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**WOMEN IN INDIGENEOUS CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND PEACE
BUILDING: THE EXPERIENCE OF THE GRUSI IN NORTHEASTERN
GHANA**

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List of Acronyms

CFLIs	Canada Fund for Local Initiatives
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
CPV	Community Peace Volunteer
DCEs	District Chief Executives
FPT	Feminist Peace Theory
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
IDIs	In-depth Interviews
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
REGSEC	Regional Security Council
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SWOPA	Sirigu Women Organization for Pottery and Art
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UN	United Nations
WHO	World Health Organization
WIPSEN	Women in Peace and Security Network
WPDC	Wajir Peace and Development Committee

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Abstract

The study sort to explore the role of women in conflict resolution and peacebuilding among the Grusi people in the Upper East Region of Ghana using indigenous cultural tools. The study used a qualitative approach using in-depth interviews (IDS) and focus group discussions (FGD) to gather data. A total of 20 women participated in the study, of which 6 women who lived in Doba and Kandiga during the conflict participated in the IDS, one queen mother and one women leader of the Payaasi network from each from Doba and Kandiga communities. Also, 10 women from SWOPA, Doba and Kandiga took part in the 2 FGDs sections conducted in Sirigu.

The study was analysed using themes and quotes from the data collected. These quotes and themes developed from the data were analysed using the lenses of the feminist theory, maternal and women's agency to comprehensively understand how women contribute to conflict resolutions and peacebuilding and the barriers the face.

The study found that despite cultural systemic caveats, women continued to deploy strategic measures to promote peace building and conflict resolution. The strategic actions of the women as found in the study included and not limited to; spreading of ash lines by women, holding of calabash with grounded jute leaves, formation of human shield by women, Negotiation with husband and children, reflected the collective agency power and negotiations skills women explore in peace building. These actions gave nuances of the understanding of women in fostering peace building.

The actions of the women revealed in the study highlighted the feminist view of the embodiment power in peace building. The study also revealed very crucial traditional rituals performed as a belief in peace building. This emphasized the fact that peace building transcends political negotiations but also involves cultural deep-rooted practices within the communities.

The study also showed how women navigated the constraints of systemic traditional structures deploying or leveraging on their cultural knowledge to promote peace using their agency. The study also revealed the negotiation power of women played a critical part with their husbands and sons during the conflict. This finding reflected my opinion that mothers negotiate by putting her life online, trying to take minimum risk and because of their love and the role as the bond of the family they try to influence the family decisions on risk.

The study showed that women play very important roles in conflict resolution using their unique culturally embedded and social roles through their effective exercise of their agency power. Thus, there is a need for traditional institutions to reevaluate its patriarchal structures to promote gender equality of women and men to ensure inclusivity in conflict resolution.

Relevance to Development Studies

Conflicts have many consequences on the development of any community globally. Apart from the direct or underlying effects such as loss of lives, property and permanent injuries, conflict indirectly affect development. Resources usually allocated for developmental projects such as schools, hospitals, roads are rather channelled towards the deployment of security and reconciliations committees. Also, there have been global advocacy for gender equality as stated in the sustainable development goal 5 which emphasised on achieving gender equality and women empowerment. This study findings on the role of women in conflict resolution and the barriers women face in their participation conflict resolution is relevant to development studies by providing data to policy makers to implements laws and programmes that will promote gender equality. Ghana as signatory to the sustainable development will benefit in this data in unpacking the challenges hindering gender equality in patriarchal communities such as the Grusi in the Northeastern enclave of Ghana.

Keywords

Conflict resolution, peacebuilding, patriarchal, Doba, Kandiga, culture, traditions, maternal, feminist, agency

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Background of Study

Ghana has been widely regarded the most peaceful country in sub-Saharan Africa due to its strong commitment to the rule of law and democratic values (Azinim, 2024). However, the recent surge in violent conflicts in parts of the country especially in the Northeastern enclave of Ghana jeopardised this enviable reputation. These conflicts, usually arise from land disputes, chieftaincy disputes, ethnic and political disputes which have caused severe consequences and hindered development in various regions across the country (Kpeleku,2021; Azar,1990). Despite efforts by government, CSOs, and interest groups to resolve these conflicts, success has been limited.

Land disputes are particularly noted as significant sources of violent conflicts (Osei-Kufour *et al.*, 2016) One of the most protracted and violent crises, the Doba-Kandiga conflict in the Northeastern enclave of Ghana, has been extensively discussed nationwide (Apubeo, 2023). This conflict, dating back to the colonial era, stems from demarcation of land boundaries and a rivalry over legitimate land ownership between the Doba and Kandiga communities in the Kasena-Nankana Municipal and Kasena-Nankana West Districts respectively (Awedoba, 2009). As part of government's measures to contain the dispute, a dusk to dawn curfew was imposed in these areas but this measure negatively affected the economic and social activities of the areas.

In 2022, Grusi women across various communities in their bid to intervene in the conflict, mobilized themselves into peace volunteer groups played an important role in lobbying to resolve the conflict and build peace in the communities (Jayasundara-Smits, 2022). These women's activities were facilitated by Sirigu Women's Organization for Pottery and Art (SWOPA), a women's empowerment organization in the area with support from its development partner namely Canada Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI) (Apubeo, 2023). These women used *Grusi* traditional customs, values, norms and practices surrounding women's role in conflict situations and exploited existing traditional structures to participate in resolving the conflict. Even though, they encounter patriarchal barriers or challenges in pursuit to their participation to the conflict resolution and peacebuilding in the Doba and Kandiga. Their action has proven to be sustainable, and many peace and development pundits stand in awe of such an achievement. This positive feat of women's participation and leadership in

contemporary conflict situations calls for in-dept examination of their roles and the propelling factors behind their success for replication and adoption in future conflict situations.

1.2 Statement of Problem

The Doba-Kandiga conflict has been a long-standing dispute in which many people especially the youth who were always at the forefront of the conflict lost their lives. The government in a bid to resolve the conflict, imposed series of curfews and stationed armed security personnel to maintain peace and order in the two communities. Additionally, various committees including the Justice Atubga's committee comprising of chiefs, conflict resolution experts, some respected citizens from the Northeastern enclave, the Regional Peace Council and the Bishop of the Navrongo/Bolgatanga Diocese were set up to resolve the protracted dispute between the two feuding communities (Kasise, 2021). However, all efforts proved unsuccessful.

Amid the escalating tensions and violence of the conflict which led to the lost of over 1200 lives and over 200 houses burnt (Apubeo, 2023). These incidents triggered the Grusi women groups namely the inter-married women and daughters (*Payaasi la Isi*) from both feuding communities to rise up to action. This group led by selected women leaders (Peace Queens) embarked on many peace campaign programmes including peace walks from one feuding community to the other while performing certain traditional rites to foster peace and to appeal for cessation of fighting. They visited chiefs and government officials such as the District Chief Executives (DCEs) to plead for help in resolving the conflict through dialogue (Awuni, 2022). This initiative by the women yielded positive results and brought relative peace between the two community who have been in fatal conflict for decades (Awuni, 2022; Apubeo, 2023).

