to influence contemporary inter-religious conflicts.

Political Manipulation

According to Nasr (2006), political leaders may exploit religious differences to gain or maintain power, inciting inter-religious tensions and conflicts. He explains that political leaders have used sectarian differences within Islam to further their political agendas, leading to increased inter-religious conflict.

Socio-Economic Inequality

Varshney (2002) believes that economic disparities between religious communities can lead to tensions and conflict, particularly when one group feels marginalised or oppressed. Varshney (2002) further analyses how socio-economic inequalities between Hindus and Muslims in India have contributed to inter-religious conflicts, with economic grievances often intersecting with religious identities.

Religious Identity Threats

Varshney (2002) argues that perceived threats to religious identity can lead to defensive aggression and conflict between religious groups. Trigg (2007) agrees that conflicts arise when religious groups feel their identity and religious-cultural practices are threatened, leading to defensive measures that can escalate into conflict.

Competition for Resources

Collier et al. (2004) maintain that competition for scarce resources such as land, water, and political power can exacerbate conflicts between religious communities. Appleby

(2000) collaborates that competition for resources, often intertwined with religious identities, can lead to violent conflicts between different religious groups.

Religious Nationalism

The rise of religious nationalism, where religious identity is closely tied to national identity, can marginalise minority religious groups and lead to conflict. Bose (2018) indicates that religious nationalism in countries like India and Turkey has led to the marginalisation of religious minorities and heightened inter-religious conflicts.

Extremist Ideologies

The proliferation of extremist ideologies that advocate violence against other religious groups can lead to inter-religious conflicts. According to Roy (2017), extremist ideologies, particularly those propagated by groups like ISIS, have led to increased inter-religious violence and conflict globally. Rother (2009) confirms that conflict can arise where there are perceived or actual differences among religious sects

Mathew (2014) believes that understanding the types and causes of religious conflict is essential for effective identification and management of such conflicts. George (2013) also sees conflict as an inevitable aspect of social life, as individuals and groups pursue differing values, interests, and goals. George (2013) further argues that despite the emphasis placed by religions on peace and unity, inter-religious conflicts frequently arise due to divergent beliefs and faith commitments.

Green (2012), George (2013), and Amponsah (2020) classify conflict into several forms, including intrapersonal, intragroup, and intergroup conflict. Intrapersonal conflict occurs within individuals, often manifesting as internal struggles or indecision (George, 2013). Intragroup conflict arises among members of the same group, religion, or organisation and reflects internal disagreements within a collective entity (George,

2013). Intergroup conflict, which is particularly relevant to this study, occurs between distinct groups, such as different religious communities, and Amponsah (2020) notes that it is driven not only by personality differences but also by competing values, beliefs, and interests.

These conflicts sometimes pose significant threats to social cohesion, religious tolerance, and interfaith dialogue. Green (2012) agrees that, if not addressed promptly and effectively, such conflicts can undermine institutions and religious organisations, leading to prolonged divisions and instability. Consequently, recognising the various forms of conflict enhances the capacity for timely intervention and constructive conflict resolution.

2.8 Africans at the Crossroads

Aya (2000) and Sarpong (2002) believe that cultural and religious encounters often generate conflict, particularly where Indigenous Religion intersects with Christianity in African societies. This is because religion is deeply embedded in African culture, separating. Mulagu (1991) argues that indigenous Religion from cultural identity is difficult, making such encounters prone to conflict. Aya (2000) observes that African societies experience conflict when indigenous cultural realities confront Western religious traditions introduced through Christianity.

Aya (200) opines that modern Africans are frequently enculturated into both African and Western traditions, resulting in cultural dislocation and identity conflict, especially in religious practice. This conflict is illustrated by cases where African cultural expressions, such as indigenous musical instruments, are rejected in Christian worship settings. Ogundele (2002) recounts the experience of Duro Ladipo, whose incorporation of traditional Yoruba drums into Christian worship led to his rejection by the church,

reflecting broader resistance to African cultural forms perceived as “pagan.” John Paul II (1995) and Bediako (1997) recount how similar resistance occurred in an intercultural Catholic mass in Rome, where African drums were initially barred due to their association with Indigenous Religion. These practices mirror early Christian debates, such as the Judaizers’ insistence on Jewish customs for Gentile converts, which St. Paul opposed by advocating the expression of the Gospel through indigenous cultural forms (Acts 15; Philippians 3). Knitter (1988) narrates how contemporary African theologians similarly emphasise inculturation, arguing for the integration of African cultural and religious symbols into Christian theology and practice

Literary expressions further illustrate this cultural-religious conflict. Okara (1966) in his poem “*Piano and Drums*,” captures the psychological and cultural struggle faced by Africans navigating between indigenous and Western worlds. Bediako (1995) and Sanneh (2008) highlight that conflicts between Indigenous Religion and Christianity are rooted in cultural misunderstanding and resistance to indigenous expressions, underscoring the need for contextualised and culturally sensitive approaches to religious practice and dialogue. To describe the crossroads some Africans face, I employed the poem “*Piano and Drums*” to show the significance of cultural confusion:

When I hear jungle drums telegraphing at the break of day at a riverside,
I hear the mystic rhythm, urgent and raw, like bleeding flesh, speaking
of Primal youth and the beginning... Then, I hear a wailing piano solo,
speaking in complex ways. In the tear-furrowed concerto, Of faraway
lands... Moreover, I was lost at a riverside in the morning mist of age,
wandering in the mystic rhythm of jungle drums and the concerto
(Okara, 1966, p.36-37).

An analysis of this poem reveals the piano as a representation of the European way of life and the drums as a representation of the African way of life. Oni (1997), in his analysis of this poem, writes that “the piano is a musical instrument made by Europeans and supplies European music to Europeans. The jungle drums, like bata or ekwe, are

homemade musical instruments that supply African melody to Africans. In this poem, the African first hears the vibrant sounds of the jungle drums, which move him from head to toe. Then, the sound of the piano comes faintly, narrowly, and sadly from a very distant place. Now, the speaker must stand between these two different types of music. The piano enters the right ear; jungle music enters the left. The situation needs to be clarified for him. He only looks on, unable to sing or dance to either. The speaker finds himself in a cultural dilemma of contact between the African culture and the European or Western culture". The two cultures meet and clash inside him. This poem highlights the clash of faith between African Traditional Religion and Christianity.

2.9 Integration of Indigenous Religion and Christianity

Mokhoathi (2020) and Masoga et al. (2021) highlight persistent conflicts surrounding the indigenisation of Christianity in Africa, particularly in its engagement with African Indigenous Religion. Knitter (1988), drawing on "*Zulu Sofola*," argues that African Christianity has often pursued superficial indigenisation by adopting African cultural forms while retaining a fundamentally European theological worldview. Sofola (1973) contends that unless Christ is presented in a manner intelligible to African cosmology and mentality, Christianity will remain alien and ineffective. True inculturation, he argues, requires liberating Christianity from European dominance so that it resonates authentically with African realities.

This critique, Knitter (1988) says, is reinforced by the growth of African Independent Churches, which have maintained a strong integration of religion with African traditional life and continue to challenge mainline churches to deepen contextual engagement. At the same time, Bediako (1995) argues that Christian exclusivist

theology, particularly interpretations emphasising Christ as the sole mediator, has fostered resistance to Indigenous Religious practices, often labeling them as idolatrous. Oha (2000) observes that contemporary African Christianity, especially Pentecostalism, emphasises spiritual warfare narratives that frame human experiences as battles between divine and demonic forces. That is, while early missionary Christianity dismissed beliefs in evil spirits as superstition, modern Pentecostal movements in Ghana and Nigeria increasingly share conceptual ground with Indigenous Religion regarding the active presence of spiritual forces, even as they demonise African Traditional Religion (Meyer, 1998). Meyer (1998) further notes that this conflict manifests as a struggle between Pentecostalisation and Africanisation, with traditional beliefs often reinterpreted as satanic influences.

Kwabena-Essem (2006) highlights the Western misunderstanding of African religious worldviews, particularly the interconnectedness of religion, medicine, psychology, and daily life. Parrinder (1954) puts it succinctly that, despite modernization and increased formal education, African religious consciousness remains deeply shaped by traditional cosmologies. That is, beneath the surface of new religious identities, enduring Indigenous beliefs continue to influence African spirituality, as the spiritual and material worlds are perceived as inseparably linked.

Overall, Oduro et al. (2008) demonstrate that African Traditional Religion and Christianity coexist in complex and often conflicting ways. That is, while conflicts persist regarding integration and separation, Indigenous and Christian values continue to intersect in everyday African life, reflecting an ongoing negotiation between inherited traditions and adopted religious frameworks.

2.10 Dynamisms in Conflict

Conflicts vary in nature, and each possesses unique dynamics. Understanding these dynamics is essential for effective conflict management and the promotion of sustainable peace (Mahama & Longi, 2013; Penu & Osei-Kufuor, 2016; Mayer, n.d.). Mahama and Longi (2013) examined conflicts in northern Ghana, focusing on stakeholders, potential solutions, and pathways toward resolution. They argued that a thorough understanding of conflict dynamics is a prerequisite for determining appropriate management strategies. Their comparative historical analysis of the Bawku, Dabgon, Chuchuliga, and Konkomba conflicts highlights how the consequences of these disputes have affected relationships, livelihoods, property, and productivity. For example, the Bawku conflict has manifested in varied forms and intensities over time, rendering resolution particularly difficult and protracted (Bukhari, 2013).

Despite numerous interventions, the Bawku conflict remains unresolved, and the area continues to be a potential flashpoint in northern Ghana (Lund, 2003). Bukhari (2013) contends that the conflict extends beyond chieftaincy disputes, encompassing struggles to protect community identity. This underscores Mahama and Longi's (2013) assertion that conflict resolution in such contexts requires locally informed, indigenous approaches. They emphasise that strategies applied by intervening parties have had mixed success, and lasting peace is unlikely unless underlying issues in the Bawku and Dabgon conflicts are addressed. Körppen (2006) supports this view, arguing that conflict analysis must precede intervention, as it explains why some interventions succeed while others fail. He notes that interventions are dynamic processes that yield different outcomes depending on cultural and religious contexts, and that relying solely on theoretical concepts is insufficient (Körppen, 2006, p. 7).

While the Dagbon conflict appears formally resolved, perceptions of peace among the local population remain underexplored. Understanding the dynamics of interventions in these cases is crucial for developing sustainable strategies and avoiding the repetition of past mistakes (Mahama & Longi, 2013). This insight is directly relevant to my research, which explores the dynamics of inter-religious conflict between Christianity and African Traditional Religion (IR) in the Ga Traditional Area, an area where the conflict dynamics have yet to be documented. A nuanced understanding of these dynamics can inform strategies for lasting resolution and the restoration of peace between religious communities.

Brorby (2013) conducted a qualitative study on conflicts within multicultural organisations and identified multiple conflict patterns shaped by employee expectations, organisational change, multicultural interactions, and management practices. Brorby's work, grounded in conflict theory, demonstrates that conflict patterns emerge from interconnected and reinforcing dynamics. This insight is relevant to understanding the inter-religious conflict in the Ga Traditional Area, as it underscores that interactions between parties inherently produce conflict, whether at individual, organisational, or community levels (Gyamera et al., 2016).

Similarly, Ahiave (2013) examined the Dagbon conflict, highlighting factors such as succession interruptions, political influence, poverty, and unemployment as key drivers of the conflict. These findings align with the UNDP (2012) observation that politicisation complicates conflict resolution. Ahiave (2013) also documented multiple interventions, including military and police deployments, commissions of inquiry, and mediation by traditional and civil society actors, yet the conflict remained unresolved. His work demonstrates the complexity of intractable conflicts and provides valuable

lessons for addressing both Dagbon and other conflicts in Ghana, including my study on inter-religious conflicts in the Ga Traditional Area.

Nieuwpoort (2016) analysed irregular armed conflicts using the Israeli Independence War as a case study, highlighting that multiple, interacting factors, ranging from social cleavages to the capacity of armed groups, shape conflict dynamics. Penu and Osei-Kufuor (2016) echo this perspective, emphasising that understanding the multifaceted and fluid dynamics of the Nkonya-Alavanyo conflict is essential for effective peacebuilding (p. 97). Nieuwpoort's framework demonstrates that no single factor can fully explain conflict dynamics, as these factors interact in complex and context-specific ways (Nieuwpoort, 2016).

Gati (2008) examined communal conflicts in Ghana's local government system, using the Adaklu-Anyigbe conflict as a case study. He found that identity, socio-economic deprivation, underdevelopment, and traditional power struggles fueled the conflict, which was exacerbated by failures of both state and semi-traditional institutions to address grievances. Gati's study highlights how interactions between traditional and state systems can either mitigate or exacerbate conflicts, a finding directly relevant to understanding the inter-religious conflict in the Ga Traditional Area. This perspective aligns with Körppen's (2006) assertion that local actors must define the conflict system and its characteristics, emphasising the importance of conflict analysis for successful intervention.

Penu and Osei-Kufuor (2016) identified "peace factors" and "tension factors" that influenced the dynamics of the Nkonya-Alavanyo conflict. They found that incidents such as anonymous killings disrupt peace processes and undermine interventions. Penu (2016) further observed that violent incidents, emerging identities, land disputes, and

socialisation of younger generations into the conflict contributed to its protracted nature. These findings highlight the critical role of conflict dynamics in shaping both the complexity and duration of disputes.

Debrah et al. (2016) explored the Nawuri-Gonja conflict, revealing how the conflict affected economic, health, psychological, religious, and social aspects of community life. They argue that recovery is a long-term process, as conflicts create interwoven tensions spanning religious, political, and traditional dimensions. This reinforces the consensus in the literature that understanding conflict dynamics is fundamental to effective conflict management and resolution.

In summary, the review demonstrates that conflict dynamics differ across cases but consistently influence the nature, complexity, and resolution of disputes. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for explaining why certain conflicts, such as the inter-religious conflict in the Ga Traditional Area, remain unresolved and for informing strategies to achieve sustainable peace.

2.11 Conflict Recurrence

Conflicts in Ghana are increasingly recurring and becoming more intractable (Mahama & Longi, 2013; Asamoah, 2014). Research on the recurrence of conflicts has grown in recent years, highlighting the threats such conflicts pose to peace and stability. Asamoah (2014), using the Nkonya-Alavanyo conflict as a case study, observed that the repeated resurgence of the dispute is largely due to the land being regarded as a traditional heritage that must be protected, regardless of the consequences (p. 4). According to Asamoah (2014), ethnic and religious conflicts in Ghana recur frequently, posing a continuous threat to the nation's peace and stability.

Anumel (2017) questioned the effectiveness of conflict resolution mechanisms in Ghana, emphasising that the type of mechanism employed and the manner in which parties engage with it can determine whether a conflict reoccurs. Similarly, Braithwaite and Sudduth (2016) examined military purges in non-democracies between 1969 and 2003, finding that the removal of high-ranking officials can reduce the likelihood of civil conflict recurrence by helping dictators preserve stability in post-conflict contexts (p. 1). Gates et al. (2016) further note that conflicts often repeat, stating that approximately 60% of conflicts recur, with post-conflict peace averaging seven years, and that most conflict onsets since the mid-1990s have been recurrences (p. 1). The United Nations (2017) corroborates this, reporting a six-fold increase in battle-related deaths from 2011 onward and that 60% of conflicts in the early 2000s relapsed within five years (p. 2). Gates et al. (2016) argue that recurrent conflicts signal unresolved grievances, and sustainable peace can only be achieved by addressing these underlying concerns.

Gates et al. (2016) also highlight the global pattern of conflict recurrence. Out of 259 armed conflicts identified by the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), 159 recurred, and 100 involved new groups or incompatibilities (p. 1). They note that 135 countries have experienced repeated conflict situations, with North Africa, the Middle East, and Sub-Saharan Africa contributing significantly to these patterns. Factors contributing to conflict recurrence include entrenched ethnic divisions, poverty, underdevelopment, lack of democracy, unresolved settlements, and the absence of security guarantees, which may incentivise parties to resume fighting to avoid marginalisation (Gates et al., 2016, pp. 2–3). Additionally, competition over natural resources exacerbates grievances, finances rebellion, and increases the strategic value of controlling the state (Gates et al., 2016, pp. 2–3).

In Ghana, conflict recurrence is particularly evident in the northern region (Debrah et al., 2016). Sulemana (2009) surveyed 600 residents to capture perceptions of local conflicts, while Loyle and Appel (2016) emphasised that processes addressing the underlying motivations of conflicts are critical in reducing recurrence (p. 1). Payne et al. (2017) found that civil wars over central government control are more likely to recur than secessionist wars, and that decisive victories by one side reduce the likelihood of recurrence within five to ten years (p. 17). Jackson and Morelli (2009) similarly argue that wars persist until either a decisive victory occurs or the cost of continuing becomes prohibitively high (p. 3).

Wordofa (2010) warned of the threat of new conflicts in Africa, suggesting that addressing both ongoing and potential disputes is essential to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Collier and Hoeffler (2000) also observed frequent conflict recurrences in certain territories. El-Bushra (2017) noted that premature transitions from active conflict to post-conflict status, without resolving underlying causes, often prolong disputes (p. 4). Hegre and Nygård (2012) emphasize that “good governance reduces the likelihood of conflict renewal, the onset of new conflicts, and their overall incidence” (p. 1). Poor governance, conversely, contributes to a “conflict trap,” which Hegre et al. (2017) find has intensified in recent years. Their simulations indicate that large, low-income countries with ongoing conflict experience significantly more years of future conflict compared to those where peace is maintained (p. 243).

In West Africa, Annan (2014) expresses concern that violent conflicts and civil strife remain poorly understood, increasing the risk of recurring disputes. Collectively, these studies suggest that conflict recurrence in Ghana, particularly in regions such as the north, is influenced by unresolved grievances, structural inequalities, ineffective resolution mechanisms, and governance challenges. Understanding these patterns is

essential for developing sustainable strategies to prevent future conflict and promote long-term peace.

2.12 Conflict Actors

Various individuals, institutions, and groups play distinct roles in conflicts, and the actions of each actor can significantly shape the trajectory, duration, and pattern of the dispute, including the strategies employed (Adzahlie-Mensah, Golo, & Gyamfuaa-Abrefa, 2016). In their study on conflict prevention, Adzahlie-Mensah et al. (2016) emphasise that actors are central interacting components of any conflict, as their interests, needs, and identities are often at stake (p. 179). Their work, situated within the conflict prevention paradigm, highlights the importance of considering actors' power, context, timing, and roles in preventing, managing, and resolving disputes.

Adzahlie-Mensah et al. (2016) propose an actor-mapping process to identify and clarify stakeholders whose interests are affected by the conflict. This process also helps to recognise community members opposed to the conflict, political dynamics, conflict spoilers, independent groups, and influential personalities, all of whom play varying roles in the conflict process. Understanding actors' identities, power relations, and interactions is thus crucial for effective conflict prevention, management, and resolution.

External actors also influence conflicts significantly. Stedman (1999) notes that humanitarian organisations, international financial institutions, peacekeepers, and mediators often support factions in conflict (p. 4). However, interventions by some external actors may inadvertently hinder conflict resolution. Von Uexkull and Pettersson (2018), studying organised violence in Africa between 1989 and 2011,

provide insights into the causes, dynamics, and consequences of non-state armed conflicts in the region.

Pearlman and Cunningham (2011) define non-state actors as organised political entities not directly linked to the state but pursuing objectives that affect critical state interests (p. 1). Von Uexkull and Pettersson (2018) identified 401 non-state actors in their study, 16% of which had a religious identity (p. 10). They argue that actors' livelihoods shape their identities, communal needs, and willingness to compromise in conflict, rather than simply serving as income sources for the group (p. 11). Similarly, Pearlman and Cunningham (2011) contend that the interaction between non-state actors and their external environment can create both opportunities and constraints, influencing actors' decisions and engagement in conflict (p. 5).

External support to non-state actors can originate from national or foreign governments, as well as groups residing within or outside the conflict zone (Von Uexkull & Pettersson, 2018, p. 11). Pearlman and Cunningham (2011) classify non-state actors into nationalist and self-determination movements, rebel groups, and warlords (p. 4). These actors exert varying effects on conflict dynamics, with external governmental actors often having the greatest influence on violent mobilisations and the overall trajectory of the conflict (Von Uexkull & Pettersson, 2018, p. 11; Arasli, 2011). Fragmentation within actor groups further shapes conflict processes, affecting mobilisation, negotiation, and resolution outcomes (Pearlman & Cunningham, 2011).

Understanding actors' roles, power sources, interests, and interactions is critical for designing effective conflict interventions (Grönberg et al., 2011). Actors can operate at different levels, supporting or opposing the conflict, and may be perceived differently depending on perspective. An actor seen as supportive by outsiders may be viewed as

opposed by members of the conflict community, highlighting the importance of contextual understanding (Grönberg et al., 2011).

Overall, the literature indicates that interactions among actors strongly influence conflict dynamics and outcomes, including prevention, management, and resolution. However, despite these insights, there remains a gap in understanding the specific actors involved in inter-religious conflicts and how their interactions have contributed to the persistent challenges in resolving such conflicts in the Ga Traditional Area.

2.13 Threats to Conflict Resolution

Resolving conflicts is a complex and challenging process. As Adzahlie-Mensah and Benson (2018, p. 9) note, conflict resolution is “complex and multidimensional.” In their process model, they emphasise that building trust and confidence, ensuring access to resources, exercising patience, and understanding local issues are critical for successful conflict resolution. Failure to consider these elements can significantly hinder the resolution process (Adzahlie-Mensah & Benson, 2018). Similarly, El-Bushra (2017) argues that conflict and peace should be understood as iterative, multi-layered, and dynamic processes to ensure that interventions yield productive outcomes (p. 2).

The participatory nature of peace processes is also critical. Reflecting on the Nkonya-Alavanyo conflict, Kuupiel (2019) contends that processes that exclude key stakeholders or fail to account for local context are unlikely to achieve optimal outcomes. Kuupiel (2019) further stresses the importance of reflection in conflict resolution, arguing that neglecting this can result in overlooking critical issues or repeating past mistakes, thereby constraining the prospects for lasting peace.

Several factors have been identified as obstacles to conflict resolution. In the Dagbon conflict, Ahiave (2013) found that the absence of justice, mutual mistrust between the

Abudus and Andanis, lack of confidence in the peace process, and the interference of “spoilers” contributed to its intractability. Conflicts, by their nature, generate mistrust among parties (Adzahlie-Mensah, 2007). Kanda (2019) also highlights that ignoring established succession plans and political interference significantly complicates resolution efforts. Trust and confidence in mediating parties or mechanisms are therefore essential for achieving sustainable peace.

There is a broad consensus that political interference significantly hindered the resolution of the Dagbon chieftaincy crisis (Ahiave, 2013; WASCI & SIPRI, 2011; Kanda, 2019; UNDP, 2012). Jackson and Morelli (2009) argue that the “first-strike advantage” in conflicts poses a major challenge to peace, as initiating an attack often provides one side with an offensive edge, complicating the prospects for enduring resolution. They suggest that when both parties know that gains are equitable regardless of who strikes first, sustaining peace becomes more feasible. According to Jackson and Morelli (2009), the offensive advantage inherent in war makes conflicts more likely and long-lasting, and although Ibrahim et al. (2019) argue that conflict outcomes are not entirely predetermined, Jackson and Morelli (2009, p.16) contend that the side initiating hostilities often significantly influences the outcome.

Several other factors also impede conflict resolution in Africa. Kutesa (2009) and Oguonu and Ezeibe (2014) highlight financial constraints as a major obstacle. Rogier (2004) observes that the absence of international involvement often complicates conflict resolution, whereas Johnson (2016) attributes Africa’s successes in dispute management to effective international engagement. Conversely, Aall (2015, p.1) cautions that external assistance has often been unreliable. Media overemphasis on conflicts relative to peace initiatives may also prolong resolution (Grasa & Mateos, 2010).

Additional structural challenges include state failure, resistance to peace efforts, and the proliferation of warring parties. Rogier (2004) explains that state failure creates political and security vacuums, while an increase in belligerents complicates mediation and negotiation processes. Moreover, the vested interests of parties seeking to prolong conflict and the interference of malicious neighbouring actors further undermine resolution efforts (Ducasse-Rogier, 2004, pp. 5, 9).

Despite these challenges, conflict management remains a contemporary necessity (PINPOINTS, 2002). Madalina (2016) notes that managing conflicts is an emerging challenge across organisations, while Gody (2012, p. 3) emphasises that intrastate conflicts, in particular, pose risks not only locally but also to international peace and security.

2.14 Human Rights Conventions on Religion (Worship)

Article 9 of the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) seeks to protect freedom of thought, belief, and religion, the right to change religion or beliefs, the right to express beliefs through actions, such as wearing religious clothing, discussing beliefs, or participating in worship and protection extends to non-religious beliefs like atheism, agnosticism, veganism, and pacifism (Council of the European Union, 2012). It states that the belief must be severe, concerning essential aspects of life or behaviours. Thus, it must be sincerely held and worthy of respect in a democratic society.

However, public authorities can restrict these freedoms only when the restrictions are lawful, necessary, and proportionate to protect public safety, order, health, morals, or the rights and freedoms of others (European Union, 2007). To avoid breaching human rights laws, public authorities must provide non-religious alternatives for oaths. The Human Rights Act on Freedom of Thought, Conscience, and Religion (Article 9)

indicates that there can be freedom to change religion or belief and manifest religion or belief alone or in the community, in public or private (Council of the European Union, 2012).

Notwithstanding, these freedoms must be prescribed by law and necessary in a democratic society for the purposes of public safety, order, health, morals, or the protection of others' rights and freedoms. Moreover, the Council of Europe's Convention on Religion and Human Rights reiterates that religion is crucial in promoting and protecting human rights in the EU (Council of Europe, 1950). Article 17 allows dialogue with churches and spiritual, philosophical, and non-confessional organisations. Religious actors contribute to areas like migration, deradicalisation, social justice, and education for tolerance. The EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights guarantee freedom of religion and belief (Council of the European Union, 2012).

These rights are outlined in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the 1966 International Covenants on Human Rights, and other vital documents. Rights include the freedom to adopt or change religion and to manifest it in various forms. Thus, religion's influence in areas like gender equality and reproductive health can cause conflicts (United Nations, 1966a; 1966b).

2.15 The 1992 Republican Constitution of Ghana on Religion

The Government's legal framework for a proposed Policy on Religion is based on Article 21(1)(c) of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana, which guarantees freedom of religion (Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, 1992). This fundamental right has been respected by successive governments since 1992.

In January 2010, a Presidential Commission of Enquiry consulted the public on the 1992 Constitution. The Constitutional Review Commission (CRC) summarised submissions on religious freedom, including calls for explicit constitutional provisions on religious freedom, a seven-day allowance for Muslim festivals, and a review of Article 21(c) (CRC, 2011). Some submissions also suggested regulating religious practices, taxing churches, and establishing a Ministry of Religious Affairs (MCRA, 2013). The CRC concluded that the status quo on religious rights should be maintained, emphasising the importance of national unity and cohesion (CRC, 2011). The CRC observed that while religious freedom is fundamental, it is not absolute and must be balanced with public interest, order, and morality. They recommended amending Article 21(4)(c) to include "public order" and "public morality" as criteria for restricting rights (CRC, 2011). The CRC also noted that respecting others' rights and public interest is essential in addressing issues related to religious freedom. They argued against state control over religious bodies and the need for a dedicated ministry to regulate churches, suggesting that existing laws and ministries should apply to religious bodies as they do to other entities (CRC, 2011).

In state-owned secondary schools, religion is encouraged, reflecting the profoundly religious nature of Ghanaian society. The Ministry of Chieftaincy and Religious Affairs (MCRA) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) support a proposed government policy to protect citizens' rights regardless of their beliefs, promoting peaceful coexistence and self-regulation among religious bodies to minimise social vices (MCRA, 2013; UNFPA, 2014). The CRC's findings indicate that Ghanaians generally support the current state of religious freedom, which allows for significant freedom while imposing necessary restrictions in the public interest (CRC, 2011). This

approach ensures that individuals can practice any religion, provided they respect the rights of others and the public interest.

2.16 Theoretical Framework

This section discussed the theories the study drew upon to inform the research. The research questions guided my search strategy. After describing the theories, the study found “*social identity theory*” and “*contact hypothesis theory*” to be supportive and suitable for explaining and guiding the research.

2.16.1 Social Identity Theory (SIT)

Social Identity Theory (SIT), developed by Tajfel and Turner (1979), explains how individuals derive a sense of identity from the groups to which they belong, often resulting in favouritism toward in-groups and discrimination against out-groups. According to the theory, part of a person’s self-concept is shaped by their membership in social groups, influencing how they perceive themselves and others. Tajfel and Turner (1979) emphasised that groups, such as social classes, families, or sports teams, serve as significant sources of pride and self-esteem. Key components of SIT include social categorisation, social identification, and social comparison, which collectively shape intergroup behaviour and attitudes.

In the context of religion, SIT helps explain the dynamics of group identification and inter-group tensions. Christians and adherents of ATRs may strongly identify with their respective groups, leading to mutual exclusion and conflict. Hogg and Abrams (1988) expanded on SIT by exploring social identity in inter-group relations. Brown and Hewstone (2005) analyzed SIT in the context of social conflict and prejudice, highlighting its applicability to inter-group relations, including religious disputes.

Tajfel and Turner (1979) state that Social Identity Theory (SIT) in social psychology examines the relationship between personal and social identities, focusing on how individuals perceive themselves as either unique individuals or members of a group. Tajfel and Turner (1979) maintain that the theory seeks to explain and predict the conditions under which people adopt a personal versus a group-based identity, as well as the impact of these identities on individual perceptions and group behaviour. SIT emerged from a series of studies known as the minimal-group experiments, conducted by British social psychologist Henri Tajfel and his colleagues in the early 1970s. Tajfel and Turner (1979) hold that the theory is based on the premise that group membership provides individuals with a framework to make sense of social situations, helping them define their own identity and determine how they relate to others.

2.16.2 Contact Hypothesis Theory (CHT)

Gordon Allport formulated the contact hypothesis theory (CHT) in 1954. CHT suggests that direct contact between members of different groups can reduce prejudice and improve inter-group relations under certain conditions. These conditions include equal status between groups, common goals, inter-group cooperation, and support from authorities or social norms.

Applying CHT to the Ga Traditional Area situation implies that structured inter-group interactions between Christians and ATR adherents could mitigate conflicts. This framework can help design interventions to reduce the inter-religious conflict between Christianity and African Traditional Religion by promoting positive interactions between members of the conflicting religious communities. Creating opportunities for cooperative endeavours and fostering environments where both groups have equal status and shared goals can help bridge divides.

Research conducted in the 1940s and 1950s indicated that interactions with members of different groups were associated with reduced levels of prejudice. A key figure in the development of this idea, known as the contact hypothesis, was Harvard psychologist Gordon Allport, who extensively explored the concept in his seminal 1954 work, *The Nature of Prejudice*.

Dovidio et al. (2003) and Pettigrew et al. (2006) propose that intergroup contact can help reduce prejudice by alleviating anxiety, which often arises when individuals interact with members of groups with whom they have little prior experience. Thus, such contact can also foster empathy and enable individuals to understand the perspectives of the other group. Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) argue that interacting with members of another group allows individuals “to sense how outgroup members feel and view the world.” Similarly, Dovidio, Gaertner, and Kawakami (2003) suggest that contact can decrease prejudice by influencing the ways in which individuals categorise others.

Allport (1954) formulated the initial theory, focusing on reducing prejudice through inter-group contact. Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) conducted a meta-analysis supporting the effectiveness of CHT across various settings. Wright and Taylor (2007) examined the conditions under which inter-group contact reduces prejudice relevant to inter-religious contexts. Notwithstanding, SIT provides a framework for understanding the root causes of inter-group conflict based on identity and categorisation. CHT offers a mechanism for resolving such disputes through structured interactions and cooperation.

SIT helps identify how Christians and ATR adherents form their social identities and perceive each other as out-groups, leading to inter-religious tensions. CHT suggests practical ways to reduce these tensions through controlled and positive inter-group

interactions, promoting understanding and cooperation. Brewer (1999) discussed SIT's limitations in explaining complex inter-group relations and suggested integrating other theories like CHT. Dovidio, Gaertner, and Kawakami (2003) critiqued and expanded on SIT and CHT, proposing more nuanced understandings of inter-group contact and identity.

In a nutshell, Social Identity Theory and Contact Hypothesis Theory provide a robust framework for understanding and addressing inter-religious conflicts between Christianity and African Traditional Religions in the Ga Traditional Area. SIT elucidates the underlying identity-driven conflicts, while CHT offers practical strategies for reducing these conflicts through structured inter-group interactions. Combining these theories can help create a comprehensive approach to fostering peace and mutual understanding in the region.

2.17 Empirical Review

This section reviews empirical studies relevant to inter-religious conflict, with specific attention to conflicts involving Christianity and African Indigenous Religions (AIR). The review is organised thematically and analytically, focusing on various authors, their way of argument, key findings, and a brief critique of each study. The section concludes by identifying theoretical, methodological, and empirical gaps that justify the present study.

Ojo (2007) conducted a qualitative study on inter-religious conflict in Nigeria with the aim of examining the socio-political and religious factors that fuel conflicts between religious groups. The study relied on documentary analysis and key informant interviews involving religious leaders and policy actors. The findings revealed that religious intolerance, political manipulation of religion, competition over public space,

and weak state regulatory mechanisms were central drivers of inter-religious conflict. Although the study provides useful contextual insights into religion-related conflicts in Africa, it focuses predominantly on Christianity–Islam relations and pays little attention to African Indigenous Religions. In addition, the heavy reliance on secondary data limits the depth of community-level perspectives.

Kukah (2011) examined religion and conflict in plural African societies, focusing on selected cases in Nigeria and East Africa. The purpose of the study was to explore how religion interacts with politics and identity to generate conflict. Using a mixed-methods approach involving surveys, interviews, and historical analysis, the study found that religion often serves as a mobilising instrument rather than the root cause of conflict. Kukah emphasised identity politics, competition for power, and socio-economic inequalities as key underlying factors. While methodologically robust, the study marginalises Indigenous Religions and does not examine conflicts between Christianity and AIR as a distinct category of inter-religious conflict.

Meyer (1999) conducted an ethnographic study among the Ewe people of southern Ghana to examine the interaction between Christianity and African Indigenous Religions. The study aimed to understand how Christian discourses shape perceptions of Indigenous Religious practices. Using participant observation and in-depth interviews, Meyer found that Christianity often portrays Indigenous Religions as demonic and incompatible with modernity, leading to social exclusion and symbolic conflict. Although the study provides deep cultural insights, it does not explicitly frame these tensions as inter-religious conflict nor examine their implications for peace and coexistence.

Quarcoopome (2006) investigated the marginalisation of African Indigenous Religions in Ghana's public sphere. The purpose of the study was to examine the impact of colonial legacies, Christian dominance, and state policies on Indigenous Religious practices. Employing qualitative interviews and documentary analysis, the study found that Indigenous Religions are often excluded from formal recognition, leading to contestations over sacred spaces, festivals, and moral authority. Despite its relevance, the study does not focus on localised conflicts within specific traditional areas, limiting its applicability to community-level inter-religious disputes.

Asamoah-Gyadu (2015) explored religious pluralism and tensions in contemporary Ghana. Using qualitative interviews with religious leaders and participant observation, the study found that Pentecostal and Charismatic Christian demonisation of Indigenous Religious practices has heightened tensions, particularly concerning shrines, rituals, and festivals. While the study highlights theological sources of inter-religious tension, it does not systematically analyse conflict dynamics within a defined traditional area such as the Ga Traditional Area.

Onuoha (2013) examined conflicts over sacred spaces in African societies to understand how religious expansion generates tension over land and ritual sites. Using a comparative case study approach involving Ghana and Nigeria, the study found that Christian church expansion frequently clashes with Indigenous sacred spaces, resulting in disputes and community tensions. Although the comparative approach strengthens the study, it lacks an in-depth, single-case analysis and does not sufficiently incorporate the perspectives of Indigenous Religious practitioners.

Tsikata and Seini (2004) examined land tenure conflicts in Ghanaian traditional areas. Using qualitative interviews and archival data, the study found that religious change,

particularly conversion to Christianity, often weakens adherence to traditional authority and ritual obligations tied to land, thereby intensifying social conflict. Although religion was not the central focus of the study, its findings underscore the intersection between land, tradition, and religion in inter-religious tensions.

The reviewed studies reveal several points of convergence. First, inter-religious conflict is rarely driven by religion alone but is shaped by identity, power relations, land ownership, and cultural dominance. Second, Christian representations of African Indigenous Religions as inferior or demonic significantly contribute to tension and conflict. Third, inter-religious conflicts often manifest around sacred spaces, festivals, land use, and traditional authority. However, the studies also differ in focus and approach. While some emphasise symbolic and discursive dimensions of conflict, others prioritise material and spatial factors. Methodologically, most studies rely on qualitative approaches, with limited engagement of grassroots community members such as traditional priests and clan heads.

From the reviewed literature, the following gaps are identified. First, theoretical Gap: Existing studies inadequately apply peace and conflict theories to explain Christianity–African Indigenous Religion conflicts as a distinct form of inter-religious conflict. Second, methodological Gap: Many studies rely on secondary data or elite interviews, with limited use of in-depth, community-based qualitative methods that capture grassroots perspectives. Finally, empirical Gap: There is a paucity of empirical studies focusing specifically on inter-religious conflict between Christianity and African Indigenous Religions in the Ga Traditional Area. Therefore, the present study addresses these gaps by providing a localised, qualitative investigation of inter-religious conflict between Christianity and African Indigenous Religions in the Ga Traditional Area. By engaging directly with Christian leaders, Indigenous Religious practitioners,

and community members, the study contributes context-specific empirical evidence to peace and conflict scholarship.