However, there were cultural structures that hindered the women full participation in these conflict resolution and peacebuilding processes. These barriers are embedded in their traditional norms and culture that shape the roles of women in conflict regulation. These obstacles been embedded by the traditional norms limit women's capacity to leverage on their agency and the special roles given to them to perform. More intriguingly, the patriarchal structures make it difficult for women to review and demand for their equal opportunities since women are mostly not part of the decision-making process. This is what I refer to as the "silent killers" of the women's agency. Therefore, this study sort to leverage on the

successes of the women's network in the Doba-Kandiga conflict to solicit more information on the roles women play in conflict resolution and peace building. The study used the traditional roles the women played and leveraged on them to advocate for equality and inclusion of women in conflict resolution.

1.2.1 Sub-Research Objectives

1. To assess the traditional roles and responsibilities of women in conflict resolution and peacebuilding in *Grusi* communities?
2. To determine and assess the strategies *Grusi* women use to resolve disputes and promote peace during communal conflicts.
3. To assess the challenges *Grusi* women face in participating in conflict resolution and peacebuilding

1.3 Research Questions

In broad terms the study would answer the question: In how do women participate in conflict resolution and peacebuilding in *Grusi* culture?

Sub-questions

1. What traditional roles and responsibilities do women play in conflict resolution and peacebuilding in *Grusi* communities?
2. How do women in *Grusi* culture engage in conflict resolution and peacebuilding practices, and what specific methods or strategies do they use to mediate conflicts?
3. What key challenges do *Grusi* women encounter in their roles as mediators and peacebuilders?

1.4 Relevance and Justification of the Study

Many studies have been conducted relating to the role of women in conflict resolution and peacebuilding (Awedoba 2009). Many of these literatures focused on the general roles women play in conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Ghana. However, this study sort to focus on the indigenous societies such as the *Grusi* which offer unique feature of conflict resolution framework that is culturally rooted in their tradition providing a distinct lens to examine these mechanisms. Although, the role of women in conflict resolution within the Grusi indigenous system is regularly limited, women's roles still remain pivotal, in peacebuilding and mediation. Therefore, the findings of this research add to literature of knowledge on the contribution of Grusi women in conflict resolution using their traditional knowledge, strategies and relational networks for resolving conflicts and sustaining community cohesion.

Additionally, the study findings will also contribute to policy direction by providing empirical data on the strategies *Grusi* women employ in indigenous conflict resolution. This will provide insightful information towards a broader discussion of gender ability in peacebuilding challenging the predominantly male centred conflict resolution and peace building process. The findings will also inform policy makers and stakeholders on the barriers women face in exercising their roles in conflict resolution to enable a comprehensive and cooperative collaboration among all stake holder both in the formal (government, NGOs) and the informal (traditional authorities) sectors. The results of the study could inform gender inclusive strategies that recognise women's contributions to conflict resolution and peacebuilding in culturally sensitive ways, enhancing both local and global peace initiatives.

However, the limitation of findings of this study is that, the findings cannot be generalised as a representation of the whole Upper East Region and Ghana because of the multi-ethnic groups in the region and Ghana which have different traditional norms and cultures regarding the role of women in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Also, the specificity of the Grusi traditional context may limits my generalizability to other regions or ethnic groups.

1.5 Outline of the study

This section gives a comprehensive outline of the paper showing the order, the theoretical framework and literature used in the paper.

Chapter one comprises of the introduction or background of the study explaining conflicts in Ghana and some of the roles women play in conflict resolution. The chapter also consist of the problem statement indicating why the study, the main objectives oof the study and research question. It concludes with the justification of the study.

Chapter two consists of the literature review, showing the relevant studies that have been done in the field of the role of women in conflict resolution. This builds on literature on conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Africa, Indigenous conflict resolution and conceptualising conflict resolution. Chapter two also explains the theories that are used in the analysing and understanding the findings of the study. These theoretical framework include feminist peace theory which explains inequality in gender representation in peacebuilding, women and maternal agency that also talk about the intersections of women, motherhood and peace building process.

Chapter three comprises of the mythology of the study. This section includes the description of the study area and the traditional dynamics (patriarchal system), the number of participants in the study (sample size) including the selection criteria, data collection method (in-depth interviews and focus group discussions), positionality of the researcher and limitations of the study. This chapter also showed how the data was analysed thematic analysis using quotes from the participants, literature, theories (feminist, women and maternal agency) and my reflection and interpretation of the data.

Chapter four talked about the findings and analysis of the study. This consists of findings of quotes, strategies and programmes undertaken by women in the peacebuilding process, interpretation of these quotes and results with literature backing and the use of theories. The findings analysed the data by answering the research questions. The study analysed the roles women play in conflict resolution, followed by the strategies the women used in the conflict resolution and peacebuilding process and lastly the barriers hindering the participation of women in conflict resolution.

Chapter five consists of summary and conclusion. This chapter comprehensively summarised the finding of the study and concluded on what these findings mean to women involvement in indigenous conflict resolution and peacebuilding among the Grusi communities.

Chapter 2 Literature Review and Theoretical Frameworks

2.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the review of various literature that are relevant to this study. It also conceptualises conflict, conflict resolution and peacebuilding, referencing the perspectives the work of various scholars. These are presented in the global context and the African context. Furthermore, the role of women in conflict resolution and peacebuilding, considering the successes, the strategies and challenges the African context has been elaborated. Though these perspectives are necessary for the discussion of the findings of the study, the feminist peace theory intersect with maternal, and women agency will serve as the basis of discussion of this study.

2.1 Conceptualising Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding

The term 'conflict' has attracted various perspectives from different schools of thoughts, disciplinary orientations and historical epochs. Early constructs of the term emerged in the 19th and early 20th centuries from the works of social theorists who perceived conflict as an integral part of society. For instance, in Marx's (1848) view, conflict is an outcome of class struggle in a capitalist system, that is the struggle between the working class and the ruling class which would eventually lead to a change or revolution.

According to Marx, conflict is a necessary condition for transformation of society and possesses both destructive and constructive elements. Building on Marx's economic view of conflict, Weber (1947) introduced the idea of power and authority, arguing that conflict arises from the struggle for status, power and authority. Departing from both Marx and Weber, Simmel (1955) argued that conflicts are integral part of social relationships and highlighted the positive role of conflicts in social change, group solidarity and in addressing injustices. Supporting Simmel, Coser (1956) argued that conflicts are not necessarily negative highlighting the positive aspects of conflict such as illuminating social roles and facilitating cohesion within groups. Coser (1998) defines conflict in terms of the struggle over values and/or claims to scarce resources, power and status in which the parties involved aim to destroy or harm their rivals.

These descriptions and perspectives suggest that modern conflicts could be non-violent or violent, dormant or active, non-controllable or controllable, insolvable or solvable depending on the actors involved and their values or claims. It equally suggests that violence

is only a potential aspect of conflict but not a necessary condition or outcome (Omotosho, 2004).

The dominant perspectives about modern conflicts as illustrated by Rummel (1981), Hostin (1983), Coser (1998) as well as (Omotosho, 2004), bring to fore the need to resolve conflicts by addressing the underlying causes (peacebuilding) and attenuating violence (conflict resolution). Peacebuilding or positive peace operates with the assumption that peace is not necessarily the absence of violence, but the presence of all the attitudes, institutions and structures necessary to create and sustain peace. Galtung (2014) offered a new framework for understanding modern conflicts through the prism of structural violence and the importance of positive peace which addresses injustice and equality as root causes of conflict.

2.1.1 Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution within the African Traditional Context

Conventional peace and conflict literature perceive conflict resolution and peacebuilding as twin concepts (Imhomoh *et al.*, 2023). Peacebuilding is a preventive mechanism whilst conflict resolution is reactive mechanism in situations of disruptions in the status quo, with the aim of restoring normalcy, thus, creating the need to peacebuilding (Visoka and Lemay-Hébert, 2023). Peacebuilding and conflict resolution processes are complex, multi-faceted and multi-stakeholder oriented.

African traditional societies have long-standing peacebuilding and conflict resolution mechanisms rooted in their social, cultural, political, and spiritual systems (Ahorsu *et al.*, 2011; Bukari *et al.*, 2014; Zuure *et al.*, 2020; Olowolafe *et al.*, 2020). These indigenous approaches prioritize restorative justice, reconciliation, and the maintenance of community cohesion. African conflict resolution methods seek to restore relationships and repair harm rather than punish offenders (Clark, 2010; Bukari *et al.*, 2014). Studies affirm that these practices predate the colonial era and have remained relevant over time, highlighting their deep roots in African traditions (Clark, 2010; Bukari *et al.*, 2014; Zuure *et al.*, 2020).

According to Gade (2012), one significant philosophical underpinning of African peacebuilding is ubuntu philosophy, which emphasizes mutual respect, interrelationships, empathy, and forgiveness. This worldview values the collective wellbeing of the community and sees conflict as a disruption to societal harmony (Murithi, 2006). As a result, African conflict resolution mechanisms focus on restoring peace through consensus-building, mediation, and reconciliation (McCandless, 2007). This raises the question of who are

involved (actors) and what kind of mechanisms are employed in conflict resolutions in Africa.

In Nigeria, Bogoro (2013) highlights that elders and traditional leaders play a critical role in mediating these processes by acting as custodians of traditions and community cohesion. Their position as elders is derived from customs and kingship structures, and symbolize wisdom, moral authority, and experience. Elders and traditional leaders not only mediate disputes but also provide spiritual and moral guidance. In some cases, diviners, spiritual leaders, and herbalists are involved when communicating with the spiritual realm is required, particularly in rituals or symbolic ceremonies designed to aid conciliation and reconciliation (Zartman, 2000).

Numerous examples across Sub-Saharan Africa illustrate the successful application of traditional conflict resolution mechanisms (Pankhurst, 2003). One notable case is the Gacaca courts in Rwanda, which were used after the 1994 genocide. These community-based courts were instrumental in handling the vast number of cases the formal legal system could not address, focusing on accountability, truth-telling and reconciliation. The success of the Gacaca system has garnered international admiration and is considered a model for other post-conflict region like northern Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Similarly, traditional mediation methods in Nigeria, such as among the Fulani, Yoruba, and Igbo ethnic groups, are preferred for their informality, low cost, and emphasis on reconciliation (Bogoro, 2013).

Despite the effectiveness of these traditional mechanisms, they face limitations in addressing modern conflicts. In large, heterogenous communities where social ties are weak, traditional systems often struggle. For instance, the Gacaca court in Rwanda has difficulties in dealing with more complex, large-scale disputes involving government official's or external actors Longman (2009). Similarly, studies on the Fulani in Nigeria revealed that traditional mechanism were ineffective in managing inter-tribal conflicts.

Another limitation is the patriarchal nature of traditional system, where decision-making is dominated by male elders and chiefs, often sidelining women despite their role in conflict resolution just as found in Mamdani (1996) and Murithi (2006). While some progress has been made in including women in these processes in certain Nigerian tribes, overall participation remains limited (Imhomoh,2023). The dominance of modern state legal system also undermines traditional conflict mechanisms.

Findings from Boege (2007) revealed that, many African countries, customary law is non-binding, and decisions by traditional authorities are often ignored by state institutions, which weakens the legitimacy of traditional governance structures.

According to Abugbilla (2022), Colonialism has eroded the authority of traditional systems, and without formal enforcement mechanisms, traditional methods rely on social pressure and moral agreements, which can be ineffective, especially when dealing with practices by modern legal system present significant challenges to the continued application of indigenous African conflict resolution mechanism.

Despite these limitations, African traditional peacebuilding practices remain an essential part of many communities. This is because according to Zartman (2000) traditional mechanism involves the entire community who holds each other accountable and collectively maintain peace. However, he rejects the state system which tends to centralize decision making and often ignores community opinions decreasing the public investment in the Resolution.

Many scholars notably Murithi (2008), Bogoro (2013), Donova (2021) Mboh (2021), emphasize that restorative justice, community solidarity, and long-lasting reconciliation offers valuable lessons for modern conflict resolutions. However, integrating these systems into broader, more complex, and diverse societies requires addressing their patriarchal structure, enhancing women's participation, finding ways to bridge the gap between traditional and modern legal systems Huysse and Salter (2008) and Donovan (2021).

2.1.2 Women in Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding in Africa

The role of women in African traditional societies as peace makers and mediators have received significant scholarly attention (Kabira and Nzioki, 1993; Albert, 2008; Bogoro, 2013). In African traditional contexts, women have historically been at the forefront of conflict resolution and peacebuilding at the family and community levels leveraging their positions as mothers, queen mothers or elders.

In Nigeria, Bogoro (2013) reports that the Igbo hold women in high regard referring to them as *Nneka* meaning, 'mother is supreme' and widely consider women as sustainers, protectors and healers of human relationships. Furthermore, it is widely believed among the Igbo culture that when things are good and life is bearable, a man belongs to his father, but he runs to his motherland in times of bitterness and sorrow. Thus, the woman is the pillar of the family and women constitute a powerful force in society. As mothers, women are

widely perceived as impartial and emotionally balanced which enables them to build bridges, mend differences and restore broken relationships (Kabira and Nzioki, 1993).

Several studies have also proven that even in male-dominant societies, women still occupy various vital spaces. For instance, one of the core responsibilities of elderly women is to ensure that, there's harmony and cohesion in society by making sure that the young are trained to become responsible adults (Albert, 2008).

Culturally, women are predominantly saddled with the responsibility of socialising and shaping the character of children. Case studies by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO,2003) across several African countries have revealed that the primary manifestation of women's contribution to peace in Africa is the role they play as peace-educators to their children by imparting cherished values, morals, norms and etiquettes. This is often done through storytelling, songs, myths, etc. that are easy to comprehend and apply. Mothers are the first to detect and correct defective behaviour among children and would normally make a referral to the father or an adult male, should their efforts fail. Through this effort, women engage in preventive diplomacy and conflict prevention and peacebuilding by moulding the character of the young members of society and ensuring that they grow into peaceful and responsible adults (Albert, 2008; Bakut, 2013).

From the indigenous African context, women play an integral role in conflict resolution and peacebuilding beyond the roles they play in the house. Indeed, many ethnic groups recognise the important roles women play in conflict management (Murithi, 2008). Among the Yoruba of Nigeria, the active participation of women in family dispute resolution has been observed by (Ajayi and Buhari, 2014).