2.18 Summary of the Literature Review

The review revealed that conflict is a common human experience manifesting in complex dynamics in Ghana and globally. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for resolving conflicts and determining practical approaches to conflict resolution. However, there was enough literature addressing the conflict dynamics specific to the inter-religious conflicts in the Ga Traditional Area.

Given the importance of understanding conflict dynamics for adequate resolution, examining the inter-religious conflict between Christianity and Indigenous Religion (IR) in the Ga Traditional Area is essential. IR existed independently of Christianity before the arrival of missionaries and can continue to do so today. On the other hand, Christianity holds that Jesus Christ is the sole mediator between God and humanity, as stated in 1 Timothy 2:5 (KJV: "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus"). This belief inherently conflicts with IR practices, particularly the veneration of ancestors and other religious festivals, which the study looked at.

The review also emphasised that although there is extensive literature on conflicts in Ghana, the specific inter-religious conflict between Christianity and IR needs further exploration. Conflict resolution is a complex, multidimensional process influenced by many factors. Identifying these factors is essential for resolving the conflict between Christianity and IR in the Ga Traditional Area. The chapter highlighted the importance of social identity theory and contact hypothesis theory in explaining the ongoing inter-religious conflict in this region. These theories offer a comprehensive framework to

understand and address the complex and changing nature of inter-religious conflicts, ensuring that resolution efforts are better informed and practical.

Addressing the inter-religious conflict in the Ga Traditional Area requires a nuanced understanding of the underlying dynamics and careful consideration of both religious beliefs. By integrating insights from social identity theory and contact hypothesis theory, conflict resolution strategies can be more effectively tailored to this conflict's unique context.



CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Overview

This chapter presented the research methodology for the study. It outlined the procedures and processes that the researcher employed to generate empirical data and the distinctive analysis method that will be utilised. The research design, sampling techniques, procedures, and the target and study populations from which the sample was drawn are all part of this approach. Additionally, the research instruments adopted to collect the data, and the data collection and handling procedures were described in detail. Finally, the chapter addressed ethical issues in the research process, giving them the utmost attention and ensuring the highest standards of research ethics.

3.1 Philosophical Underpinning

This work discussed various philosophical claims about knowledge in research, focusing on interpretivism as a research philosophy. Creswell (1994) outlines that researchers make ontological (nature of knowledge), epistemological (how we know it), axiological (values involved), rhetorical (how we write it), and methodological (processes of studying) claims.

However, interpretivism, adopted by the researcher, holds that knowledge is value-laden and objective knowledge is challenging to achieve (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It posits that multiple realities exist, which can change and are difficult to measure, viewed through different lenses and interpreted by various individuals (Kuranchie, 2021). This philosophy helps understand how people construct and maintain perceptions of the world (Kuranchie, 2021) and assumes that knowledge comes from many "realities" rather than one (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Researchers using this

philosophy aim to understand participants' meanings and experiences, seeing reality as socially constructed and subjective.

Interpretivism's foundation can be traced to Weber (1922), who emphasised empathetic understanding of human behaviour, and Wilhelm (1883), who differentiated between natural and human sciences. Interpretivism integrates human interest into studies and assumes reality can only be accessed through social constructions like language and shared meanings (Myers, 2008). This philosophy critiques positivism in social sciences, emphasising qualitative over quantitative analysis.

It encompasses diverse approaches like social constructivism, phenomenology, and hermeneutics, rejecting the idea that meaning exists independently of consciousness (Collins, 2010). Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2012) highlight the importance of understanding differences between people in interpretive research. Interpretivist studies focus on meaning, often using methods like interviews and observations, with meanings emerging towards the end of the research process.

Interpretivism's key variations include hermeneutics, which focuses on biblical texts and wisdom literature, and phenomenology, which seeks to understand the world through direct experience (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009). Interpretivism is characterised by a relativist ontology and a subjectivist epistemology, where reality is seen as intersubjectively based on social and experiential levels, and there is a clear link between the researcher and the subject. Pizam and Mansfeld (2009) contrast positivism's objective reasoning with interpretivism's subjective reasoning. Interpretivism allows for the in-depth study of qualitative research areas like cross-cultural differences, ethics, and leadership, with primary data often trustworthy and honest.

This philosophy is valuable in studying inter-religious conflicts. It delves into individuals' subjective experiences and contexts, uncovering how historical, cultural, and social factors contribute to conflicts. It provides insights into how religious identities and symbols are understood and contested, informing effective conflict-resolution strategies. Ontologically, interpretivism uses an inductive or subjective approach, with shared beliefs and agreements on understanding and addressing problems (Kuhn, 1970). It analyses societal events based on specific value systems, recognising that people act differently based on their societal, traditional, and religious backgrounds (Weber, 1981). Therefore, this research philosophy helped to understand the inter-religious conflict between the Christians and the Indigenous Religious believers' perspective while contributing to measures to resolve it holistically.

3.2 Research Approach

The work utilised a qualitative research approach to find out measures to resolve the tension between Christianity and Indigenous Religions in their quest to serve the Supreme Being (God). The study focused on the use of a case study to explore and understand the conflict in the area from the perspectives of the Christians and Indigenous Religious believers and other stakeholders in the Ga Traditional Area (Neville, 2007; Madill & Gough, 2008; Smith & Caddick, 2012; Creswell, 2014). Qualitative research involves gathering narrative data on variables to gain insights into issues of interest. It seeks to discover meanings and understanding of phenomena and entails both interpretation and a critical approach to the social world (Kuranchie, 2021). This approach makes use of both subjective and inductive approaches. Qualitative data is generally expressed in words rather than numbers (Walliman, 2011, p. 71). Thus, it emphasises words rather than quantification in data collection and analysis (Bryman,

2008). It focuses on meanings through verbal narratives, descriptions, and observations rather than numbers.

Qualitative research focuses on understanding social phenomena and providing thick verbal descriptions of settings, situations, and participants (Ary et al., 2010). It uses detailed descriptive data, which portrays what people say in their own words about their experiences and interactions or encounters in natural settings. Qualitative research enables the researcher to gather participant data, taking their thoughts and assessing their feelings, emotions, and imaginations on the phenomena studied (Bryman, 2004). Ross (1999) posits that qualitative approaches to research are premised on a “world view,” which is holistic and has beliefs like there is no single reality, the reality is based on individual perceptions, and what we know has meaning limited to a given situational context. This research approach relies on personal experience and gives voice to perspectives and creative synthesis (Patton, 2002).

Therefore, qualitative research methods for data collection and analysis will be employed to understand the respondents’ perceptions of religion and how these religious sects can co-exist harmoniously while protecting each other’s rights. This is because the qualitative research method allows researchers to study things in their natural settings, attempting to understand or interpret phenomena regarding the meanings people bring to them (Cohen & Manion, 1994; Neuman, 2003). The qualitative research method using SPSS data coding and analysis will work best for this study as it will allow the researcher to ask questions that would help gain a deeper understanding of the respondents’ perceptions of religious tensions and how they can be resolved.

3.3 Research Design

The research design refers to the general plan of how the researcher will answer the research question(s) (Ampofo, 2020). Polit and Hunglar (1996) describe research design as an overall plan for gathering and analysing data, including measures to enhance internal and external validity. This plan or blueprint specifies how data relating to a given problem should be collected and analysed. The research design is a blueprint for anchoring research activities (Kuranchie, 2021). It indicates the basic structure of the study, the nature of the hypothesis, and the variables involved (Gay, 1992). It provides a framework for planning, gathering, and analysing data and indicates the appropriate research methods. The researcher used a case study design.

A case study design is a detailed analysis of one or more events, settings, programs, groups, or individuals (Creswell, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Bailey, 1987). This design was not only informed by the fact that it would allow the researcher to gain in-depth knowledge of the problem under study. However, it also helps to understand how believers perceive religion and human rights. A case study is an in-depth or intensive description and analysis of a single unit or bounded system (Merriam, 2000; Yin, 1994). Gall and Borg (2007) define a case study as an in-depth study of one or more instances of a phenomenon in a real-life context, reflecting the participants' perspectives. The study aims to understand the case in detail and in its natural setting, recognising its complexities and context. It gives a rich and thick understanding of a real-life context (Kuranchie, 2021). A case study has a holistic focus, aiming to preserve and understand the wholeness and unity of the case (Punch, 2005).

A qualitative case study investigates a phenomenon in detail, and it must entail a collection of extensive data to produce an understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Kuranchie, 2021). Case studies are conducted on individuals, groups, institutions, and communities like the Ga community (Ary et al., 2010).

Again, this case study approach was chosen because, apart from the fact that it can be identified as an empirical inquiry into a specific social variable, it helped to achieve the purpose of this study. Additionally, this approach allowed the use of multiple instruments to gather data from participants in their natural settings rather than artificial ones, which is helpful for the study.

3.4 Setting or Study Area

The study focused on the Ga Traditional Area in southern Ghana, particularly the Ga-Adangbe people, who reside in Accra, the capital city (see Figure 1). The current Ga Mantse, or king, is King Tackie Teiko Tsuru II, a prosperous entrepreneur whom traditional leaders duly swore in according to custom. The Ga-Dangbe people are an ethnic group in Ghana, Togo, and Benin, primarily inhabiting the Greater Accra region.


Under King Ayi Kushi's leadership (1483-1519), the Ga-Dangbe migrated from the Lake Chad region to Accra in the 16th century. They organised into six independent towns with a central stool used in rituals and warfare. Accra became the most prominent town and is now Ghana's capital.

The Ga people traditionally were farmers, but are now mainly engaged in fishing and trading. They follow both matrilineal and patrilineal descent systems. They celebrate various festivals, including the Homowo festival, commemorating the overcoming of a famine. The Dangme people, a subgroup, occupy coastal areas from Kpone to Ada and

are known for farming and fishing. They celebrate the Asafotu festival, which honours warriors and includes purification ceremonies.

The Ga-Dangbe are organised into clans based on patrilineal descent. Their languages are part of the Kwa branch of the Niger-Congo family. The Ga people are also notable for their music, dance, and boxing tradition, with Bukom being a renowned boxing hub.

For the Shai and Krobo people, Dipo is a rite of passage that has evolved into a pre-marital sexual purification ritual for teenage girls. The Ga people are also famous for their elaborate funeral celebrations, often involving specially crafted coffins that reflect the deceased's life or status.



The Greater Accra region is the most urbanised in Ghana, with Accra being the regional and national capital. It became a separate region in 1982, bordered by the Eastern, Volta, and Central regions and the Gulf of Guinea. It comprises 16 administrative areas and has a significant urban population. The Greater Accra Region has the smallest area of Ghana's 16 administrative regions, occupying a total land surface of 3,245 square kilometres (Greater Accra Region Reports, 2023). This is 1.4 percent of the total land area of Ghana. It is the most populated region, with a population of 5,455,692 in 2021, accounting for 17.7 percent of Ghana's total population (Population & Housing Census, 2010; Ghana Statistical Service, 2017; Greater Accra - Government of Ghana, 2019).

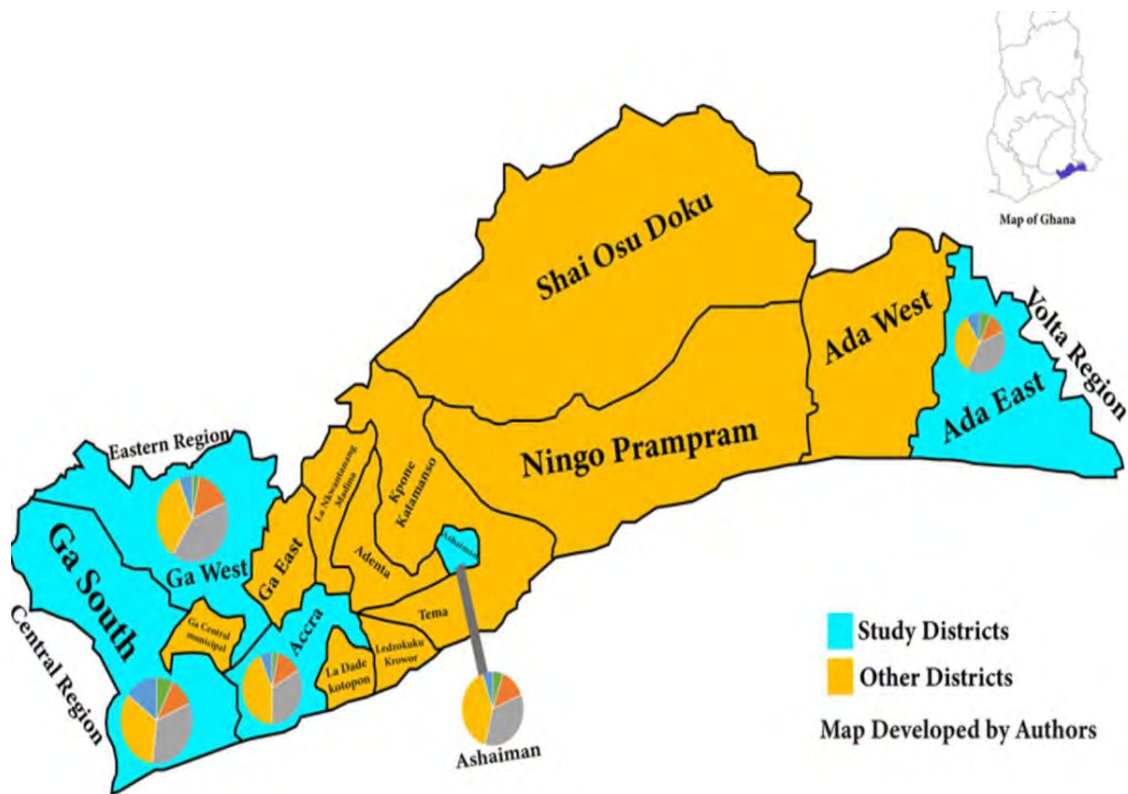


Figure 1: A map of the Greater Accra Region (Specific reference: Ga Traditional Area).

Source: ghanaculture.gov.gh/mapsofworld.com

3.5 Population

Population refers to the target group the researcher is interested in obtaining information from to determine a study (Kuranchie, 2021). Polit and Hunglar (1996) define a population as aggregating cases meeting criteria. All members of a well-defined group of people, events, or objects constitute a population in research (Ary et al., 2010). Population answers, “From whom do I gather data for the research?” According to Tuckman (1985), defining the study population aids the researcher in establishing boundaries, which specify who is to be included or excluded from the entire population. Therefore, the population for the study was the people from the Ga Traditional Area (Indigenous religious believers and Christians).

3.6 Sample and Sampling Techniques

A sample is a carefully chosen part of a population for a study when it is not practically possible to use all population members in a study due to reasons such as time, energy, cost, and volume of data (Kuranchie, 2021). According to Ary et al. (2002), the researcher can confidently generalise the findings when the sample represents the population. The sample unit comprised the Christians and the Indigenous Religious believers who live in the Ga Traditional Area. The sample frame comprised the area's total population from which the sample unit was taken for the study. Therefore, the researcher sought to adopt a small sample size as a characteristic of a qualitative research approach. The sample size was based on the point of saturation that the researcher reached. This shows that the researcher did not predetermine the sample size.

In this case, a non-probability sampling technique like snowball sampling was adopted to select the participants needed for this study. Snowball sampling is used when members are sampled and then asked to identify other members to test, and this process continues until enough samples are collected” (CIRT, 2018). Again, snowball sampling is a procedure where the researcher first identifies an individual or a small number of subjects with knowledge of an issue of investigation (Kuranchie, 2021). After interacting with them, the chosen individuals identify others who meet the selection criteria and thus qualify for inclusion in the research. The recommendation continues till saturation or until no more respondents or substantial data can be acquired through additional respondents (Sarantakos, 2002). Hence, the snowball sampling technique is called chain referral sampling, as the reference is done in the chain. In qualitative research, non-probability sampling techniques are adopted to get participants who are experts and have rich and in-depth knowledge and experience on the issues inherent in the research problem (Kuranchie, 2021). The snowball sampling method is appropriate

when there is no sampling frame or the target population is unknown (Osuala, 2003). The choice of the sample is, therefore, purposeful. In this case, the researcher decided who could provide appropriate answers to the research questions and who needed to be part of the study (Kuranchie, 2021).

3.7 Research Methods

The researcher sought to adopt the interview guide protocol designed and administered to crucial participants to capture qualitative information. The researcher sought to adopt observation in addition to the interview guide method.

Kvale et al. (2009) and Creswell (2014) define an interview as a means of generating data from the respondents through dialogue. It is a well-intended conversation focused on one party to elicit data from the other (Kuranchie, 2021). An interview represents a direct attempt to obtain reliable and valid measures of insights, perspectives, beliefs, characteristics, behaviours, feelings, and attitudes in the form of verbal responses from respondents. This process entails asking respondents for answers face-to-face, by telephone, or by using more advanced computer technology platforms like Skype, Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and Viber (Kuranchie, 2021). The main task in interviewing was to understand the meaning of what the interviewees said.

The data were collected through individual, face-to-face interviews, all of which were audio-recorded to facilitate accurate transcription and subsequent analysis. A semi-structured interview format was employed, using open-ended questions that provided participants with the flexibility to express their perspectives and personal experiences in detail. The interview guide was carefully designed to ensure that the questions aligned with and adequately addressed the research questions underpinning the study.

Furthermore, the study employed a semi-structured interview approach. This method involved the use of an interview guide containing predetermined questions, while still allowing the flexibility to introduce unanticipated follow-up questions where necessary. Although the sequence and content of the questions were planned, the interviewer had the discretion to rephrase, adjust, or expand the questions during the interview process (Koul, 2011). The questions were administered orally, and because the researcher was not proficient in the Ga language, a translator assisted in conducting the interviews.

Moreover, observation refers to watching participants, listening, and recording what is observed rather than asking questions (Kuranchie, 2021). This data-gathering method is beneficial in determining what people do and how they behave in their natural contexts (Kell, 2008). Observation is done in both controlled and uncontrolled situations. The researcher considered the traits or behaviours of interest that were observed and recorded as they occurred during the observation process. In addition, the researcher sought to adopt unstructured observation, which does not follow strict procedures in gathering data (Kuranchie, 2021). Unstructured observation helps to explore issues under investigation. Although the researcher had a problem in mind, he observed and took note of traits that occurred during the exercise and are relevant to the study (Kuranchie, 2021).

3.8 Data Collection Procedure

The study engaged participants through interviews to obtain in-depth insights into the inter-religious conflict between Christianity and Indigenous Religions. Before data collection, the researcher planned a preparatory meeting with the supervisor to review the research instruments and data collection procedures. This meeting was intended to ensure adequate intellectual and psychological readiness for fieldwork.