In a related perspective, traditional conflict resolution processes among the Acholi of northern Uganda involves a high-level public participation involving both men and women (Murithi, 2008). Bakut (2013) provides further evidence of women's participation in traditional conflict resolution processes across various communities notably the Oromo of Ethiopia, the Tswana of Botswana, and the Asantes of Ghana. These case studies clearly demonstrate the successes of women's role as mothers, sisters, wives, daughters and aunts, and how these positions are utilised in conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

Across Africa, there appears to be a surge in the participation of women in peacebuilding and conflict resolution processes beyond the traditional settings. This is attributed to the rise in advocacy and grassroots mobilization programmes involving women in conflict inflicted areas. The amorphous rise of women's movements and the mobilization

of women in conflict zones to demand for peace and to challenge the exclusion of women in formal peace processes have received attention across Africa.

A good example of these women movements is the Liberian women's peace movement that arose during the Second Liberian Civil War. Dubbed the "*Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace*" Moran (2007) describes how the movement organized thousands of women across ethnic and religious divisions to call for cessation of fighting and an end to the civil war. The movement among other things, staged a three-month long peace campaign christened "Mass Action for Peace" to advocate for a ceasefire. The women also took their activism to peace negotiation centers outside Liberia when in Akosombo in Ghana, they held demonstrations by barricading the entrance to the venue of the talks to prevent parties from escaping from the talks and to compel them to reach a favorable outcome (Alaga, 2010). The efforts of the Liberian women movement paved way for the signing of a peace agreement in 2003 that ended the notorious civil war and the return to peace and democracy which produced the country's first female president.

In Sierra Leone, Mazurana and Carlson (2004) present a similar case of a movement led by the Mano River Women's Peace Network which played a central role in ending the 11-year-long Sierra Leone Civil War and the restoration of peace in the war-torn country. Another example is the *Wajir* women in Kenya who established the *Wajir* Peace and Development Committee (WPDC) to help in peacebuilding efforts after the 1991 brutal conflict which claimed over 1200 lives (Tongeren, 2013). Similarly, Mzvondiwa (2007) and Mwambari *et al* (2021) describe how women play a pivotal role in peacebuilding and reconciliation in post-genocide communities in Rwanda.

In the heat of the Guinea Bissau election violence in 2004, the army's attempt to clamp down on protesters was halted by local women's groups whose advocacy triggered a dialogue process and eventually a peaceful resolution of the impasse (Issifu, 2015).

Finally, Mazurana, (2005) highlights the important role women played in rehabilitating and reintegrating former child soldiers in post-conflict Uganda. These cases serve as microcosms of the successes of women's participation in conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Africa.

Despite their enormous successes and the inert potential that women have in conflict resolution and peacebuilding, their participation still faces limitations and challenges. It is instructive to note that the erosion of the traditional roles of women in African societies has been observed with grave concern by many scholars. For instance, Bakut (2013) bemoans the impact of colonialism and the so-called modernity on the ability of women to assert their

roles as mothers, wives, sisters, daughters and aunts in conflict resolution and peacebuilding processes across many African communities. He nostalgically and polemically advocates for the incorporation of indigenous mechanisms that exemplify women's participation in modern conflict and peace affairs at the family, community and national levels. Unlike Bakut (2013), Murithi (2008) traces the problem to multiple factors particularly the paternalism inherent in human societies, both indigenous and modern. He argues that although indigenous conflict resolution and peacebuilding mechanisms contain progressive values, the practices are patriarchal in nature and not gender sensitive. But as he further argued, patriarchy is not exclusive to African traditional societies. Western or Eurocentric traditions practised as the 'modern' system in African countries, equally excluded women from problem-solving roles and political decision-making including peace and conflict processes. Murithi's view seems to resonate Anderlini (2007) who blamed the issues on gender biases within formal conflict resolution and peace processes as well as the dominance of military styled negotiations which undermine women's perspectives.

On the contrary, Badmus (2009) and Puechguirbal (2010) blame the traditional patriarchal African system describing it as disempowering women through various discriminatory cultural practices emanating from the patriarchal system. According to Badmus (2009), male dominance pervades all echelons of power decision making process in many African communities. Such systems reduce women to mere peace makers but not actors that can participate in decision making process.

Evidence from Bell, (2018) indicate that globally, women represent only 4% of signatories in peace agreements and negotiations. They further revealed that peace negotiations in Africa are predominantly male-dominant, thus marginalizing women in the process. True (2013) also raises important concerns about women's peacebuilding work in African being underfunded and unsupported by both local governments and international donors. These political, financial, and cultural factors, together act as limitations to women's participation in conflict resolution and peacebuilding processes., therefore inhibiting the sustainability of women-led peace initiatives.

The literature on women in conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Africa mirrors the crucial yet often underappreciated role women play in fostering peace. From traditional conflict resolution roles to championing grassroots peace campaign movements, African women have demonstrated their capacity in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. However, their exclusion from formal conflict resolution and peacebuilding processes remains a significant challenge. Moreover, the literature has revealed significant empirical gaps. Much

of the literature is focused on women's role in intra-community and state level participation to the neglect of inter-community conflicts which presents nuance differences that are yet to be explored.

2.1.3 Women and Indigenous Conflicts Resolution and Peacebuilding in Ghana

In Ghana, the role of women in indigenous conflict resolution and peacebuilding is greatly influenced by the cultural norms, traditional gender roles, and evolving practices within the local governance system. Like other African societies, conflict resolution and peacebuilding mechanisms are dominated by men in terms of recognized traditional leadership and mediation roles. Although, the practices are quite similar, there are notable nuance differences between tribes. The involvement of women in conflict resolution and peacebuilding arena in Ghana has largely been done through informal or traditional processes rather than formal channels. This depends on the kind ethnic group and the nature of the conflict. In many indigenous systems, women were entrusted with significant responsibilities within their families and communities, particularly in times of crisis.

According to Osei-Hwedie and Rankopo (2008), women were often involved in negotiations between warring parties, either directly or indirectly through their influence over male relatives, especially in matrilineal societies like the Akan of southern Ghana.

Nukunya (2003) notes that among Akan people, the *Queen Mother*, who is the highest female authority, serves as the advisor to the *chief*, the highest male authority, on governance issues, including conflict resolution and peacebuilding. She is the principal actor in conflict situation, mediating disputes and shepherding the community towards reconciliation and restoration of order. From the Paramount Chief (*Omanbene*) down to the Village Chief (*Odikro*), Kendie and Guri (2006) report that the Queen Mother plays a central role among the Akan people. The Queen Mother of Asante particularly participate actively in the judicial and legislative processes of the kingdom and wields significant power in the making and unmaking of war, and the distribution of resources such as land (Arhin, 1983). Generally, the conflict resolution process among the Asantes progresses through the hierarchy from the family/household level through to the Omanhene with women actively involved. Besides the chiefs, elders and queen mothers, other actor in the conflict resolution process in Akan culture include fetish priests, spiritualists, herbalists and soothsayers some of whom are women (Kendie and Guri, 2006).

Similarly, in northern Ghana, the participation of women in peacebuilding and conflict resolution processes has been documented by (Tonah 2007, Odotei 2008, Abdulai

and Ibrahim 2017, Zuure *et al.*, 2020). Unlike the Akan of southern Ghana, the northern tribes in Ghana are characterized by male-dominance and patriarchy.