An official letter of introduction was obtained from the Centre for Conflict, Human Rights and Peace Studies, University of Education, Winneba. This letter was presented to participants to confirm the researcher's studentship and to demonstrate that the study was conducted solely for academic purposes. Upon entering the field, the researcher identified a gatekeeper within the Ga Traditional Area to facilitate access and clearly communicate the purpose of the study to the community. For confidentiality reasons, the gatekeeper's specific position within the community is not disclosed. The letter of introduction and a copy of the interview guide were shared with the gatekeeper.

In line with ethical research standards, verbal informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection. Additionally, participants were asked to reaffirm their consent before each interview commenced, ensuring their continued willingness to participate in the study.

3.9.1 Interviews

The interviews commenced immediately after participants provided their consent to take part in the study. With the participants' permission, a mobile phone was used to audio-record all interview sessions to ensure accurate data capture and prevent information loss. The interviews consisted of open-ended questions designed to address the research questions guiding the study. Where necessary, follow-up probes were used to clarify participants' responses and to reduce ambiguity in the data collected.

Questions were framed in a language and manner that participants could easily understand, thereby minimising the risk of misinterpretation and enhancing the accuracy of responses. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage of the data collection process without any consequences. All

interviews were conducted at locations chosen by the participants to ensure their comfort and convenience.

Throughout the data collection process, the study adhered strictly to established ethical guidelines. All relevant protocols were observed, and care was taken to protect participants from harm and to respect their privacy and confidentiality.

3.9.2 Observation

Observation was employed as a data collection technique to enable the researcher to study participants within their natural social environment (Kuranchie, 2021). This method allowed events and interactions to be examined as they occurred, thereby guiding decisions on the type of data to be recorded. Accordingly, observation commenced immediately upon the researcher's entry into the Ga Traditional Area and continued throughout the entire interview period.

The observation focused on the physical setting of the community, the people, and their patterns of interaction. Attention was paid to the organisation and participation in religious and social events, including marriage ceremonies and prayer activities within both Christianity and Indigenous Religious practices. In addition, the study examined verbal communication and non-verbal expressions such as tone of speech, body posture, facial expressions, and gestures during interviews, as well as interactions between adherents of Ga Indigenous Religion and Christianity. Consistent with Adzahlie-Mensah et al. (2017), emphasis was placed on observing “what is being said, how it is being said, and the tone of conversation among participants.”

Field notes were used as the primary means of recording observational data. Beyond interview-related observations, the researcher also engaged in broader community observation. Visits were conducted at various times and on different occasions,

including during prayer sessions for both religious groups, marriage and naming ceremonies, and at different periods of the day, morning, afternoon, evening, and night (not exceeding 10:00 p.m.), to capture variations in social and religious interactions.

3.10 Data Analysis

Data transcription was carried out after the completion of each interview session. Data analysis commenced concurrently with data collection, enabling emerging issues to be identified and incorporated into the ongoing research process. To achieve this, the study employed the Constant Comparison Method (Anfara et al., 2002), which facilitated continuous comparison of interview data and supported the interpretation of findings alongside data collection. Consequently, data collection and analysis were treated as interrelated and iterative processes rather than as distinct stages. This approach informed subsequent interviews by highlighting areas that required further probing and ensured that emerging insights were not overlooked.

In addressing the study's research questions, the data were systematically coded, categorised, and organised into themes that emerged from the analysis. The study adopted thematic template analysis as the primary analytical approach. Initially, all interview transcripts were read repeatedly to achieve familiarity with the data. Relevant segments of the data were then coded by identifying and marking portions that contributed meaningfully to the research objectives. Based on these codes, an initial thematic template was developed in alignment with the study's research questions. This template was subsequently applied to additional data sources, including observational data, and was refined where necessary.

It is important to note that template analysis is not a distinct analytical method but rather a flexible approach to organising and interpreting qualitative data thematically (Brooks & King, 2014; Brooks et al., 2015). As noted by Waring and Wainwright (2008), template analysis draws from grounded theory and interpretive phenomenological analysis (p. 86). Its strength lies in its capacity to facilitate a clear, systematic, and adaptable analysis of qualitative data (Brooks et al., 2015). Moreover, the approach is suitable for a wide range of research topics and epistemological positions and can be applied both within individual cases and across multiple cases (Waring & Wainwright, 2008; Brooks et al., 2014; Brooks et al., 2015).

However, the study also recognised the limitations of template analysis, particularly the potential reduction in holistic understanding of individual accounts (Brooks et al., 2015). Despite this limitation, the approach was considered appropriate for capturing and interpreting the lived experiences of individuals within the Ga community. Ultimately, the analysis aimed to present a rich, contextualised, and nuanced understanding of the inter-religious conflict between Christianity and Indigenous Religion.

3.11 Ethical Consideration

Ethical considerations constitute fundamental principles that inform and guide research design and practice. These principles typically include voluntary participation, informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, avoidance of harm, and responsible communication of research findings. Bryman and Bell (2007) outline several key ethical principles that are particularly relevant to academic research and dissertations. These include ensuring that research participants are not exposed to physical, psychological, or social harm; prioritising respect for participants' dignity; obtaining

informed consent before participation; safeguarding participants' privacy; and maintaining an adequate level of confidentiality in the handling of research data.

In addition, ethical research practice requires the protection of anonymity for both individuals and institutions involved in the study, the avoidance of deception or misrepresentation regarding the aims and objectives of the research, and the full disclosure of any affiliations, funding sources, or potential conflicts of interest. Bryman and Bell (2007) further emphasise the importance of honesty and transparency in all forms of research-related communication, as well as the need to avoid misleading information or biased presentation of research findings.

In line with these principles, the researcher endeavoured to uphold all relevant ethical standards throughout the study, with particular attention to informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, and the protection of participants from any form of harm.

3.12 Trustworthiness

According to Tracy (2010) and Creswell et al. (2018), in qualitative research, rigor refers to the strategies employed to establish trustworthiness and confidence in the study's findings. It enables consistency in the application of research methods over time and supports an accurate and credible representation of the population under investigation. Ensuring rigor is particularly important in qualitative studies, as the interpretive role of the researcher introduces the possibility of subjectivity influencing data analysis. Consequently, qualitative findings are often subjected to heightened scrutiny within the scientific community (Brink, 1993).

In recognition of these concerns, the researcher adopted the criteria for validity and reliability as outlined by Guba and Lincoln (1985) to ensure the trustworthiness of the data and the credibility of the study's findings.

3.13 Positionality

Positionality refers to a researcher's standpoint or worldview in relation to the research topic and the broader social and political context in which the study is situated (Foote & Bartell, 2011; Savin-Baden & Major, 2013; Rowe, 2014). It is commonly articulated by situating the researcher in relation to three key dimensions: the phenomenon being examined, the research participants, and the overall research context and process. In this study, the researcher occupied an outsider position, as they did not identify with or belong to any of the parties involved in the conflict under investigation.



CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

This study was undertaken to shed light on the inter-religious conflict that usually arises between Christianity and Indigenous religious adherents in the Ga traditional area of the Greater Accra Region. The research focused on identifying the causes of the conflict, its effects, the key actors involved, the threats to conflict resolution, and, more importantly, the possible measures for resolving the dispute. The chapter presents and discusses the results, demonstrating how they interact with the existing literature and theoretical frameworks, thereby providing a comprehensive understanding of the issue.

4.1 Causes of the Conflict

This section presents the causes and the dynamic nature of the inter-religious conflict in the Ga Traditional Area. Participants were asked about the causes of the conflict and its dynamic nature. The results reveal many causes within the conflict, each with its complexities, intricacies, and interconnections, demonstrating the depth of our analysis.

4.1.1 Origins of the Conflict

One of the significant aspects explored to understand the conflict was its origins. Participants cited several reasons for the conflict, with standard comments such as the inception of Christianity in the area, the cosmopolitan nature of Accra, the perceived dominant nature of Christianity, and the lack of mutual respect. Some participants stated the following:

... It is better to understand that the inception of a foreign religion (Christianity) has brought this tension. We were living in peace. Our forefathers used to worship God (Ataa Naa Nyɔŋmɔ), and they were ok. We were told it was when the whites came with their Christianity and started calling our way of worship paganism, ... that brought about the whole situation we find ourselves in today... (TRA 1, 2nd June 2024)

It is crucial to understand that Accra's cosmopolitan nature as the capital means many residents must familiarise themselves with the local traditions and expectations. This lack of understanding has led to a sense of coercion or conflict, particularly regarding this religious conflict. (CHR 1, 2nd June 2024)

From the responses, there is some agreement that the conflict has roots in the inception of Christianity [which the people see as a foreign religion] and the Cosmopolitan nature of Accra. Thus, it can be argued that the original cause of the inter-religious conflict is the inception of Christianity and the blackmailing of the indigenous way of worship. However, the cosmopolitan nature of Accra, with some of its occupants from different ethnic and religious backgrounds unfamiliar with the Ga Indigenous religious practice, cannot be underestimated in terms of the original causes. This issue of inter-religious conflict is rooted in the inception of Christianity and the cosmopolitan nature of the Greater Accra Region at some point, as discussed in the following sub-section.

4.1.1.1 Inception of Christianity in the Greater Accra Region

When the researcher explored why the participants insisted the origin of the conflict is traceable to the inception of Christianity, it was realised that the conflict was traced to when Christianity found its way into the Ga soil and started stretching its roots in the area. For example, a respondent in the interviews indicated as follows:

You know Africans [especially Ghanaians] are highly spiritual, which has nothing to do with religion. Therefore, combining religion with spirituality becomes a problem. For instance, I cannot understand why Christians refer to their worthy dead people as Saints and pray for their intercession. When we do the same, they refer to it as paganism... (TRA 3, 4th June 2024)

4.1.1.2 Cosmopolitan Nature of Greater Accra Region

When the study explored why some participants also insisted the origin of the conflict is traceable to the cosmopolitan nature of the Greater Accra Region, it was realized that the conflict was traced to the cosmopolitan nature of the area, coupled with the

accommodation of people with unfamiliar knowledge of the Indigenous religion of the area. A participant [a Methodist Pastor] also shared as follows:

...when it comes to Christianity in particular, many Christians who may not be Ga think that they are pushed or compelled to do things against their Christian faith. However, the GA also points out that there is no way a GA person would live outside Accra or other places and would not adhere to the rules and regulations there. The leaders would instruct them wherever they find themselves, and they cannot say that because they are not from there, they would not obey. (CHR 4, 3rd June 2024)

It was revealed that the inception of Christianity had dramatically impacted the inter-religious conflict in the area. Also, the cosmopolitan nature of the area has allowed many people from different regions to come and stay, which has had a negative ripple effect on the area, even though there are positive ones. These people have come with cultural and religious traditions in mind, which makes it difficult for them to accept the indigenous religion of the new place. Since these people are unfamiliar with the traditions and customs of the Indigenous Religion, they find it challenging to adapt to it or accept it, and instead turn to dominate the Indigenous Religion with Christianity. This is discussed in the sub-section below

4.1.1.3 Dominant Nature of Christianity

The study discovered that the conflict has a characteristic cause in that the Indigenous Religious believers felt that the Christians wanted to lord their beliefs and practices over them in their land. One participant highlighted as follows:

Now, the whole of Ghana is under one umbrella, which is called democracy. Moreover, democracy was being practiced before the Whites introduced democracy. We have our system of governance, which comes with a different understanding of it when it comes to our ethnic group. Now, Christianity wants to dominate and has dominated the whole universe. Christians should not undermine the abilities of the traditionalists. You were a traditionalist before you became a Christian. I am not talking about taking up or doing that, but about self-compartment. (TRA 5, 10th June 2024)

This indicates that the attempt by the non-Ga settlers to dominate and impose their religion [Christianity] on them has created an avenue for the conflict. Again, participants indicated as follows:

In popular culture, people say that if you go to Rome, you do what Romans do, but I want to be very frank with you: from what people say or share about this, the typical Gas believes they are looked down upon. ... and that is where the anger stems from. The Ga people expect their traditions to be respected on their land. They are willing to follow their leaders' instructions but are not open to directives from other leaders. This insistence on respect for their traditions is a significant source of tension. They think that once you are with them here and want to live with them broadly, you need to understand and cooperate with what they expect you to do so that there will be peace and tranquillity in the area. So, looking at the situation and how development has come to this point, we could say that, at first, this might be the cause that has led to this conflict between us, the Christians, and them. (CHR 6, 15th June 2024)

From the interview, it was realised that the lack of respect for other Indigenous religions from these people who have come to live with the Gas due to the cosmopolitan nature of the place is another cause of the conflict, and this is discussed in the sub-section

4.1.1.4 Lack of Mutual Respect

When the researcher examined the reasons why the participants insisted the origin of the conflict is traceable to a lack of respect for the Ga people and their religion, I realised the conflict was traced to when other people from different areas came to settle here and decided to show disobedience to the religion of the Ga Traditional Area. Some participants explained this as follows:

In a situation where our traditions are not respected, that's where the problem lies. It's a disheartening thing for any Christian to do, as they are giving what belongs to Caesar to Caesar. The reason they said that is because if you don't respect us, you're not in the best state of Christianity. True Christians must respect people with a different faith. We are all Ghanaians; we are all brothers and sisters, and we are all one big family. This unity remains unchanged. Oh yes... (TRA 10, 15th June 2024)

Disregarding local customs is not just a matter of personal liberty. It's a primary cause of tension and conflict between Christians and traditional Ga people. This mentality, where outsiders feel exempt from local rules, is a significant problem. Every community, even abroad, has binding rules, and newcomers should not be an exception in Accra. (TRA 9, 21st June 2024)

We, traditionalists, have our doctrines, just as others have theirs. What's most frustrating is that every time an evangelist starts to preach by the roadside, they start condemning us, the traditionalists. However, the same Bible they hold tells them, "You do not condemn for you to be condemned first. For He is the true Son of God". So, if you say you are a Christian, you are a religious believer; that is who you are. It's crucial to respect others' faith. (TRA 6, 21st June 2024)

Ga youth who insist on following local rules often do so from a tribal, not Christian, perspective, specifically targeting Akans rather than other groups. They believe Akans, who dominate most churches, are the ones causing trouble, as they see evidence of rule-breaking mainly in Akan-majority areas like Achimota and Amasaman. In contrast, areas with fewer Akans, such as Jamestown or Osu, experience different issues. (CHR 10, 16th June 2024)

The responses suggest that the Ga felt offended when Christians or people from other areas who had come to settle with them decided not to obey the religious beliefs and practices of the Ga land. The interviews revealed that the Gas felt disrespected and mistreated in their land whenever those who had come to live with them did not adhere to their religious instructions. This act of disrespect seemed ill-conceived, creating confusion and causing conflict in the Ga Traditional Area.

4.1.1.5 Threatened Identity or Sense of Loss of Identity or Position

Participants indicated in the interview that some people will try to claim superiority, forgetting that they are in someone else's land. Some participants explained this as follows:

When we started, I said that the first is that they think they are looked down upon and belittled. Do you understand? Statistics show that the Gas are a minority on their land, and the Akans are the majority. Thus, most people in the Akan group always want to lord it over them, even

though they are in their land. Moreover, that is the beef that they have. Their beef. (CHR 8, 11th June 2024)

So, people will be claiming superiority over the act of worshipping God while in someone's land, as against the traditional type of worship in the area, because of what they see with their eyes, but what is known as what is not being told. So, when care is not taken, these things will become a point of conflict among many people for a long time. (TRA 8, 16th June 2024)

The responses of the participants suggest that when the people who are not typical Gas and have come to stay with them tried to impose their religion on them because they see Christianity as superior to their indigenous religion, which was handed to them by their forefathers, and they have believed in it to date. Meanwhile, some participants shared in the interview that they usually feel looked down upon due to the superior nature of others who live with them. According to some participants, there is a need for more understanding of what religion is the cause of the conflict. Participants in the interviews shared as follows:

The religious conflict in the Ga Traditional Area arises from a need for more understanding of indigenous and Christian religions. Each spiritual group has its distinct practices and founders, which shape its worship. Ghanaians, or Africans in general, are more spiritual than religious, and blending religion with spirituality is challenging. While Christians follow the doctrines of Jesus, traditionalists adhere to their unaltered cultural practices. The loss of identity and history among Africans hinders their ability to define the future, highlighting the need to preserve these for future generations. (TRA 2, 26th June 2024)

These responses suggest that there is some agreement that the conflict has roots in the lack of understanding of what religion is from both Christians and the Indigenous Religion of the area. Thus, it can be argued that one of the original causes of the inter-religious conflict is a dispute over what actual religions are and whose religion is the true religion. This issue is rooted in the lack of understanding of the tenets of religion, as discussed in the following sub-section

4.1.1.6 Inadequate Understanding of Religion

From the various responses, both factions in the inter-religious conflict agreed that the conflict was driven by people not understanding religion. Social Identity Theory (SIT) explains how an individual's lack of knowledge of what the other possesses can lead to in-group favouritism and out-group discrimination, which is a clear point of this cause of conflict (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Thus, people think that not having the same faith as them makes them enemies. A Chief Priest in the interview highlighted how a lack of understanding of the tenets of religion has caused the conflict, divided their community, and marred their relationship as a family. He shared as follows:

As traditionalists, we are not just individuals following a set of beliefs; we are a spiritual entity, a part of the fabric of Ghanaian and African culture. Despite the fundamental difference in essence and formation between Christians, we share a common humanity. This recognition can serve as a bridge to the clashes and misunderstandings arising from our diverse religious beliefs. The lack of understanding has caused division in families and marriages, leading to emotional distress and even separation. For instance, a husband may need to comprehend why his wife should be a traditionalist. (TRA 4, 8th June 2024)

Another participant shared that:

It is a misunderstanding. Yes, of course, it is a misunderstanding. Most of these conflicts happen here due to misunderstandings. Religions do not understand themselves. Christians do not believe in traditionalism. They do not believe in gods and shrines and those customs. They do not believe in it. (CHR 7, 20th June 2024)

You have to automatically have a full glimpse of the understanding of tradition and culture to explain further to the other Christian bodies. Understanding my worship and your worship without advising some of our members to deny their own family will never stop us from worshipping our Supreme Being. (TRA 7, 12th June 2024)

The responses gathered are a testimony to the mentality driving the conflict. Thus, the inception of Christianity, the area's cosmopolitan nature, and the dominant position of Christianity over the Ga Indigenous Religion catalyse the conflict, transforming it into a conflict driven by a lack of understanding of religion. The lack of knowledge of tenets

of religion also led to a lack of respect for the Ga Indigenous Religion and the people as a whole - Ga on the one side and the non-Ga settlers on the other. Overall, the discussion reinforces the notion that unresolved grievances are a key driver of conflict (Gates et al., 2016; Collier & Hoeffler, 2000, 2002). Avis (2019) argued that feelings of exclusion from power or opportunities, as well as experiences of marginalisation, can create conditions conducive to hostility and violence. In line with Social Identity Theory, threats to an individual's or group's identity can prompt collective action, sometimes manifesting in violent resistance against perceived challenges to that identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Conflict, therefore, can be understood as arising from disagreements or incompatibilities between individuals or groups (Sulemana, 2009).