Nevertheless, women, (especially elderly women), perform mediation duties in communal disputes between families or clans in many communities in northern Ghana (Odotei, 2008; Ajayi and Buhari, 2014). The impartiality and sense of wisdom (derived from accumulated experience) that elderly women are accorded, gives them the leverage as effective mediators in situations of disputes relating to inheritance, marriage and family disagreements, promoting dialogue between disputing groups and appealing to shared values such as kinship, unity and communal harmony. Ajayi and Buhari (2014) note that, leveraging their roles as sisters, mothers, aunts and wives, women foster reconciliation and maintain peace in their communities. Their unique position as caretakers of social relationships allows them to engage in conflict resolution in ways that men may not be able to, especially in domestic and family disputes.

Odotei (2008) further reports that women's roles in conflict resolution and peacebuilding have been institutional in some communities. One such example is the Dagomba people who prioritized the role of women, particularly elderly women, in mediation processes involving disputes between clans or families (Odotei, 2008). Moreover, women have been at the forefront of conflict resolution and post-conflict reconciliation and reconstruction following the brutal Dagbon chieftaincy conflict in northern Ghana. Ateng *et al* (2018) give account of how women played roles (behind the scenes) during the Dagbon peace talks whilst Abdulai and Ibrahim (2017) report that women established peace groups and worked assiduously to bring rival factions together for dialogue, and to adopt tolerance, and non-violence as the strategies for the resolution of the conflict. In the area of post-conflict reconciliation in northern Ghana. Tonah (2007) further highlights the role women groups play in conflict-affected areas, where women organized reconciliation activities such as peace education initiatives, in order to rebuild trust between divided communities or factions, promoting emotional and psychological healing of conflict wounds and restoring broken social ties. Osei-Hwedie and Rankopo (2008) provide a sterling argument concerning women's traditional roles as caregivers and nurturers which make them important agents of peace, especially in grassroots conflict resolution.

Despite their contributions and potentials, several challenges hinder women's involvement in peacebuilding processes in Ghana. Scholars are divided in their opinions about these challenges. Tsikata and Seini (2004) the patriarchal nature of many traditional societies in Ghana is the limiting factor to women's formal involvement in peacebuilding.

According to him, the patriarchal system exalts men over women in terms of formal decision-making structures and procedures as women are in most cases refrained and restricted from playing public leadership roles, regardless of their capabilities, skills, experiences and abilities to contribute impactfully to conflict resolution processes. The prevailing patriarchal system is further enforced and entrenched by customary law and norms which restrict women's participation in conflict resolution and public affairs. These patriarchal norms sometimes allow women to play significant roles only at the household level, but their participation in decision-making at the wider community level is often limited just as Amadiume (1997) asserts.

The marginalization of women in conflict and peacebuilding is further reinforced by cultural and religious beliefs that perceive men as divinely ordained leaders while women are to play supplementary or subordinate roles. In a study entitled, *Culture and Customs of Ghana*, Salm and Falola (2002) reveal how in some communities in Ghana, traditional religious beliefs relegate women to subordinate roles while elevating men as the principal agents of peace and conflict management. Odotei observes some of these beliefs among some Islamic communities in northern Ghana where religious interpretations further exacerbate the situation by restricting women's participation in peacebuilding efforts and public affairs (Odoeti, 2008). Arhin (2001) reveals that even in matrilineal societies such as the Akans where women hold formal positions (queen mothers), their powers are always contained and restrained by men as they rarely have the final say in issues relating to governance and conflict resolution. These factors limit women's ability to fully participate in peace and conflict management efforts, particularly in matters involving inter-ethnic or political disputes.

Despite the challenges and limitations, the prospects of women's participation remain bright. Generally, there is the need to empower women through capacity building, education, and legal reforms to overcome the obstacles and enhance women's participation in formal peacebuilding processes. Fortunately, there has been an increasing recognition and a clamor to increase the participation of women in conflict resolution and peacebuilding in view of the immense benefits that such an effort provides. In recent times, there are increasing pressure from the international community through various frameworks and resolutions (UN Security Council Resolution 1325), women advocacy/pressure groups and international and local organizations for a greater participation of women in peace and conflict matters especially in minority and patriarchal settings.

Consequently, there is an apparent rise in women's activism and advocacy in Ghana by various organizations leading to an increasing the involvement of women in conflict

resolution and peacebuilding (Abdulai and Ibrahim, 2017). For instance, the Women Peace and Security Network – Africa (WIPSEN-Africa) and other organization like it, have been instrumental in advocating for women inclusion in peace processes in Ghana (Abdulai and Ibrahim, (2017). Together these organizations and the Government of Ghana have initiated various measures such as training and sensitization programmes aimed at increasing the capacity of women to increase their participation in conflict and peace affairs and to expand and provide the needed platforms for women to exercise and to optimize their inert potentials in peace and conflict management. For instance, Tsikata and Seini (2004) details the efforts that the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection as well as the National Peace Council are making to promote women’s leadership in conflict prevention, mediation, and peacebuilding in all conflict, peace and security situations.

In the area of reform, Arhin (2001) called for a reform of the customary laws to reduce or eliminate marginalization of women and expand women’s opportunities for leadership roles at all levels. In the same vein, government should embrace and promote women’s inclusion in local government structures particularly at the district and sub-district levels as well as the traditional councils to expand the scope of women’s participation in all the spheres of governance including peace and conflict management. As Ajayi and Buhari (2014) argues, there is the need to put to practice the rhetoric of gender inclusion by adopting a gender sensitive approach to development generally, and peace and conflict management specifically with consequential improvements which will change the narrative of women as victims of conflicts to reveal and optimize their true nature as peacemakers and troubleshooters.

The review of the literature on women’s participation in conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Ghana has revealed noteworthy gaps. The existing literature have so far revealed the important roles, potentials, challenges, limitations and prospects of women’s participation in conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Ghana without providing the details. Besides, existing literature is dominated by studies focusing on women’s participation or their potentials in conflict and peacebuilding at the family or intra-community levels. Given the complexities and dynamism that characterizes human societies particularly in the area of conflict and peace building, there is the need to provide a case-by-case analysis of the evolving role of women in conflict and peace affairs in the inter-community context.

The *Grusi* of northeastern Ghana provides a unique cultural environment for the analysis of conflict and peace issues involving women and tradition. Zuure *et al.*, (2020) provides an anecdotal account of how Talensi indigenous approaches provide a good

opportunity for conflict resolution and the achievement of justice. Unfortunately, their study failed to address the important question about how indigenous peace and conflict management processes affect women's participation and the consequential outcomes of that. In the face of these gaps, the study presents evidence of the participation of women in conflict resolution and peacebuilding from the *Grnsi* context using the Doba and Kandiga inter-community violent conflict. The study hopes to fill important gaps in the literature by offering more insights from an inter-community perspective.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The study employed two theories namely Feminist peace theory in combination with women agency in analyzing women role in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Through feminist perspective, I will expose and combat the long-standing gender inequality. In addition to that, my aim is to examine how gender dynamics are shown. The goal is to evaluate critically how these women's agency affects larger cultural and social conceptions.

2.2.1 Feminist Peace Theory

Feminist and peace are intertwined, regarding feminism, the foundation of women studies, The study used this feminist concept which focused on affirmed historical oppression and exclusion of women and connected it with the theory and practices in order to eradicate this exclusion. On the other hand, the Peace concept examined the methods to manage conflict and the transformation to promote justice while minimizing violence (Forcey, 1995).

Therefore, feminist peace theory emphasizes that, society need to address and dismantle structural inequalities, particularly gendered based injustice and advocates for inclusive, nonviolent approaches to conflict resolution that empower marginalized group especially women (Friedan, 1963 and Forcey, 1995).

This theory within peace and conflict studies seeks to understand, critique and address how gender dynamics shape the causes, experience and the resolutions of conflict. It argues that traditions, often male dominated perspectives on peace and security overlook or marginalize the experiences contributions of women, as well as other gendered perspectives, thus limiting the effectiveness and inclusiveness of peace process. Friedan (1963) argue that any act of glorification of nurturing is viewed as an instrument of women's oppression. Therefore, the study used this theory to comprehensively analyst and understand the traditional roles of women in conflict resolutions and how gender inequality influences their roles.

Gender, according to the World Health Organization (2019), refers to the socially constructed characteristics given by society to women, men, girls, and boys. These roles are ingrained through cultural norms and expectations, with women often cast as caregivers and nurturers (O'Reily, 2024). Porter (2007) cited in Anderson, (2024) argues that, due to these roles, women play significant yet informal roles in peacebuilding, often regulated to unofficial spaces or seen primarily as victims of conflict.

Butler (1999) defines gender as not something we are innately born with but something we “become” through social performance. Butlers’ framework opines that gender is a learned behavior, a social performance shaped by societal expectations. Makore’s theory of gender resonates with Hall (2021) who asserts that, the discourse of women involvement in protection from violence is constructed informal, grassroots and local. Such assumptions reinforces the idea that women are inherently vulnerable and require protection rather than being active participants in creating peace and security .This positioning sidelines women’s contribution in the early stage of conflict, framing them to the status of “objects” in need of protection (Hall, 2021).This construction overlook the capabilities, knowledge and the networks women possess that could contribute to early warnings and preventative measures of conflict.

Therefore, FPT, as proposed by Butler (1999) exposes how politics and culture are systematically constructed and reinforced through gendered roles and expectations. By challenging these traditional assumptions and examining the performative nature of gender, FPT reveals how societal structures are maintained. To tackle this, Hudson, (2015) emphasizes the need for legal reforms and societal changes in order to achieve feminist peace and gender equality in the public sphere.

These perspectives of FPT, reflected in the findings of this paper as the paper uncovers the barriers women face informal and traditional negotiations and highlights the need for their inclusions in conflict resolution efforts.

2.2.2 Women agency in conflict and peacebuilding

According to Weber (1947) agency refers to an individual’s ability to make choices exert power, and act with intention within social and structural constraints. It is fundamentally about the capacity to act independently and shape one’s own life, even when faced with external pressures. Understanding assumption surrounding women agency is crucial in knowing their contributions in conflict resolution. Sheri Gibbings highlights the im-portance

of analysing how institutional norms and assumptions such as those within the United Nations shape ideas about who is capable of action and how they can contribute

Again, agency as argued by Yadav (2021) emphasised on understanding how individuals, particularly women, perceived and navigate their lives amidst conflict, shaped by social, cultural, political and economic contexts. The author further argued that women agency is not static but evolves as women transition from one stage to another, adapting to the fluid circumstances they encounter in conflict and peacebuilding. Similarly, Ortiz, *et al.*, (2016) explained women agency as the capacity for decision-making which is crucial for enhancing their position within both society and their households. Acher (2002) expanded this argument by framing it as the ability of the human agency to reconstruct and transform itself when confronted with contradictory or challenging situation and the well-being of the society.

In the context of conflict resolution, women's agency is often both constrained and shaped by cultural narratives and norms. Ortiz *et al.*, (2016) points out that in a patriarchal environment where gendered ideologies dominate such as those marked by conflicts women ability to exercise agency is often limited by societal expectations and the marginalization of their roles. This reflects broader cultural constraints, particularly traditional societies where women's voices in conflicts resolution and peacebuilding are undervalued. This point resonates Hall, (2021) logic of agency quizzes, who decides? who act? who is call upon? To support or complement., A classic example is a lady judge who said she had nomination to join the conflict resolution committee in her traditional area which was revoked because the elders said she was a woman and could not make decisions with men (UER House of Chief's Annual report, 2022). Hall criticised the session, women are positioned as objects of early detection rather than participating in decision making in the theory "logic of agency". Women are portrayed as passive recipients of protection rather than actively participating their own safety through early discovery of massive violence.

Building from Hall (2021) work, emphasizes that frameworks such as responsibility to protect (R2P) and women, peace and security (WPS) apply gendered assumptions that shape the perceived roles and agency of women and women organization in conflict resolution. Rather than empowering women as active agents of change, often position them passive recipients of protection and support. Adding on, this gendered logic of agency assigns certain roles and assumptions based on gender, which can limit the full involvement and agency of women in conflict prevention and resolution.

Despite these constraints, women continue to engage in conflict resolution and peacebuilding like those in the Grusi society of the northeastern Ghana, navigating deep rooted cultural systems while balancing their traditional roles. These women though perceived passive, they are actively negotiating their agency within social structures to influence peacebuilding outcomes (Ari, 2024). Nkumbuku (2013) observed in the study on “Social-cultural Factors Affecting Women in Decision Making and Conflict Resolutions Activities in Garissa County” that many women in traditional patriarchal communities’ struggle to achieve autonomy in decision-making due to family and cultural pressures. This is especially true in conflict settings, where women are expected to maintain their familial roles while also contributing to peace efforts. Many scholars highlighted the dual burden women face in managing their societal obligation while asserting their agency in peace processes. As women balance their roles, they often demonstrate resilience and resourcefulness, shaping their environment in ways that foster both peace and social cohesion cited by (Khatri, 2023)

Thus, women agency in conflict resolution must be understood as a dynamic process of negotiation within broader social, cultural, and political structures. By situating women’s activities within these contexts, we gain insights in to how structural factors either facilitate or limit their ability to act. As Justino, *et al.*, (2018) argued, that understanding these dynamics is critical for developing inclusive peacebuilding strategies that acknowledge and support women agency in conflict-affected regions.

2.2.3 Maternal agency of women

According to Hall, (2021) the concept of logic maternal agency which associates feminism with maternal qualities and recognising women as mere mediators, nurturing, and caregivers. This notions sort to limit the role of women agency to motherhood care rather than recognising women experience and knowledge in conflict resolution that merits at strategic leadership position in society. Hall argues that, sees maternal agency as socially constructed logic that presumes women’s peacebuilding roles to link their reproductive capabilities.

This perception reproduces gender essentialism, suggesting that, even women without children assumes to have embody maternal qualities merely because of their biological capacity for motherhood (Krulisova, 2020 cited in Hall, 2021).

This resonates with Cahn (2000) who asserts that maternal powers have the role of women household duties to their motherhood duties. I might appear to accuse women of complicity in their own subordination, since women has been denied sources of power the household duties have been the primary source of power.