The findings of this study support media reports indicating that the inter-religious conflict in the Ga Traditional Area is largely driven by perceived threats to the identity of the Ga people and a lack of understanding of Ga Indigenous Religion by non-Ga settlers (Yeboah, 2018; Quaye, 2017, 2018; Ghana News Agency, 2018). Scholars have cautioned that underestimating this situation could result in substantial social and cultural losses for both the Ga community and the nation at large (Yeboah, 2018). The persistent disregard for established procedures aimed at fostering mutual understanding between Ga Indigenous Religious believers and Christians has been identified as a key factor complicating conflict resolution.

Research suggests that conflicts are more likely to emerge when groups are perceived as majorities or minorities (Debrah et al., 2016). According to Debrah et al. (2016), as long as certain groups are categorised as "minorities" and others as "majorities," the potential for conflict remains high. Collier and Hoeffler (2000) similarly argue that the likelihood of conflict increases when one group seeks to dominate others within a multi-

ethnic community. Galtung (2000, p. 1) further observes that framing the Ga conflict in terms of minority versus majority status tends to obscure its underlying cause, unaddressed grievances. In this context, the conflict arises when the Ga people are treated as a minority in their own land, resulting in the marginalisation of their cultural and religious practices by non-Ga settlers.

The nature, intensity, effects, causes, and forms of the conflict have evolved. The Contact Hypothesis Theory (CHT) provides a useful lens for understanding this dynamic, emphasising that conflicts are not static but can change in degree and intensity as people interact with one another (Allport, 1954). Addressing these grievances is therefore essential to prevent further escalation and to work towards sustainable peace.

4.1.2 Dynamic Nature of the Conflict

Responses from the participants on how the conflict has changed were taken to provide a clear picture of the conflict and its evolution over time. This detailed description of the conflict dynamics and nature ensured that the audience was well-informed.

4.1.2.1 Span of the Conflict

Participants generally acknowledged that the inter-religious conflict had persisted for an extended period. However, many were unable to specify the exact year when the conflict began. A few participants made attempts to estimate the period, revealing that the conflict has spanned several decades. Some of the participants recounted the following:

Yes, this conflict has been going on for many years, even though we have not experienced it as we used to lately. I have stayed here for over thirty years and can say that I came to meet it. This whole conflict started when the chiefs gave land to these Christians. (CHR 2, 16th June 2024)

Some conflicts happen for longer, and when we have to treat them, they worsen. However, some have adopted a system where any time they have

a case, they prolong it so that by the time they give judgment, they can mobilise things to start fighting them again. However, you realise that some family members will stop fighting when they are being talked to. (CHR 9, 29th June 2024)

...some happen short, some happen through mere understanding, and some happen seriously. (CHR 3, 27th June 2024)

As mentioned earlier, the intensity of inter-religious conflict in the area is significant. This will help to bring forth the importance that should be attached to it and the urgent approach needed.

4.1.2.2 Regularity of the Conflict

The results revealed that inter-religious conflict in the Ga Traditional Area used to be quite frequent; however, it has gone down over the past few years. Participants indicated that attacks and confrontations were frequent. When it was asked if the conflict was a frequent occurrence, some participants stated the following:

In the current situation, even though we do not see the conflict as it used to be, we cannot write off the idea that everything is normal. (CHR 5, 28th June 2024)

We used to experience it every season whenever the Ga Indigenous Religion celebrated their festival, especially Homowo. You know, the Ga people practice religious practices during their festival celebrations. ...We do not experience it like that nowadays. The Christians do not fight with the Indigenous believers as they used to. However, we still experience it, but in a lower tone. (CHR 1, 2nd June 2024)

The responses suggest that the Ga Traditional Area inter-religious conflict has changed over time, and it is not as it used to be, except for pockets of it in some homes and communities. For some participants, the conflict persisted until stakeholders such as the Christian Council and Peace Council started engaging the various communities.

4.1.2.3 Pattern of the conflict

The study sought to understand from the participants whether the conflict was easily predictable. The participants indicated that one could not determine whether there would be a conflict this year because of how they do things. It was realised in the interviews that the behaviour, utterances, and actions of the people who are directly involved in the conflict, especially the youth, were not problematic for one to predict that there was going to be some form of confrontation whenever these religious practices are practiced or whenever they approached someone perceived to be flouting the rules during the religious festivities. When I asked a participant in the interviews if the Ga inter-religious conflict was predictable, he said:

People try to keep their issues within themselves. When others push them a little, they move, even Christians. That can never be erased. It is a continual recurrence. (TRA 1, 2nd June 2024)

A participant also indicated that:

However, because they cover up and do their stuff, one may not know precisely how they do their things. Before you realize it, it has become a chronic conflict that affects everybody. So, it is... I cannot say it is okay. However, for now, it is OK. (CHR 5, 28th June 2024)

The results suggest that it is difficult to predict that confrontations will occur during the Indigenous Religious festival. Some participants shared that both sides would go about doing their things, and by the time you realised they threatened each other whenever, the enforcers of the Ga Indigenous Religious observation were enforcing it. It was also revealed that the conflict reoccurs whenever a resolution is attempted. Participants shared that, unlike what happened on a higher magnitude some years back, nowadays, the pockets of those conflicts still start in smaller homes, even between couples who share different faiths. Thus, sometimes, the man prevents the wife from attending church activities of the Christians because he sees it as disobedience or betrayal. Participants indicated that they often anticipate a recurrence of the conflict whenever

efforts are made to resolve it. In other words, the arrival of a third party claiming to mediate or facilitate dialogue between the conflicting groups is frequently expected to lead to renewed confrontations.

Several participants noted that feelings of anger, resentment, and bitterness remain deeply entrenched among many individuals. Consequently, when mediators attempt to bring the parties together, confrontations often resurface. This observation was further reinforced during fieldwork, when a community member remarked that they no longer trust anyone claiming to come and resolve the conflict. This widespread lack of confidence in external interveners, further discussed later under threats to conflict resolution, significantly hampers efforts to achieve lasting peace.

4.1.2.4 Strategies

The study revealed that the two factions (Christians and the Ga Indigenous Religion) blamed each other for causing the conflict. The Ga Indigenous Religious believers indicated that the conflict would not have occurred if the Christians [especially the non-Ga settlers] had respected and obeyed their Ga Indigenous Religious tenets when settling with them earlier on. On the other hand, the Christians [especially the non-Ga settlers] accused the Ga Indigenous Religion of imposing its beliefs on them. At the same time, they had nothing to do with it because they only came to make a living.

However, the Ga Indigenous Religious believers opined that it was the Christians who first imposed their belief on them, trying to disregard the indigenous religion by calling it paganism. Also, the Ga Indigenous Religious believers were using threats and seizure of items as weapons to make the other yield. Both sides have threatened each other openly at times before intervening bodies or authorities. The factions were also labelling each other. Each side has labelled the other as a minority, and this came to the

limelight when the non-Ga settlers described the Ga as a minority in their land. The interviews revealed that the two sides were making irrevocable comments. The two factions were committed to continuing to behave antagonistically and as enemies.

4.2 Effects of the Conflict

This section discusses the effects of the inter-religious tension in the Ga Traditional Area. To investigate these effects, I interviewed participants to collect comprehensive information for an in-depth conflict analysis. Participants were asked about both the internal and external impacts of the conflict. The findings highlight numerous effects, each characterised by its complexities, intricacies, and interconnections, underscoring the thoroughness of our analysis.

4.2.1 Impact of the Conflict

The data analysis showed that the conflict strongly affected the Ga Traditional Area, the inhabitants, and the entire nation. This section discusses the effects of the conflict as distilled from the data collected.

4.2.1.1 Marred and Damaged Peaceful Relationship

The study discovered that the conflict had marred the community's long, healthy relationship in pre-colonial times and after the colonial era. One participant is highlighted as follows.

... it has affected peaceful relationships in the area. It involves the peaceful existence in the Ghana community to the point where some Indigenous people will think that if you are, sorry to say, arrogant and you are not ready to abide by what we expect you to do, then we cannot live with you. (CHR 8, 11th June 2024)

The findings revealed that community members no longer interact freely with those they perceive as belonging to opposing factions. The prolonged conflict has made peaceful cohabitation challenging, restricting even those who have friends across

factional lines from engaging openly. This has, in some cases, created strained relationships, with certain Ga participants asserting that non-Ga individuals must adhere to Ga religious practices to be accepted within the community. Some participants also noted that attempts to socialise with members of the other faction are often discouraged or blocked by elders within their own group. While younger members of the community expressed frustration over the ongoing nature of the conflict, older members appeared less motivated to seek a resolution. Across the interviews, participants consistently observed that whenever Ga Indigenous Religious ceremonies take place, the outcome of interactions and potential tensions can often be anticipated by the broader community.

4.2.1.2 Loss of Property

The study discovered that the conflict had caused many people to lose their properties by seizing and sometimes burning them when the affected person proved difficult to deal with. One participant highlighted:

...it has also cost some people their livelihood. Yes, many people have lost their properties, even including churches. There was a time at Bokum here when the whole property of a church was seized and burned because they were drumming during the Homowo Festival. (CHR 3, 27th June 2024)

Another participant shared as follows:

...it has affected many individuals and families because they have lost their source of income. (CHR 7, 20th June 2024)

As revealed in the comments, both factions in the Ga Traditional Area agreed that the conflict had inflicted significant losses on individuals and churches, including the loss of properties. An older woman in the interviews shared a distressing account of how the enforcers of the Indigenous Religious celebration, when seizing items, often resort to destruction, thereby creating further conflict. This destructive cycle has not only

impeded the movement of people, especially non-Ga settlers, but has also led to a perception of unfriendliness towards them by the Ga. This is further detailed in the following sub-section.

4.2.1.3 Impeded Movement

One learning from the interviews was that the inter-religious conflict in the area had impeded movement, especially for the non-Ga settlers. Thus, those who are not typically Ga Indigenous religious believers find it difficult to settle in any of the Ga Traditional Areas because the Gas sees them as unfriendly. The gravity of this situation cannot be overstated. People shared that when they discover that you are not obeying their religious observance, they turn to expel you, and thus, it becomes difficult for you to stay in any of the Ga lands. In this case, one turns out to be moving from one place to another every time because the Gas sees them as their enemy. One participant described this as follows:

It has affected the movement of people who were not prepared to obey. If, for example, you are in Jamestown here and working peacefully, and it comes to that issue, you say I am not ready for it. It affects you because you do not get accommodation and move to another zone when forced out. Moreover, because people see you as needing more time to be ready to obey their religious observations, they see you as unfriendly and prefer to avoid entertaining you. This feeling of being unwanted can lead to a deep sense of isolation. (CHR 6, 15th June 2024)

The responses suggest that although Gas is accommodating when they realize you do not respect religious observation, they create a hostile environment. I also realised in the interviews that the Gas are very observant of their religious rituals, and any sense of disrespect towards them makes you their enemy. There is currently relative calmness in the Ga Traditional Area. However, some people are still concerned about what happens in some homes and a few communities due to religious differences.

4.2.1.4 Hindered Community Development and Job

From the interview, it was clear that the conflict has delayed or stalled the development of the community, which is a significant concern. Although the Greater Accra Region has seen massive development that spans many years and regimes, due mainly to it being the administrative capital of Ghana, the typical Ga Traditional Area in the Region needs to catch up in terms of development. This is somehow attributed to the conflict and the unfriendly atmosphere for business owners and investors. The interviews revealed that whenever these non-Gas are expelled from the area due to what they classified as disobedience to their religious tenets, they turn to leave with their businesses, thereby creating unemployment and delaying development. One participant indicated as follows:

It has affected the community because it has brought development down. For example, employers or people who can bring jobs to the community, if you see them not being friendly and want to ward them off from within you, they turn to take what they have away from the community. It has indeed affected the community. So, let me be straightforward. For example, if you think of Jamestown here, many businessmen and women exist. If, for example, some of them say that because you insist that we keep quiet during that period, we are not ready for it, and you want us to leave, we want to go with our businesses... Most of their companies employ indigenous people. So, when they take it away, who suffers? That is why we must find a way in between, promoting unity so that the two people can live in peace. (TRA 5, 10th June 2024)

Although Accra was developed because it is the head of administration for the government of Ghana, the typical Ga Traditional Area is still lacking in terms of development.

4.2.2 Effects on the Believers

The data analysis showed that the conflict had substantial consequences not only between the Christians and the Ga Indigenous believers but also among the Christians [churches] themselves because some of the people tasked to enforce the Ga Indigenous

Religious celebration found themselves in the various churches; they see their members as those who flout the laws. This section discusses the effects of the conflict on the believers as distilled from the data collected.

4.2.2.1 Created Disunity among the Church Members

The interviews also revealed that some Christian faithful in the Ga Traditional Area who still see the Indigenous Religion as an inheritance and, for that matter, the need to observe it even if they are Christian. They believe that disobedience to it is equally disobedient to their forefathers. Also, it was revealed that sometimes, it is not about the Christians per se; however, it is the Akans in the church because they see the Akans as those who look down upon them and their religion, even in their land. Some participants mentioned that some of the Christians who are typical Gas are part of those who enforce the Indigenous religious observation. Sometimes, it turns out to be a confrontation among the Christian faithful in the church, thereby leading to the outbreak of violence. One participant shared that:

...it creates disunity. In the same way, I am being very frank with you. Yes, that aspect is essential. Thus, it is not about the Christians for many youths who do these things. Some of them are Pentecost. Some of them are Apostolic. Some of them are Catholics. Moreover, they rise against their church because they feel that it is the Akans who make the noise. They think that the Akans always look down upon them, and they do not want to be... (CHR 2, 16th June 2024)

Another participant shared as follows:

I know of the Ga Traditional Area; I do not know any other, so I am talking about the Ga Traditional Area. The persistence of the conflict had had many consequences. Because you see that, people do not get to unite their families. It has brought some disunity. Yes, there is disunity among the community and even the church members themselves. (CHR 4, 3rd June 2024)

These suggest that the conflict has not only affected the relationship between the Christian and the Ga Indigenous Religion, but it has also created hostility among some

Christian faithful or churches. It was also realised that the conflict has stalled the growth of some churches in the area. The interview showed that the conflict has repercussions on the other side of the country, as discussed in the sub-section below.

4.2.3 Magnitude or Length of the Effects

The interview revealed that the effects of the conflict have some repercussions through its dynamics, and this is discussed in this section

4.2.3.1 Disruption of National Harmony

The interviews revealed that the continuous conflict has damaged national harmony because another ethnic group also sees the Gas in their area as enemies, because of what happens in the Ga Traditional Area. They feel that what happens to their relatives in the Ga Traditional Area must also occur to the Gas in their area.

It has also affected the whole country. It may be something you see from afar, but indirectly, it is nearer than we can imagine. You may not directly see it, but it affects the country gradually or in small ways. For example, if a group of young indigenous people says that a particular person is not ready to obey the traditional leaders, they want him out of this place, and they move him out. He goes to wherever he comes from, and if there is a Ga there. He insists that you also move out. We also do not want you because of what was done to us. You can see the ripple effect. You have expelled our people, so when we come, we also expel somebody. (CHR 5, 28th June 2024)

Another participant shared as follows:

...an employer or a director somewhere with nothing to do with what happened to obey. Because of the mere fact that he is somebody whose tribe's men or women were expelled, he also says that, as a subordinate working under me, I am not ready to accommodate you. So, there are so many ways in which it has affected the nation. (CHR 8, 11th June 2024)

The interviews revealed that conflict has somehow disrupted national unity and cohesion. Some participants noted that this has made accommodating some of their members in other areas of the country complex. An older man who lives in the Ga traditional area indicated that his son, who lives in another part of the country, was

refused a job because the company owner asserted that his relatives were expelled from the Ga Traditional Area, which has made him develop some enmity towards the Gas. It has also made finding jobs in different communities difficult for its members.

4.2.3.2 Obstruct Family Reunions and Weaken Family Bonds

The conflict has obstructed family reunions, which, in the end, breaks family bonds. The interviews revealed that some family members who have travelled felt unhappy coming home. This particular issue has made some family members lose ties with others outside the Ga Traditional Area. Also, the family members of the non-Gas felt unhappy to visit them at the Ga Traditional Area. A participant indicated as follows:

...hmm, people outside the home have also stopped returning home. Before you realise it, it will get to the stage where they do not even know they are family members. It has driven even those who have travelled away. Thus, they say that if those in the house are fighting, they do not need to come. By the time you realize, they have even lost their roots.
(TRA 7, 12th June 2024)

The incidents mentioned have led to the erosion of indigenous religious values that Ga Indigenous Religious believers sought to protect. The interviews reveal that the ongoing conflict has significantly impacted the area.

Gates et al. (2016) argue that recurring conflicts indicate unresolved grievances among the affected parties. Research suggests that conflicts often strain relationships between or among the involved factions (Gariba, 2015; Kpormasi, 2013; Adzahlie-Mensah, 2007; Adzahlie-Mensah & Benson, 2018; Mensah, 2013; Tsikata & Seini, 2004). The findings from this study support the existing literature, confirming that conflict adversely affects the social dynamics within the Ga Traditional Area (Debrah et al., 2016). Moreover, conflicts impose significant social consequences on those who experience them (Brück et al., 2017; Asamoah, 2014), creating insecurity within affected communities.

There is concern that the ongoing inter-religious conflict could tarnish the image of the Ga Traditional Area as a peaceful community, aligning with the arguments of Tsikata and Seini (2004), Jönsson (2007), and Gati (2008) that conflicts are a cause for concern among many Ghanaians. Thus, many conflicts have deteriorated the peaceful atmosphere that some communities have created. Many people do not feel comfortable visiting these places anymore. The study's findings further support Brück et al. (2017) and Asamoah's (2014) contention that conflicts have troubling economic consequences for the affected populations. One such economic impact identified in the study is the loss or destruction of property. This aligns with existing research, which highlights the commonality of property loss in conflict situations (Aremu, 2010; Adzahlie-Mensah, 2007; Greene et al., 2006; UNDP, 2012; Tchombe, 2006; Tsikata & Seini, 2004). Asamoah (2014) also notes that the security implications of such conflicts have profound effects on people's lives.

The conflict between Christians and Indigenous Religious believers in the Ga Traditional Area is fundamentally religious. Religious conflicts are notable in Ghana (UNDP, 2012; Tsikata & Seini, 2004; Jönsson, 2007). The findings corroborate the literature, emphasising that conflict actors operate at various levels and play different roles (Grönberg et al., 2011). This is further explored in the following section.

4.3 Actors Involved in the Conflict

The study also sought to identify the various actors involved in the conflict. This section explored the different participants in the conflict and their respective needs. Additionally, the study aimed to determine these actors' allies and understand their motivations. The interviews revealed that the conflict involved multiple actors,

including Christians, Indigenous Religion adherents, state actors, traditional leaders, independent individuals, and various groups.