However, Meyers (2000) response to this by daring feminist theory are respect the dignity of women and defend their capacity to gain recognition to be involved in decision making, they must counter that maternal agency has been concealed and overlooked but not diminished.

Chapter 3 Research Methodology and Methods

3.1 Introduction

This chapter defines the kind of data employed for the research paper, and the methodological style used for the collection of data. It presents the location of the fieldwork; This chapter outlines the study population, and the composition of the participants involved. It further details the sampling methods applied, including the sample size and its defining characteristics. Additionally, it describes the procedures for data processing, handling and the analytical techniques employed. Lastly, this chapter addresses the scope of the study, its strength, limitations, and ethical considerations.

3.2. Study Approach

The study adopted mainly qualitative approach by combining in-depth interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) to collect primary data to answer the research questions. FGDs allow the researcher to gather thorough and broad information by observing various interactions on a topic within a controlled timeframe (Islam *et al.*, 2022). The purpose of the FGDs was to create the avenue for the women to tell their own story, to widen the spectrum of opinions, notions, experiences, to create interaction among respondents and to synthesize the information provided by respondents. In-depth Interviews (IDIs) equally offered me the opportunity to make an in-depth exploration to uncover individual experiences. According to Edwards and Holland (2013) IDIs also allow the interviewer to establish an environment where the interviewee feels at ease to share his/her insights and experiences. Given that conflict issues often evoke emotions and are thus sensitive, creating the appropriate environment that suits each respondent is key to successful data collection.

By means of this technique the researcher is offered the flexibility of modifying the direction of questions when desired. This enables participants to share information in a manner that other methods do not allow, enhancing the data (Mutlag *et al.*, 2019).

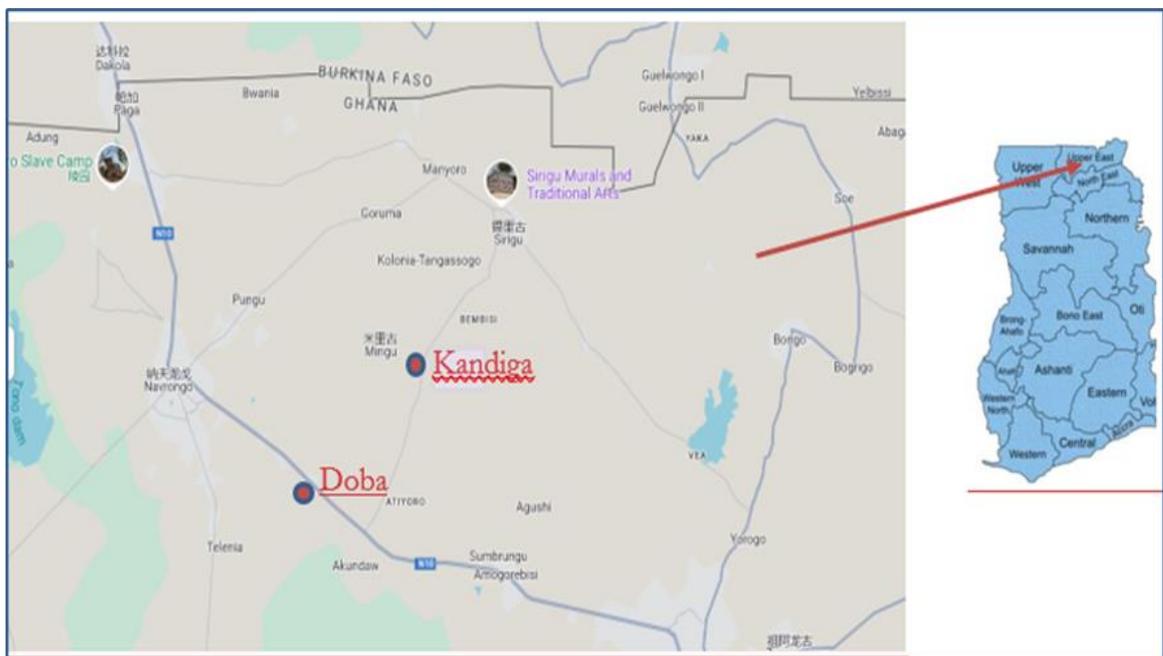
This enables participants to share information in a manner that other methods do not allow, enhancing the richness of the data. Conducting interviews for data collection allowed me, as a researcher, to maintain control, stay focused, and ask follow-up questions and probes as needed (O'Leary, 2017).

Finally, secondary data was gathered by reviewing articles and publications from various websites relevant to topic. This involves the identification of useful information from reputable sources related to my research study. Important information was reviewed from journals, articles and expert opinions as well as online data or literature. Through this broader extraction of information, an overall comprehensive analysis was established.

3.3 Study Site

As illustrated in the map of Ghana below, there are 16 regions in Ghana. The study was conducted in the Upper East Region, located in the Northern part of Ghana. This part of Ghana consists of many tribes which have been categorised under five main ethnic groups namely, Gurma, Mole-Dagbani, Guan, Mande, and Grusi. This research considers the Grusi group which consists of the following tribes: Kasena, Nankana, Sisala, Mo, Vagala, Lela, Templemsis (Tampula), Gurini (Frafra), Talensi, Nabit (Nabdam), Ko and Nuna. These tribes speak related languages and have a common cultural background (Ghana Statistical Service, 2013, 2010) census.

Figure 3.1 Map showing the location of the study communities



Source: google map

It must therefore be emphasized that the term Grusi refers to a group of tribes but not one specific tribe. Each of these tribes have hierarchy of their traditional leaders and no one leader superintends over all of them. For instance, the Nankana call their chief Naba while

the Kasena call theirs Pe (Pio). Doba and Kandiga are found within these tribes. Doba are in the Kasena area while Kandiga in the Nanakana area, but they are being separated by a tin land boundary. This region was chosen because it is noted for series of conflicts and disputes such as the Bawku conflict, the Bolga chieftaincy conflict, and specifically, Doba and Kandiga were chosen because of its distinct cultural characteristics that shape the involvement of women in conflict resolution and peace building.

The communities within this study area are patriarchal by default. Hence, the roles of men and women are pre-defined by decision markers (men) with women being the subordinates. Also, unlike Bawku, which is still experiencing conflict, this area which has experienced notable conflicts in 2019 resulting in the loss of about 200 lives, the destruction of about 150 houses, as well as the disruption of farming and other economic activities, now remains relatively calm (Awedoba, 2009). This conflict has attracted the attention of Ghana Government and its efforts to resolve such conflicts. Due to the objective of this study, Doba and Kandiga which have records of such conflicts and have become relatively peaceful have been chosen. Lessons of achievements could be learned from these areas that would be relevant for other parts of the region, the country and other countries facing crisis of conflicts.

3.4. Study Participants

A total number of six women were engaged in the IDIs. They comprised the queen mother of Doba, the queen mother of Kandiga, the leader of the Doba *Payaasi* Network and two members of same network, the leader of the Kandiga *Payaasi* Network and two members of same network.