4.3.1 Primary Actors (Conflict Parties)

The interviews revealed that the main actors in the inter-religious conflict in the area are the Christians and the Indigenous Religion [not the whole of Gas per se]. They are the two parties still contesting each other over faith and practices, and this comes up strongly whenever there is a religious festival by the Ga Indigenous Religion, which demands some observations. It is a custom that whenever there are religious festivities by the Gas, there should be an observance banning noise-making. However, the Christians found this to be the imposition of the so-called pagan idols. They see this as an act against their faith and the motive and mandate of Christianity. This has continued for many years since Christianity entered the Ga Traditional Area. From the interview, there are several occasions that some churches and individuals have been confronted and sanctioned, yet some churches and individuals remain culpable whenever there is this observance. The Gas regard this as a deliberate attempt to undermine their religious faith and practices by the Christians, especially the Akan Christians. As such, these are the recurring issues among the two main actors in the Ga Traditional Area inter-religious conflict. A participant indicated:

The parties involved directly are the Christians and Indigenous Religion; they are the two parties fighting over their faith, beliefs, and practices. (TRA 8, 16th June 2024)

Some participants also indicated as follows:

It is just individuals. You cannot generalise it; sometimes, people claim these people as actors. Some individuals think we are we; we are alone, no one... We announce it in churches every year, yet some individuals defy it. No particular hidden actors push people to do it, but it is individual. (CHR 9, 27th June 2024)

It is the youth, yes, it is the youth. Usually, those who are not mandated come to seize the equipment when they come. That is what happens. So, the church people also resist. ...I do not know what exactly, but I know it is the youth. (CHR 4, 3rd June 2024)

The interview revealed that the two main conflict parties are the Christians and the Ga Indigenous Religion, who are fighting because of religious differences. They seemed not to accommodate each other regarding religious faith and its exercises.

4.3.2 Secondary (Perceived/Indirect) Actors

The interviews revealed that some actors were not directly connected to the conflict but either fuelled it from unseen places or used it to gain their parochial interests. Various groups within and outside the Ga Traditional Area were mentioned during that interview, who benefit from the conflict indirectly. These actors are the politicians, the youth, and the rich men who live outside the area, to mention but a few, and they call the conflict profiteers. Thus, there are indirect actors in the conflict. When I asked participants who the actors in the conflict were, some of them highlighted as follows:

... yes, if we look at the actors, it is the politicians. Some politicians benefit from it while they are fighting. (TRA 3, 4th June 2024)

Some people indirectly take advantage of it. ...you cannot say for sure that this politician or that politician, but you can also not rule it out. (TRA 3, 27th June 2024)

There are some elders, I think, who wish that the conflict continues so that the government will continue to send intervention or call them for a meeting. I hope they gain something whenever the government calls them. So, they sometimes incite the youth against the Christians. (CHR 7, 20th June 2024)

Some elders have some negative feelings towards the Akans, so they target churches where the Akans are and incite the youth to go and cause mayhem there. For example, in my church last year, some youth came there claiming that they were alerted by some elders that we were making noise, which was not true... (CHR 6, 15th June 2024)

...some unruly young guys take advantage of it during the period and find some money. So even when they have not been sent to come to a particular place, they can organise on their own. That is a cover-up.

They cover up, and then they do their own thing. There are some guys around who want to exploit it. (CHR 3, 27th June 2024)

These suggest that, apart from the main conflict parties, some actors' actions indirectly fuel the conflict for their parochial interests or gains. They may not be at the forefront of the conflict, but influence it from afar [to some point, financing it] to gain advantage.

4.3.3 Other (Third-Party) Actors

In this section, the researcher explored the actors whose actions have positively or negatively affected the conflict. Although they are not directly involved in the conflict, their actions seem to have resolved it. These are not the conflict parties per se, but those who have contributed in some way to ending the conflict.

4.3.3.1 Traditional and Religious Actors

Traditional and religious actors were involved in the conflict. In the interviews, I realised that Dr. Boni Nii Amugi II (Former Ga Mantse) intervened in the conflict several times before his death. As the Ga Mantse from 1965 until he died in 2004, Nii Amugi II played a significant role in maintaining peace among various religious groups in the Ga State. He was known for preserving traditional customs and promoting peaceful coexistence between Christians and practitioners of Indigenous Religion. Until his death, the former Paramount chief engaged the two factions to restore calm in the Ga Traditional Area. The passing of Nii Amugi II marked a significant moment, as his long reign was characterised by efforts to maintain harmony among the Ga people.

Aside from him, King Tackie Tawiah III (Ga Mantse), who ascended the throne later on, also attempted to engage the two sides to restore peace in the community. During his reign as Ga Mantse (2006–2012), King Tackie Tawiah III was involved in resolving conflicts between Christians and Indigenous religious practitioners, particularly

concerning the use of land and sacred spaces. King Tackie Tawiah III's reign saw notable efforts to address religious tensions, particularly about Christian groups' use of traditional lands. Again, Nii Tetteh Kwei II (Ga Wulomo), serving as the Ga Wulomo, the highest spiritual leader of the Ga people, Nii Tetteh Kwei II was instrumental in mediating conflicts that involved indigenous religious practices and Christian activities. In addition, Nii Ayi Bonte II (James et al.), as a traditional leader, was involved in several peace negotiations and conflict resolutions, particularly those concerning religious practices. Nii Adotey Obuur II (Sempe Mantse), one of the vital traditional leaders in the Ga State, has also been involved in resolving conflicts between religious communities.

Apart from these traditional leaders, some religious leaders contributed to solving the conflict. Thus, Archbishop Charles Palmer-Buckle, a prominent Catholic leader in Accra and a former Archbishop of Accra, promoted dialogue between Christians and Indigenous Religious practitioners. His efforts have often focused on mutual respect and understanding. Prof. John S. Pobee's role as a theologian and academic contributed to interfaith dialogue, and he has written extensively on the need for peaceful coexistence between Christianity and Indigenous African Religions, including those in the Ga area.

Several interventions occurred during this period, with efforts from both traditional leaders and religious figures to resolve conflicts related to land use, religious festivals, and sacred sites. These individuals and periods represent some of the key players and moments in the ongoing efforts to manage and resolve conflicts between Indigenous Religion and Christianity in the Ga Traditional Area. However, their efforts needed to

yield a more favourable resolution. Even the study revealed that some sections in the Ga Traditional Area viewed their efforts as biased.

4.3.3.2 State Actors

The study also revealed the involvement of state actors in the conflict. Both the police and the military have historically intervened during disturbances in the Ga Traditional Area to restore order and ensure the smooth functioning of daily activities. Additionally, the research highlighted the role of former President Jerry John Rawlings in conflict resolution. Serving as Ghana's President from 1981 to 2001, Rawlings actively promoted national unity and engaged in efforts to address various disputes, including those within the Ga Traditional Area. His administration frequently intervened in religious and ethnic conflicts to maintain peace and stability in the region.

Again, during his administration, John Agyekum Kufuor (Former President of Ghana) worked to resolve inter-religious conflict in the Ga Traditional Area. His government worked with traditional leaders and religious organisations to foster peaceful coexistence. Professor John Evans Atta Mills (Former President of Ghana), who served as President from 2009 until his demise in 2012, was known for advocating peace and religious tolerance. His government supported dialogue between religious groups, including those in the Ga Traditional Area. John Dramani Mahama (Former President of Ghana), as President from 2012 to 2017, continued to mediate conflicts, including religious disputes in the Greater Accra Region. He often emphasized the importance of dialogue and mutual respect among religious communities. Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo (President of Ghana), as the current President of Ghana (since 2017), has promoted religious tolerance and peace. His administration has worked with traditional

leaders and religious bodies to address ongoing tensions, including those in the Ga Traditional Area.

Moreover, Peter Ala Adjetey (Former Speaker of Parliament), a prominent lawyer and politician from the Ga community who served as Speaker of Parliament from 2001 to 2005, was involved in various initiatives to promote peace and address conflicts within the Greater Accra Region. In addition, Sheikh Dr. Osman Nuhu Sharubutu (National et al.), although primarily a religious leader, played a significant role as a state actor in promoting interfaith dialogue and resolving religious conflicts, including those involving Indigenous Religion and Christians in the Ga Traditional Area.

Even so, Greater Accra Regional Ministers (since independence) have been involved in conflict resolution efforts over the years, working closely with traditional leaders, religious bodies, and security agencies to maintain peace in the region. These state actors have been instrumental in promoting peace and resolving conflicts between Indigenous Religions and Christians in the Ga Traditional Area, contributing to the stability and unity of the region. Government functionaries such as the Minister for Chieftaincy and Religious Affairs (since independence) have often played a role in mediating the inter-religious conflict in the Ga Traditional Area. For example, Ambrose Dery, who once served as Minister for the Interior, has been involved in the Ga Traditional Area peace-building initiatives. The MCE of the Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA) often played a role in resolving this inter-religious conflict. The DCEs of districts within the Ga Traditional Area, such as Ablekuma Central and Ablekuma West, have been involved in resolving disputes. A participant stated:

... Peace Council, the DISEC, the REGSEC, they made several attempts... (CHR 1, 2024)

Mohammed Adjei Sowah and Elizabeth Naa Kwatsoe Tawiah Sackey are also recognised for their contributions to maintaining peace in the Ga Traditional Area. According to participants, the Peace Council has played an active role in the conflict since its establishment. Interviewees noted that the Council has repeatedly engaged both factions in efforts to achieve a resolution. While these interventions have not always produced fully positive outcomes, the Peace Council's involvement in mediating between the parties positioned it as a key actor in the conflict. In this way, government representatives and functionaries also became actively involved as actors within the conflict dynamics.

4.3.3.3 Independent or Individual Actors

In addition, several independent individuals have also played significant roles in the conflict, thereby becoming active actors. During the interviews, participants identified certain persons who, since the onset of the conflict, have consistently sought to facilitate dialogue and promote resolution between the opposing sides. Participants noted that civil societies and human rights advocates have contributed to dialogue and conflict resolution efforts. These advocates have worked to mediate between different religious and cultural groups. Peacebuilding Practitioners and NGOs or grassroots organizations dedicated to peacebuilding and conflict resolution have facilitated conversations and mediated disputes between Indigenous Religions and the Christians in the area.

Some academics and researchers who are also university lecturers specialising in religious studies, sociology, anthropology, or conflict resolution have conducted research, facilitated workshops, or provided expert advice to help resolve tensions between Christians and practitioners of Indigenous Religion in the area. Journalists and Media Personalities have covered stories related to religious tensions in the Ga

Traditional Area, all in the name of bringing attention to the issues and helping to foster dialogue and understanding.

Radio and television personalities who have hosted discussions or debates on religious coexistence in the region may have helped educate the public and reduce conflicts. Individuals with mediation or conflict resolution training who are not affiliated with any religious or governmental organisation may have been called upon to help resolve disputes at the community level. Respected community members, though not officially recognised as traditional leaders, often serve as impartial parties mediating conflicts within their area. Some young leaders have organised interfaith or intercultural events to promote understanding and dialogue among different religious groups and contribute to resolving disputes in the area.

Legal Advocates specialising in human rights have also taken up cases or provided legal advice to ensure that the rights of both religious groups are respected, potentially helping to mediate conflicts. Social workers who engage with marginalised or vulnerable groups have worked behind the scenes to resolve conflicts and build bridges between the conflicting parties in the area. Although these individuals may occasionally receive public recognition, their contributions have been vital to conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts in the Ga Traditional Area.

4.3.4 Interests of the Actors

The interviews revealed that the two conflicting parties and their supporters' interest is in protecting their faith, which is embedded in their doctrines. While the Christians claim their religion has the proper way [in terms of “orthodoxy” and “orthopraxis”] to serve the Supreme Being and, for that matter, the Indigenous Religion has been seen as paganism, the Indigenous Religion sees their way of serving the Supreme Being as the

true and ultimate way, which can bring salvation. The two prominent individuals in the conflict are interested in which means of worshipping the Supreme Being is genuine. According to participants, the religious groups' interest is to make a point that their way of worshipping the Supreme Being is genuine and must be accepted by others. Some participants shared the following:

When you look critically at the conflict, it mainly focuses on faith. The indigenous religion claims that this is the way they have been serving the Supreme Being, and he has been answering their prayers. Therefore, to claim that their way of worship is paganism is an insult. (CHR 1, 2nd June 2024)

...It is the whites who have come to pollute our people's minds against our religion. This is not fair, and you know it. How can you say that our way of worshipping is paganism? Are we not worshipping the same Supreme Being (God)? (TRA 7, 12th June 2024)

...the claiming of someplace as sacred and, for that matter, we cannot visit it is barbaric and must be stopped. Christ has come, sanctifies everything ...and for that matter, every place I should be able to be visited. (CHR 8, 11th June 2024)

We do not have a problem with them per se, but their religious instructions have nothing to do with us. We want that thing to stop, and our members who are married to them must be allowed to come and worship with us. yes, some husbands stop their children and wives... Yes, it is true... (CHR 4, 3rd June 2024)

Their interest is the supremacy of religion. Each conflict party wants to claim supremacy in worshipping the Supreme Being. (CHR 4, 3rd June 2024)

...yes, some youth also use the occasion to get money from the people. When they come to your place or church, and they realize that you are making noise, they put some sticks on your items or seize your instruments, and when you give them money, they leave you. (CHR 7, 20th June 2024)

The responses indicate that each faction seeks to assert the most legitimate way of serving the Supreme Being. Beyond the primary actors, the Christians and Indigenous Religious practitioners, and the secondary actors, other participants, including state, traditional, and independent actors, were generally seen as committed to facilitating a

resolution. According to some participants, these actors were not concerned with determining which religion holds the ultimate doctrine or whose worship of the Supreme Being is authentic. Instead, their focus was on promoting peace and stability within the Ga Traditional Area.

However, during the interviews, representatives from either faction occasionally accused certain intervening parties of having vested interests in the conflict. As Galtung (2000) observes, achieving one's objectives is closely linked to satisfying one's fundamental needs. The dynamics of the inter-religious conflict in the Ga Traditional Area involve complex interactions among emotions, behaviours, feelings, actors, interests, and needs. This interplay has fostered patterns of behaviour in which conflict parties increasingly distrust the capacity of intervening actors to resolve the dispute effectively. The Contact Hypothesis Theory (CHT) helps explain this phenomenon, highlighting that systems composed of multiple interacting elements evolve, giving rise to observable patterns of behaviour (Allport, 1954).

4.3.5 Allies of the Actors

The study asked participants who the allies of the two conflict parties in the Ga Traditional Area inter-religious conflict are. The interviews revealed that the allies of the two people who have been contesting over the true doctrine and genuine way of serving the Supreme Being are their various tribes in other religions. That is, now, while the Ga Indigenous Religions are supported by the Ga [even those in other regions], the Christians are mainly being supported by the Akans [even those who are not in the Ga Traditional enclave]. I realized in the interviews that some Akans in other Regions even influence their colleagues in the Ga Traditional Area not to obey the Indigenous Religious observance in the area. A participant stated:

We have other people; we have other people from outside who have influenced this conflict. You understand? They are not part of the family. They have nothing to do with the quarrel or the dispute. However, you see them in there, and then they will push this, doing this, doing that. (CHR 2, 16th June 2024)

Another participant shared as follows:

We had some yesterday. It was noisy because they might have a trench of people who followed them. Before you start resolving, they will post it on social media. Then, the other party thinks it is another thing when they see it. (TRA 4, 8th June 2024)

These suggest that every conflicting party is being supported by one group or the other. This creates enmity between the Akans and the Gas [even in a lower tone]. However, the interviews also revealed that some people from either the Akans or the Gas may not support their own people; they seek each other to respect their religion and way of worship. For instance, an elder indicated as follows:

...I do not think this should continue. Whether Christians or Indigenous religions, we are worshipping the same God. (TRA 7, 12th June 2024)

4.4 Threats to the Resolution of the Conflict

The study aimed to examine why the inter-religious conflict has remained difficult to resolve, despite numerous interventions by state institutions, traditional authorities, and other actors. The objective was to identify the factors that act as obstacles or constraints to conflict resolution and to understand how these factors have perpetuated the conflict over time. By recognising these issues, future resolution efforts could be designed to address them effectively and achieve sustainable outcomes.

Participants were asked to reflect on the reasons that hinder the resolution of the conflict. Analysis of the interviews revealed several recurring themes: lack of cooperation and mutual understanding, exploitation of the conflict for personal or political gain, enduring cultural and historical grievances, limited confidence and trust in intervening bodies, ineffective interaction between state and traditional systems and

the conflicting parties, perceived political interference, inadequate analysis of the conflict dynamics before intervention, misperceptions of the conflict, and a sense of revenge among the parties involved. Notably, the interviews indicated that neither resources nor financial capacity posed significant challenges to the resolution of the conflict.

4.4.1 Lack of Cooperation and Understanding

The study found that the conflicting parties lacked cooperation and understanding. This interview indicated that both parties need help understanding each other, and sometimes, when they are brought together to resolve the conflict, they want to avoid cooperating. Thus, there is a continued resistance to indigenous religious practices by non-Ga residents. Also, there is a persistent feeling of disrespect and marginalisation among the Ga people. From the interview, it was realized there were several occasions when the Peace Council intervened, but the parties proved indifferent to the intervention. An elder shared:

...Oh yes, people come here to intervene, but sometimes getting both sides' leaders is brutal. I do not know their reason, but they do not want to understand them. I remember there was a time when the Peace Council scheduled a meeting here with them, but none of the leaders from the Indigenous Religion showed up. (CHR 2, 16th June 2024)

The interview revealed that resolution attempts had failed several times due to a lack of understanding and cooperation. Some participants claimed that some of the leaders in the Indigenous Religion did not want to see eye to eye with the Christians because they felt that they had turned their people against them.

4.4.2 Exploitation of Conflict

I realised in the interviews that some unruly individuals took advantage of the situation for their parochial interests. Some potential hidden actors fuelled the conflict for personal or political gain. Participants stated that these people pretend to resolve the dispute but are fuelling it from behind to exploit them. One participant indicated as follows:

Some people used this conflict to exploit us for the Gas. You see how they captured our lands. Instead of navigating how we can stay peacefully, they capture lands meant for the gods ...yes, the sacred lands. (TRA 2, 26th June 2024)

The responses suggest that people behind the scenes have turned the conflict into an avenue to exploit the people. Also, the interviews reveal that some have been using conflict to do business with the conflicting parties. Thus, they claimed to be supporting them and taking money from them

4.4.3 Perceived political interference

I realised in the interviews that the conflict parties' perception of interference of political figures in the conflict decided on the resolution. Interviews with some Indigenous Religious leaders and some Christian leaders revealed that they refused to accept some recommendations because they thought some political figures supported one of the factions. I realised in the interviews that some Indigenous Religious leaders believe that some MPs support the Christians, and they sometimes violate religious observance. One of the chiefs interviewed stated:

Politics has become one of the factors hindering the progressiveness of disputed resolutions. They are doing that because they believe they have power due to their political office, to control religious authorities. They are destroying the hub of understanding, the truth we are all looking at. Have you ever seen any politician who is a Christian or Muslim and has allowed non-Muslims or non-Christians to make things that would undermine his faith? It is the other way around. Politicians influence the

facts or points used to solve disputed issues in this area. (TRA 2, 26th June 2024)

The interview revealed that a conflict party that believes an intervening party supports their opponent may not accept any recommendation from such intervening parties. Some of the leaders in Indigenous Religions believe that politicians always influence the conflict resolution processes for their own gain.

4.4.4 Failure of intervening bodies to analyse the dynamics of the conflict before attempting resolution

The interviews highlighted that one of the reasons the conflict remains unresolved is the inability of intervening bodies to properly analyse and comprehend the dynamics of the conflict before attempting resolution. Some of the elders interviewed recounted an instance in which they informed the Peace Council that they lacked sufficient understanding of the practices and norms of the Indigenous Religion and, therefore, could not dictate what the community should or should not do. These elders explained:

...Peace Council came and entered the issue. Some MPs...yes, from this area and outside, entered the problem and realized that it was more than they thought... they could not resolve it because of the faith differences. (TRA 6, 121st June 2020)

Successive governments have tried several times but later realized that it is more complex than they thought. ...it is because it bothers people's faith and what they believe in... (CHR 5, 28th June 2024)

Now, there is a land issue. We have to look at the proper process for sending the land to the authorities, who have the right to arbitrate on land issues. The other problem is...when it comes to issues that involve disputes that involve spiritual conflicts. We must take it somewhere other than the sixth valley. We have to take it to the first valleys because we do much more on a spiritual level. (TRA 10, 15th June 2024)

These suggest that any intervening party needing help understanding the area's inter-religious conflict may find it challenging to resolve. Also, I realised in the interviews

that some of the intervening parties required more knowledge of the religion and its tenets, and thus could not ensure a resolution of the conflict.

4.4.5 Poor perception of ‘conflict and peace’ by some intervening parties

The interviews indicated that the way intervening bodies perceive the conflict may have contributed to the challenges in resolving the dispute over the years. During interactions with traditional leaders in the Ga Traditional Area, it became apparent that their understanding of the conflict and peace likely shaped how they approached the conflicts between the two religious groups. At the beginning of the data collection, some leaders were reluctant to engage fully, asserting that, from the perspective of the paramountcy, peace currently exists in the Ga Traditional Area and that no active disputes were ongoing. Others were hesitant to discuss the progress of conflict resolution efforts.

Some of the traditional leaders shared the following insights:

...As far as we are concerned, there is peace in the Ga Traditional Area. Are you seeing people fighting when you pass through town? The Indigenous Religion is celebrating its religious festival now, but do you see anyone fighting? ...oh yes, we are in Homowo, but no one is fighting.
(TRA 8, 16th June 2024)

Yes, I am a traditional leader and an elder in my church, so my faith does not allow me to speak on it... **(TRA 9, 21st June 2024)**

These responses suggest that some intervening parties had a narrow understanding of peace, as it suggests peace is when people are not actively fighting or have no physical confrontations. Thus, their perception of the conflict in the Ga Traditional Area may have influenced how they handled or approached it.

3.4.6 Cultural and Historical Grievances Leading to a Perceived Sense of Revenge

The interviews revealed a sense of hatred, giving birth to a perceived sense of revenge in some conflict parties. For instance, when I asked some participants in the interviews if they had forgotten about everything and are living in peace now, they shared that they cannot forgive those who have burnt their churches and personal properties all in the name of religious observance. Some participants shared as follows:

...Some is a revenge. Some are revenge because you will realise that someone will say that when my dad was a Muslim, when he passed away, the Muslim community did not pay their duty to be there. So, I am no longer going to join them again. I will preach the negatives about them. Moreover, the Christian world has also become like that. (CHR 8, 11th June 2024)

Yes, some feel that some forefathers spoke ill of their religion, and for that matter, they cannot live with their children. (CHR 3, 27th June 2024)

...Since they have burnt my property all in the name of religious observance that does not concern my family and me, I cannot forgive this. I will not do anything physical, but I will not forgive them, even their generation yet unborn. (CHR 8, 11th June 2024)

Yes, when it is not being appropriately administered, or the right thing is not used to resolve the conflicts, people turn to revenge, and it has happened here before (TRA 9, 21st June 2024)

These suggest that some people grieve based on past incidents and harbour some revenge in them. These grievances range from cultural to historical to religious.

Research highlights the significant role of political interference in conflicts within Ghana, particularly in the Ga Traditional Area (WASCI & SIPRI, 2011; UNDP, 2012; Tonah, 2012). Some local factions accuse MPs of exploiting the inter-religious conflict for parochial gains. However, Quaye (2017) clarifies that spiritual leaders, rather than MPs, wield actual influence over religious matters in the area. State and traditional institutions have struggled to resolve the conflict effectively due to a lack of initial

collaboration with traditional authorities and a failure to address the underlying grievances (Aall, 2015; Mahama & Longi, 2013; El-Bushra, 2017).

Effective conflict resolution requires a deep understanding of the conflict's root causes, as Körppen (2006) and Kuupiel (2019) emphasised. Many interventions in the Ga Traditional Area were superficial, focusing on quick fixes instead of addressing the core issues, leading to persistent conflicts. Adzahlie-Mensah and Benson (2018) stress that lasting peace remains elusive without addressing these fundamental grievances. Additionally, the complexity of the conflict is heightened by the dynamics between majority and minority groups and the influence of the diaspora. Collier and Hoeffler (2000, 2002, 2004) argue that diaspora involvement, especially financial support, can exacerbate conflicts and hinder resolution efforts.

Resistance from conflict parties and a lack of trust in interveners further complicate resolution efforts. Some interveners withdrew when challenged, demonstrating a need for more resilience, which is essential for effective mediation (Adzahlie-Mensah & Benson, 2018). Morake et al. (2011) note that perceptions of the conflict influence resolution outcomes, highlighting the need for interveners to align their understanding with that of the local community. Rogier (2004) and Ducasse-Rogier (2004) point out that resistance to peace efforts and a perceived commitment to the conflict by parties can undermine resolution attempts.

Building trust and ownership among conflict parties is crucial. Adzahlie-Mensah and Benson (2018) emphasise that resolution processes need more legitimacy with trust, leading to discomfort and reluctance to engage openly. Ahiave (2013) concludes that scepticism toward intervening bodies can negatively impact conflict resolution. Effective strategies must, therefore, include building confidence, engaging with

traditional authorities from the outset, and ensuring that resolution efforts are contextually informed and address the root causes of the conflict.

Resolving the inter-religious conflict in the Ga Traditional Area requires a comprehensive approach that incorporates understanding the underlying issues, fostering trust and ownership among parties, and mitigating external influences such as political manipulation and diaspora involvement. By addressing these factors, interventions can achieve sustainable peace and harmony within the community.

4.5 Measures for the Resolution of the Conflict

Since the inter-religious conflict in the GA Traditional Area cannot continue forever, this study section sought to understand ways to resolve the tension. The purpose was to unearth the various suggested ways by the people themselves on how the factions in the Ga Traditional Area [the Christians and the Indigenous Religion] can harmoniously co-exist in the area. Determining this from them will give a lasting solution since it comes from themselves. Thus, participants were asked what ways can bring a lasting resolution to the conflict. Emerging themes from the interviews were a sense of accommodation, mutual respect, dialogue, and mutual understanding, punishment for perpetrators, community education and awareness, government and policy interventions, and family mediation, underlining the importance of personal relationships in conflict resolution.

4.5.1 Sense of Accommodation

The study found that the inter-religious conflict in the Ga Traditional Area can be resolved when the two factions accommodate and tolerate each other's religion and faith. The interviews revealed no clear-cut way of serving the Supreme Being;

therefore, accepting each other's faith will help them live harmoniously in the area.

Some of the participants interviewed explained as follows:

... you know, we have come to a point where both religions need to accept that we cannot have one faith or one way of serving the Supreme Being. I am a traditionalist, and I have my way of worshipping the Supreme Being. This was handed to me by my grandparents, and I cannot abandon it like that. I will not force Christians to believe what I believe, and neither should they move me. As long as I do not believe in Christianity, I do not see anything wrong with staying with them or marrying one if it becomes necessary. We are all one big family, and we must stay together. (TRA 5, 10th June 2024)

The responses underscore the potential for conflict resolution when individuals cultivate a sense of accommodation, striving to accept and coexist with others regardless of their faith differences. This approach, rooted in mutual respect and understanding, fosters peaceful coexistence, emphasising the need for empathy and tolerance in resolving conflicts.

4.5.2 Sense of Mutual Respect

The interviews reveal that when the two factions develop a sense of mutual respect, it could help curtail the conflict situation in the area. For instance, when I asked some participants in the interviews what they think can help resolve the conflict, they answered:

It is a matter of respect for the neighbours. This is not a tradition, but it is a custom. Yes, I have been in this particular area for a long time. Whether what traditional believers believe is true or not is my business. I am a believer in Christ. You have to comply for the month. After the month, you come back to your routine. It is a custom, a ... Okay, that is good. (CHR 6, 15th June 2024)

... the only thing that can help us stay together is respect for each other, no matter our beliefs. (TRA 8, 16th June 2024)

This understanding and respect for each other's beliefs is fostered through open and honest dialogue. (TRA 2, 26th June 2024)

These suggest that mutual respect is critical to resolving the conflict and maintaining a lasting relationship.

4.5.3 Dialogue and Mutual Understanding

The interview brought to bear that when the two factions can dialogue and understand each other's faith and way of worship, there will be harmonious co-existence in the area. For instance, when I asked some participants in the interviews what they think can help resolve the conflict, they answered:

So, we need people to understand that there is no one way to serve the Supreme Being. Moreover, we must be aware that we cannot be the same. (TRA 1, 2nd June 2024)

One of the measures is that we should have a dialogue—a dialogue at the top level. The church hierarchy will see that this is very important. ...when we started, I said that when you go to Rome, you do what Romans do, then the church hierarchy must understand that once in Accra, once in a year, a month in a year, for example, there is a sea closing and who dares to stop it? You cannot stop it, even if you are the Pope in Accra. So why don't you fight over that one? Moreover, why is it that when it comes... These are some of the questions they ask. Why is it that when... You obey. We do not want to obey. We are the custodians, so you see where the issues are coming from. The dialogue should start from the top. The church hierarchy should move, not wait for the traditional people to move. They should move and come to them and let them, assuring them that we have seen the essence of what you are doing. Even though we do not believe..., that is not what our faith tells us. We know that look, wherever you go, some things will end. For us in Accra, this is what we have come to be. So, we will find a way to talk to our people. Afterward, they must sit down and tell their people about it. They should take it as a church announcement. We are Christians, and we succeed once Christians make moves with faith. (CHR 3, 27th June 2024)

You teach them about it. You bring this thing up and let your members understand it. Moreover, if you want to be comfortable, live on this land, go back home, and prosper, you must find a way of harmoniously living with these people. Moreover, I believe that when we initiate that kind of dialogue, and the traditional people realise that the church authorities respect them, it will cause everything to die out. (CHR 3, 27th June 2024)

The interviews reveal that when people engage in dialogue and mutual understanding, a way to resolve the conflict emerges, and sanity prevails.

4.5.4 Punishment for Perpetrators

The interviews also revealed that when the community develops some punishment mechanism in the form of fines or imprisonment for those who directly engage in it or influence people to engage in it, people will be deterred from engaging in it. A participant shared as follows:

...we can let everybody know that when such a conflict happens, there will be much punishment for the person who started it, especially those who were heavily involved. (CHR 4, 3rd June 2024)

The responses suggest that if the proposed punishment or sanction is given to the perpetrator and the conflict parties, it will serve as a deterrent for any other person who wants to engage in it.

4.5.5 Community Education and Awareness

The interviews revealed that continuous community education and awareness creation promote acceptance and understanding. This approach helps members understand the need to accept each other, regardless of their religious differences. It also provides a platform for them to understand each other better, thereby contributing to a lasting solution to the inter-religious conflict in the area. Some participants shared as follows:

...let them know that fighting is a component that destroys a culture. Let them know the significance of the peace among the people. And then how conflict destroys peace. They should see how some communities have suffered in various forms because of conflict. (CHR 3, 27th June 2024)

...education is the key. We need more education: structures and other academic materials. We need them here so our children can go to better schools and know the need for peace. Peace and conflict resolution should be part of our children's educational curriculum. That is enough. (TRA 9, 21st June 2024)

Now, when we say we will have a regular thing, we have to make sure that we have been meeting with them occasionally to explain more about our traditional religious culture. (TRA 4, 8th June 2024)

It is education. Education is needed for both sides. What I can say is... I will go back to my essential points... education and communication. (CHR 2, 16th June 2024)

The lasting solution is to let our people understand that we cannot do away with it. It will come occasionally, so we should find a way to live around it. After all, within one month, if we are asked to keep quiet in churches, I mean, have a solemn service without making noise, what is wrong with that? We can utilise that period for growth even in the church. We can use that for one month. That kind of thing cannot affect our church. I know, but for the Orthodox churches, this will not affect them, whether they are clapping or not clapping. (CHR 7, 20th June 2024)

The interviews reveal that education [both formal and informal] will catalyse conflict resolution and a continuous peace atmosphere in the area.

4.5.6 The Role of Government and Policy Interventions in Conflict Resolution

The interviews indicate that the government should implement some interventions, such as conflict and peace resource centres, annual peace engagement policies, making laws against it, and others who will always know the importance of peacebuilding in the area. This could be done through government agencies such as NCCE, CHRAJ, etc.

A participant in the interviews gave her view as follows:

...as in the whole government machinery. Yes, they can do it; they can do it through the state institutions and the constitution that binds us. We can adapt to it and have a bill passed in parliament. Then, it should be part of the handbook of all the chiefs so that they know what to do and what not to do so that they can preach it to their people. (TRA 3, 4th June 2024)

The interviews revealed that government policies and interventions can help create a peaceful atmosphere while eliminating conflict.

4.5.7 Family Mediation

The interviews revealed that family mediation should be the critical resolution medium whenever conflict arises. There should be an avenue where the families can meet to resolve their issues at the family level without allowing them to escalate. For instance, when I asked some participants in the interviews what they think can help resolve the conflict, they answered:

You and I know that none of us was born into a Christian family. We were born into a holy, faithful indigenous family before we decided what to do with our lives. So, whenever there is an issue, that sense of family should encourage us to solve the problem at the family level. (TRA 10, 15th June 2024)

We should have a family mediation board in every family here that will be mandated to resolve every issue so that it does not escalate. I know that the family members will respect them. These mediation teams should be educated about conflict resolution strategies and resolution techniques. (TRA 2, 26th June 2024)

The interviews reveal that allowing families to resolve their conflicts independently often leads to better acceptance of outcomes. Involving family members trained in conflict resolution and peacebuilding can further mediate internal disputes. Research underscores the importance of understanding the dynamics of a conflict for effective resolution. Scholars like Mahama and Longi (2013) and Penu and Osei-Kufuor (2016) emphasize that any intervention must begin with a thorough analysis of the underlying issues. Körppen (2006) and Kuupiel (2019) also stress that conflict resolution is closely tied to its analysis, noting that many attempts to resolve inter-religious conflicts in the Ga Traditional Area failed due to a lack of understanding of local issues.

El-Bushra (2017) suggests that conflicts persist unless their root causes are addressed, while Adzahlie-Mensah and Benson (2018) argue that patience and careful consideration are needed for effective conflict resolution. The complexity of the conflict in the Ga Traditional Area, influenced by dynamics between 'majority' and 'minority'

groups, further complicates the situation. Adzahlie-Mensah and Benson (2018) also highlight the importance of local context in resolving conflicts, noting that third-party interveners must recognise this, leading to challenges in resolving conflicts. Moreover, some interveners withdrew when warned by the involved parties, indicating a lack of resilience, which is essential for effective conflict resolution. Morake et al. (2011) suggest that people's perceptions of a conflict shape how they manage or resolve it, stressing the need for interveners to reflect on their understanding of it.

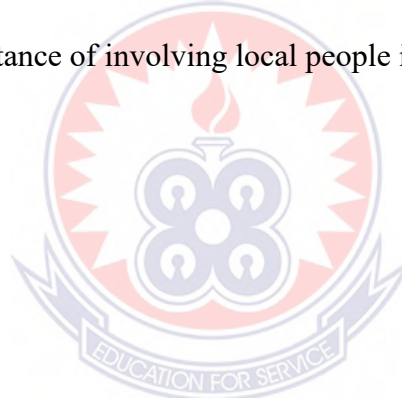
Resolving the inter-religious conflict in the Ga Traditional Area has been challenging, with participants indicating that a comprehensive approach is needed. This approach should foster accommodation and mutual respect between religious communities. Scholars like Mbiti (1969) and Gyekye (1997) stress the importance of mutual acceptance and respect for different belief systems as the foundation for peaceful coexistence. Encouraging dialogue and fostering mutual understanding between religious groups is also crucial, as Swidler (1983) emphasises the role of inter-religious dialogue in resolving conflicts.

Moreover, clear consequences for those who incite violence or engage in religious intolerance must be established. Deng (1998) advocates for strengthening legal frameworks to deter future offences, while Gifford (2004) highlights the importance of education in promoting religious tolerance. The government should also implement policies that protect religious freedom and promote harmony; as Annan (2000) suggests, state intervention is necessary to support peaceful inter-religious relations. Additionally, addressing conflicts at the family level, as Lederach (1997) suggests, can effectively resolve broader communal tensions. As proposed by these scholars, integrating these strategies can help address the inter-religious conflict in the Ga

Traditional Area, fostering a peaceful and cooperative environment for both religious communities.

4.6 Summary

This chapter presents the study's results and discusses the findings, mainly focusing on the inter-religious conflict between Indigenous Religion and Christianity in the Ga Traditional Area. It identifies remote and immediate factors that escalated the conflict, highlighting its complexity due to the involvement of various actors with different interests. The discussion also reveals systemic and actor-level challenges to conflict resolution, including a lack of trust in third-party interveners and perceived political interference. Finally, the chapter outlines measures for resolving the conflict, emphasising the importance of involving local people in the resolution process.



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

The previous chapter presented and discussed the study's results. This chapter summarises the study's findings and conclusions. Based on the findings, recommendations, and suggestions for further studies were made. The chapter ends by presenting the study's limitations.

5.1 Summary

Five questions guided the study, which include:

- i. what are the causes of the conflict between Christianity and Indigenous Religions in the area?
- ii. what are the effects of the conflict on Christianity and Indigenous Religions?
- iii. who are the actors involved in the conflict?
- iv. what are the threats to the resolution of the inter-religious conflict between Christianity and Indigenous Religions in the area?
- v. how can the conflict between Christianity and IRs be resolved?

The research was undertaken to understand the inter-religious conflict between the Christians and Indigenous Religion in their quest to serve the Supreme Being in the Ga Traditional Area in the Greater Accra Region. The research was approached qualitatively and designed as a case study. Twenty (20) respondents were purposively sampled in a snowballing way for the study. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews, and observations were made. The data was qualitative and was analysed using thematic template analysis.

5.1.1 Major Findings

The following are the significant findings of the study:

Research question 1: *What are the causes of the conflict between Christianity and Indigenous Religions in the area?*

The inter-religious tension in the Ga Traditional Area primarily revolves around differing beliefs on how to serve the Supreme Being. The conflict was initially rooted in the imposition of Christianity, perceived as a foreign religion, on the Ga people. This imposition led to latent tensions, which escalated when Christians began disregarding the religious observances of the traditional festival.

The conflict has lasted several decades and has become a recurring issue, particularly during religious observances, when confrontations between the two factions are almost inevitable. These confrontations often occur despite previous attempts at resolution, highlighting the deep-seated nature of the conflict.

This conflict is not merely about religious practices but also a struggle for recognition and preserving spiritual and cultural identity. The conflict is further complicated by the intricate dynamics between the parties involved, including their grievances, interactions, and the complex interdependencies that influence conflict management efforts. Upon closer examination, the situation reveals its complexity, far more intricate than it might appear from a distance.

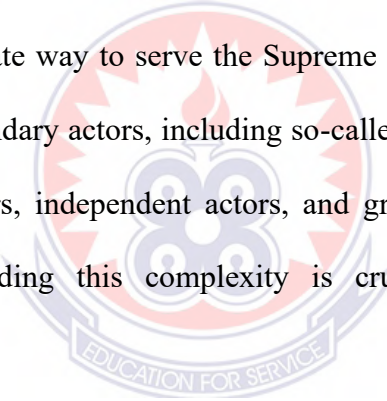
Research question 2: *What are the effects of the conflict on Christianity and Indigenous Religions?*

The conflict between Christians and Ga Indigenous Religious believers has significant effects on both groups, impacting the socio-political, economic, security, and religious aspects of life in the Ga Traditional Area. It has disrupted movement, hindered national

cohesion, and slowed development within the area. Moreover, the conflict's effects have extended beyond the region, influencing other regions and attracting national attention due to its broader implications. It has created disunity among religions, both inside and outside the area. This has also disrupted national harmony and obstructed family reunions, where some family members feel unsafe to return home for celebrations or festivities.

Research question 3: *Who are the actors involved in the conflict?*

The conflict in the Ga Traditional Area is a complex web involving multiple actors, each with distinct roles and interests. The primary actors [the Christians and the Indigenous Religious believers] are directly involved in the conflict, driven by their beliefs about the ultimate way to serve the Supreme Being. Alongside these primary actors are various secondary actors, including so-called conflict profiteers, while state actors, traditional actors, independent actors, and group actors serve as third-party interveners. Understanding this complexity is crucial for developing effective resolution strategies.



Research question 4: *What are the threats to the resolution of the inter-religious conflict between Christianity and Indigenous Religion in the area?*

While the third-party actors are ostensibly interested in promoting peace, some are perceived by the primary actors as exacerbating the conflict rather than alleviating it. This dynamic has led to a division between those who genuinely seek peace and those whose involvement supports the continuation of the conflict. The interactions among these actors have played a significant role in efforts to resolve the conflict.

While the inter-religious conflict in the area remains unresolved, there is potential for resolution. Systemic issues, actor-specific threats, traditional barriers, and a lingering sense of revenge hinder this potential. Additionally, the conflict parties need more confidence and trust in the intervening parties, and a failure to thoroughly analyse the conflict dynamics before intervention has hindered resolution efforts. The perception and involvement of politics have further complicated the situation, but with a comprehensive understanding and concerted efforts, the resolution is within reach.

Although there is a relative calm in the Ga Traditional Area, this calmness is fragile. Fear, uncertainty, and underlying hatred between the two factions persist, indicating that the conflict is far from truly resolved. The findings support existing literature, such as Collier and Hoeffler's work, which suggests that unresolved grievances can lead to recurring conflicts. They also reinforce the Contact Hypothesis Theory (CHT) view that conflict systems are dynamic and complex, and the Social Identity Theory (SIT) argument that threatened identities, if not addressed, can trigger further conflict. These insights contribute to a deeper understanding and enrichment of conflict theories.

Research question 5: *How can the conflict between Christianity and IRs be resolved?*

Addressing the conflict between Christianity and Indigenous Religions (IRs) in the Ga Traditional Area requires a multifaceted approach. Central to this effort is promoting mutual respect, dialogue, and understanding between the two religious communities. Both groups can bridge their differences and learn to coexist peacefully by fostering open communication. Ensuring that those who perpetrate religious violence face consequences is crucial in deterring future conflicts. Community education and awareness are also vital to promoting tolerance and reducing prejudice.

The government's role is indispensable in this process. The state can support these initiatives by creating and enforcing policies that protect religious freedom and promote harmony. By implementing these measures, informed by scholarly insights, the conflict between Christianity and Indigenous Religions in the Ga Traditional Area can be effectively managed, leading to a more unified and peaceful community.

The Contact Hypothesis Theory, introduced by Allport (1954), is a vital theoretical framework that suggests positive interpersonal contact between members of different groups can reduce prejudice and foster better relations. Applying this theory, promoting interactions between members of the Christian and Indigenous religious communities can help diminish stereotypes and prejudices. Such interactions allow individuals to recognise shared values and common humanity, thus facilitating mutual respect and cooperation.

Social Identity Theory, developed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner (1979), offers another essential perspective. This theory explains how individuals derive part of their identity from their social or religious group membership, which can lead to in-group favouritism and out-group discrimination. To mitigate such conflicts, the theory suggests broadening identity to encompass a more inclusive, overarching identity, such as a shared community or national identity. By doing so, the perceived differences between religious groups can be minimised, fostering a sense of belonging to a larger, more inclusive group.

Combining the Contact Hypothesis and Social Identity Theory into conflict resolution strategies can be particularly effective. Encouraging direct, positive contact between religious groups while simultaneously working to create a shared identity that transcends religious boundaries can result in a more harmonious and integrated

community. These theories provide a roadmap for designing interventions that reduce prejudice, build mutual respect, and resolve inter-religious conflicts in the Ga Traditional Area.

5.2 Implications

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

Theoretical Implications

The study underscores the critical importance of linking conflict resolution with addressing the grievances of the conflict parties. Research has consistently shown that conflicts persist if the underlying grievances remain unaddressed. Therefore, intervening parties must not treat these grievances as separate from the resolution process; instead, resolving the parties' grievances is, in essence, resolving the conflict itself.

Introducing identity into the conflict can prolong it and create conditions where younger generations are socialised into the ongoing conflicts. Previous research, such as studies by Adzahlie-Mensah (2007) and Penu (2016), has documented how conflicts fought along religious lines have been passed down to subsequent generations. The factors contributing to the conflict in the Ga Traditional Area are remote and immediate. Focusing solely on the immediate triggers that escalated the conflict may not lead to a sustainable resolution. Instead, effective conflict resolution must trace and address the root causes that initially sparked the conflict.

Given the conflict's complex and intricate nature, a thorough analysis and understanding of its various dimensions are crucial before attempting any resolution. Kuupiel (2019) aptly noted that “a well-resolved conflict is a well-analysed conflict.” A detailed analysis should be central to resolution efforts, particularly in inter-religious conflicts, as it equips intervening parties with a better understanding of the issues at hand and enhances their ability to negotiate solutions.

Resolving the inter-religious conflict in the Ga Traditional Area will remain challenging unless the threats to the peace-systemic, actor-specific, or traditional are adequately addressed. If these threats are left unresolved, the conflict will likely continue, perpetuating antagonism between the Christian and Indigenous Religious communities. As Debrah et al. (2016) argued, as long as the Akans continue to view the Ga people as a minority and seek to dominate them, tensions and conflicts will persist.

Practical Implications

Intervening parties who gain the trust and confidence of the conflict parties are more likely to encourage their participation in the resolution process. Without this trust, conflict parties may be reluctant to engage or accept recommendations, particularly if they perceive the interveners as biased. Adzahlie-Mensah and Benson (2018) emphasised that trust and confidence-building are crucial in peace processes. When the process is perceived as just and unbiased, parties are more likely to commit to it and accept its outcomes.

The inter-religious conflict in the Ga Traditional Area extends beyond a simple religious dispute. It also involves ethnic and tribal tensions within and beyond the Ga Traditional Area, particularly between the Akans and the Ga people. To treat the conflict solely as a religious dispute is to overlook these underlying ethnic issues, which are critical to

achieving a lasting resolution. Therefore, intervention efforts must recognise and address the conflict's ethnic dimensions.

Intervening parties that adopt approaches considerate of both factions' interests and serve the common good are more likely to foster participation in the peace process. A peace or resolution process that is inclusive, participatory, and sensitive to the local context is more likely to yield meaningful outcomes. As Kuupiel (2019) asserts, "for peace to last, it must be all-inclusive and contextualised." The interview responses indicate that the measures proposed by participants, emphasising inclusivity and context, could significantly help mitigate the conflict and bring a lasting solution between the Christians and Indigenous Religious believers in the Ga Traditional Area.

5.3 Conclusion

The inter-religious conflict in the Ga Traditional Area is fundamentally a contest over faith, centred on the quest to serve the Supreme Being. However, it is not merely a religious dispute but also ethnic tensions, particularly between the Akans and the Gas in the area. The conflict is deeply rooted in unresolved grievances, making it crucial to address these underlying issues as part of any resolution effort.

The conflict in the Ga Traditional Area is complex, involving religious, ethnic, social, and political dynamics. Its multifaceted nature, with interdependent issues, requires a comprehensive approach to conflict resolution. Addressing the grievances of the conflict parties offers a crucial opportunity for securing lasting peace in the community. However, this alone is insufficient. It is also necessary to decouple politics from the conflict and ensure that intervening parties maintain neutrality while earning the trust and confidence of the conflict parties. This trust is essential for fostering the willingness of all parties to participate in the resolution process.

Inclusiveness and broad participation in peace processes are vital in promoting community ownership and commitment to these efforts. Intervening parties that adopt approaches considerate of both factions' interests and serve the common good are more likely to encourage participation in the peace process. Additionally, building the trust and confidence of the conflict parties in both the interveners and the peace process is vital for boosting their engagement in resolving the conflict.

A successfully resolved conflict has been thoroughly analysed. Participants in the area have suggested thoughtful approaches that could lead to lasting solutions to this ongoing conflict. While there is relative calm in the Ga Traditional Area, this should not be mistaken for true peace. There remains a significant degree of hatred, bitterness, and animosity between the two religious groups, resulting in what is known as negative peace, a situation where open conflict is absent, but underlying tensions persist.

If concerted efforts are not made to resolve the inter-religious conflict in the Ga Traditional Area fully, future incidents could become more violent, with younger generations being drawn into the ongoing tensions. The situation demands urgent and sustained attention to resolve the conflict and to prevent the resurgence of the conflict in the future.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the research findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

- i. Intervening parties seeking to resolve the inter-religious conflict in the Ga Traditional Area must focus on building trust and confidence among the conflict parties. When the parties trust the resolution process, they are more likely to participate willingly. The two religious factions must take ownership of the resolution process to ensure its effectiveness.

- ii. Third-party mediators should thoroughly analyse and understand the dynamics of the conflict. The beliefs and practices of the Indigenous Religion and Christianity should inform this understanding. The insights gained should guide the conflict resolution process to ensure it is contextually relevant.
- iii. Political interference should be removed from the conflict resolution process. Political actors must engage with the conflict parties fairly and avoid any actions that could be perceived as favouring one faction over the other.
- iv. Since the conflict parties have preferred handling the conflict themselves, intervening parties should identify critical individuals in the Ga Traditional Area who oppose it. These individuals should be equipped with conflict resolution and management skills and guided to address the conflict independently.
- v. The suggestions and measures proposed by the interview participants should be taken seriously and integrated into future peace processes. This approach will help the conflict parties feel a sense of ownership over the process, increasing their engagement and commitment. Representatives from all factions should be involved at every stage of the peace process.
- vi. Given the unresolved conflict, security forces, particularly the police, should continue monitoring the Ga Traditional Area. This ongoing surveillance will enable security agencies to gather intelligence and prevent potential attacks or confrontations that could undermine resolution efforts. Particular attention should be paid during the Ga Indigenous Religious observances.
- vii. All stakeholders in the Ga Traditional Area, including the District Assembly, traditional authorities, religious leaders, security agencies, youth groups, and citizens, should treat the conflict as a collective issue. Resolving it should be

seen as a shared responsibility rather than just a conflict between Christians and Indigenous Religious believers.

- viii. Peace groups, both within and outside the Ga Traditional Area, should intensify efforts to organize peace programs that educate and sensitise community members about the importance of peace. Given that the youth are often drawn into the conflict, these programs should mainly target young people, encouraging them to become agents of peace and preventing their indoctrination into the conflict.
- ix. A religious court or council comprising leaders from various religions should facilitate dialogue and mutual understanding among different religious groups. This council would help reduce competition and unnecessary stereotyping by fostering better comprehension and appreciation of each religion's beliefs and practices.

5.5 Limitations of the Study

The study's results provided valuable insights into the inter-religious tension between Christians and practitioners of the Indigenous Religion in their quest to serve the Supreme Being in the Ga Traditional Area of the Greater Accra Region. However, the research had some limitations.

Firstly, the study gathered information from individuals directly involved in the conflict. Their preconceived ideas, knowledge, and personal experiences may have influenced their responses, potentially leading to biased information. Participants might have provided data that reinforced their positions or portrayed their faction favourably while depicting the opposing faction negatively.

Secondly, the study was limited to the perspectives of just twenty respondents. As a result, the views expressed by these individuals may not accurately represent the opinions of the entire population of the Ga Traditional Area. This limitation affects the study's ability to generalize its findings to the broader community.

Lastly, language and cultural barriers presented challenges in gathering information. At times, I had to rely on an interpreter, whose availability was limited due to a busy schedule, further complicating the research process.

5.6 Suggestions for further studies

The following recommendations are suggested for further research:

- i. The study found that the conflict has negatively affected businesses and employment in the Ga Traditional Area. However, it has yet to be determined whether this decline in business activity and jobs has a ripple effect on income at the national level. Future research should explore this potential link to assess the broader economic impact.
- ii. This study employed a qualitative approach, focusing on the views of a few participants within the Ga Traditional Area. Future research could adopt a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative methods, to capture the perspectives of a larger population within the community. Additionally, the research could extend beyond the Ga Traditional Area to include opinions from people in other Traditional Areas. Further studies might also explore inter-religious conflicts between Muslims and Christians or between Muslims and Indigenous Religions in the region. Conducting similar studies in different areas could provide a broader perspective on inter-religious conflicts in Ghana.

- iii. The study did not investigate how the inter-religious conflict between Christians and Indigenous Religions has affected other religious groups, particularly Muslims, in the Ga Traditional Area. Future research should examine the impact of this conflict on other religious sects in the area, especially the Muslim community. Additionally, researchers could apply the template developed from this study to other conflict situations in Ghana to test its applicability and potential for generalisation. This would help in understanding how similar conflicts might unfold in different contexts.



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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDE

I am Stephen Frimpong, a University of Education, Winneba student pursuing an M.Phil in Human Rights, Conflict and Peace Studies. I am studying the *inter-religious tension between Christianity and Indigenous Religion(s) in their quest to serve the supreme being in the Ga traditional area of the greater Accra region*. I want to study the conflict to understand the dynamics, actors, threats, and measures needed to resolve the dispute. Therefore, I want to discuss the dynamics involved in the inter-religious conflict between Christianity and the African Traditional Region in the Ga Traditional Area. I will also be interested in the actors involved in the conflict and the threats to the resolution of the conflict. Possible measures proposed by the affected religions to give a lasting resolution. This discussion will be tape-recorded, after which a transcription will be made. Information gathered from you will be combined with those of other participants so that your information will not be identified with your name. I will treat you and the information you provide with utmost confidentiality and anonymity. I will be happy if I have your verbal consent to continue. You can withdraw the data at any stage or add additional information later.

1. Causes of the Conflict

- i. What causes the conflict (Remote and Immediate)?
- ii. What are the dynamics involved in the conflict?
- iii. What is the nature of the conflict (How long, what is the frequency of occurrence, and what is the pattern of occurrence)?

2. Effects of the Conflict

- i. What are the effects of the conflict (Immediate and Long Term)?
- ii. How intense are the effects on the believers?
- iii. What bearing is the effects on human rights?

3. Actors involved in the conflict

- i. Who are the actors in the conflict (Primary, Secondary and Tertiary)?

- ii. What are their interests?
- iii. What are their needs (cultural, economic, political, and sociological)?
- iv. Who are their allies, and why?

4. Threats to the resolution of the conflict

- i. What are the threats to the resolution of the conflict?
- iii. What are the traditional threats to the resolution of the conflict?
- iv. What threats are posed by conflict profiteers to resolving the conflict?

5. Measures for the resolution of the conflict

- i. What are the measures to resolve the conflict (Remote and Immediate)?
- ii. What successful community-based initiatives can help resolve the conflict?
- iii. What government policies can play a mitigating role in this religious conflict?
- iv. What key challenges must be addressed to achieve lasting peace?



APPENDIX B ANALYSIS TEMPLATE

1. Dynamics in the conflict

a) Causes of the conflict

I. Remote

- the inception of Christianity in the area
- the Cosmopolitan nature of the area

II. Immediate

- the disrespect of the Indigenous religious celebration by some Christians
- the dominant nature of Christianity in the area

b) Effects of the conflict

I. Socio-political

- marred relationship
- threatened identity

II. Economic

- reduced development
- destruction of property

III. Security

- uncertainty and fear
- injured people
- 'self' restricted movement

IV. Religious

- severed relationship among the religious factions



c) Nature of the conflict

I. Length

- more than a decade old

II. Frequency

- occur frequently

III. Pattern

- Confrontations

could be easily predicted or sensed

IV. Tactics

- Blaming
- Threats
- Fighting and attacks
- Labelling
- Irrevocable comments

2. Actors in the conflict

a) Actors

3. ● conflict parties

- state actors
- group actors
- traditional actors
- independent actors

b) Interests

I. Interest in the Conflict

- ultimate ways to serve the Supreme Being

II. Peace interest

- resolution and restoring calm



III. Allies and why

- The various religious groups in the community.

Threats to the resolution of the conflict

a) System-level threats

- perceived political interference

b) Actor-level threat

- economic and social benefits from the conflict

c) Traditional threat

- poor perception of conflict by some traditional leaders

d) Perceived presence of spoilers

e) Rumours

f) Others

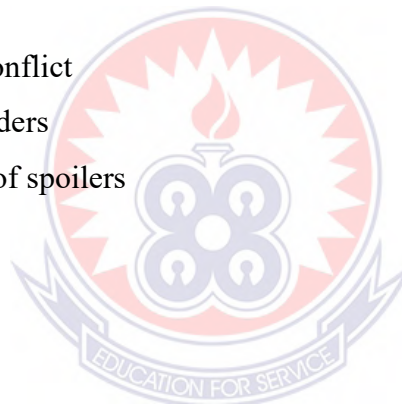
- lack of confidence and trust in

intervening parties

- failure to intervene parties to analyse the

conflict dynamics

- perception of the conflict



Source: Author's Own Construct, 2024