The selection criteria considered persons with knowledge in the traditional roles, norms and values relating to women in conflicts, who were present during the conflict and were living within the study area. The criteria also included the position of the women and their involvement in peace building in the community. These women were selected with the help of the queen mothers in the communities. SWOPA which was already working with the women, opinion leaders and the daughters of Doba and Kandiga network in the communities also assisted in my recruitment process.

Two FGDs were also organised consisting of seven participants from Doba and seven participants from Kandiga. Though notes were taken during interviews, some of the interviews were audio recorded with the permissions of interviewees. This was to ensure that I

did not miss any information given by the participants when transcribing. All interviews were conducted on the farms and homes of participants at their convenience and lasted approximately 45 minutes. The FGDs were organised at the SWOPA meeting hall in Sirigu.

I encountered some challenges of meeting my participants because the data was conducted during the rainy season. As a result, many of the participants left very early in the morning to their farms and returned to their homes in the evening. Hence, I was compelled to conduct some of the interviews at their farms with the help of some community members for directions to the farms, and others at their homes.

In the case of the FGDs, two different groups of intermarried women (*Payaasi* Networks) of Doba and Kandiga were engaged in separate discussions. In line with existing standards for a successful discussion according to Hennink *et al.*, (2019), I mobilised seven participants for each group. According to Khan and Abedin (2022), the quality of results obtained through FGDs depends on the moderator's skill, and a moderator lacking experience may find it difficult to effectively guide the discussion. In this regard, an experienced moderator from SWOPA, who is fluent in both the Gurune (Nankam) and Kassem languages moderated the two discussion sessions. This moderator was chosen due to his experience in working and supporting women in these communities on peace advocacy. On average, each FGD lasted about an hour during which notes were taken and audio recordings taken with the approval of all participants.

3.5 Data Processing, Handling, and Analysis

The data from the IDIs and FGDs were in the form of notes and audio files. All audio files were transcribed. The transcripts and notes were subjected to thematic analysis. This entailed searching the data for either manifest or latent contents or key themes, categorizing the themes providing logical details of the content based on the emerging themes (Babbie, 1992). The units of analysis were the women groups and women leaders. A systematic procedure to guide in the analysis and to provide room for replication and rigor. Generally, the data were presented in an easy format with extracts and quotes from the transcripts used to buttress and support the narratives. To protect the identity of my participants and maintain confidentiality, they were all pseudonymized. I also used quotations to write up the findings.

3.6 Ethical Consideration

Due to the sensitivity of my study regarding conflicts, I obtained ethical clearance from the Inter-national Institute of Social studies (ISS) ethical committee which supported the study. Also, to ensure adherence to ethical guidelines, respecting cultural sensitivities and obtaining informed consent from all participants, I prioritize confidentiality and anonymity to protect the identities of participants. To guarantee the confidentiality of my participants they were given codes instead of names and information from the participants were assigned codes and not attributed to individuals. According to O’Leary (2014:47), to produce trustworthy and credible results, the researcher has an ethical duty to ensure the confidentiality of participants in the study. Prior to starting the interview, I verbally sought their consent once more and provided further clarification on the main purpose of the research. Participants were also reassured that; they are free to ask or answer any question and could withdraw from the interview without any consequences. In order to protect and manage the emotions of the participants about memories of the conflicts I started the interviews by complementing them for the peace restoration efforts they made and wished them a peaceful coexistence.

I also avoided direct questions on the causes of the war and how it affected them and focussed on collaborative efforts to ensure lasting peace. I avoided asking participants personal question and told them they were free to skip questions which were unsafe or uncomfortable to them. The open-ended questionnaire allowed for an organic conversation between us rather than a question-and-answer session. For the FGD where participants were from Doba and Kandiga, I avoided the possibility of blame game by focusing on the positive progress they have made and the future they all envisage. I used inclusive words and avoided languages of grievances but rather languages that reflected a peaceful future.

3.7 Positionality

My passion and motivation for this study was grounded in the intersectionality of my role as a researcher and a paramount chief with firsthand experience in conflicts in the study area. As a stakeholder in peacebuilding in my communities I saw the brutal effects of conflicts and the injustices women face, often being reduced to mere victims during such conflicts. My intersectionality was very significant in this study most especially in instances where conflict dynamics intersect with traditional structure as is the case in many conflicts in the North-eastern enclave of Ghana. This sometimes makes it difficult for researchers to access information from participants regarding ethnic conflicts because people in the community’s fear

researchers could be security intelligence and would not give them information for the fear of being investigated or arrested later.

However, my intersectionality as a researcher and paramount chief who played a critical role peace building in these communities was a boost to solicit critical information which other researchers may find difficult to obtain for research analysis since I was well known and posed no security or customary threat to any of the communities. My intersectionality also gave me the opportunity to appreciate the context and dynamics of the interplay between cultural rationalization and academic analysis. This is because in research analysis, the contextual meanings of data are very important in understanding, analysing and interpretation of the data. My position as a paramount chief broadened the scope of the data analysis and interpretation as a researcher since the cultural norms, and beliefs needed a contextual understanding.

Furthermore, my experience as the mediator in the conflict resolution process between the Doba and Kandiga communities offered me the opportunity to witness firsthand and understand the roles of women in conflict resolution. Also, my experience in conflict resolution provided a contextual understanding and analysis of the social, political, and cultural factors that influence conflict resolution. This, my insightful interpretation of the data as a researcher was influenced by my experiences and understanding about conflict resolution and the role of women in these communities.

My positionality offered me the opportunity to have easy access to key stakeholders especially, traditional leaders from faction groups, victims who have eyewitness accounts and firsthand information and sensitive information regarding the role of women in conflict resolution.

Thus, my overall motivation was my genuine desire to address or bridge the gender disparity and advocate for the empowerment of women to participate in conflict resolution through empirical data using my privileged positionality as a paramount chief and a researcher.

However, during the data collection my positionality as a paramount chief posed a challenge in the data collection. There was a challenge where women feel timid to talk boldly to chiefs, elders or men in the communities. But before the study began, I explained to them that I was there with them not as a chief but a researcher who shared the opinion that women deserved equality in whatever affects them and that they should use the opportunity to volunteer information, and I assured them of the confidentiality of their identity.

I also explained to them that as a stakeholder it was only the truth and for them who feel it will know it better than us. This message motivated the women, and they spoke boldly, even during the interviews some mentioned names of some people who were not in the participants who they think could add valuable information to the research. Because of my positionality and the role, I played as the mediator of the Doba and Kandiga peace building I was welcome into the communities. Participants volunteered information during the data collection because I was a neutral researcher who posed no threat to their security or cultural values and were confident, I will protect their identities.

3.8 Limitations of the Study

The overall limitation of this study is that, because conflicts in Northeastern part of Ghana is multi-ethnic, patriarchal I could not generalize these findings to extend to other ethnic communities. Also, the specificity of the *Grusi* traditional context may limits my generalizability to other regions or ethnic groups.

I also find it difficult to gather data from the northeastern part of the country as it one of few areas' that not enough literature has been written about women involvement in conflict resolution and peacebuilding due to the cultural sensitivity

Chapter 4 Results and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the main findings of the Research Paper in accordance with the research question of the study. The findings have been grouped into the following: the influence of cultural norms on conflict resolution, strategies women use in conflict resolution, interconnections of culture, tradition, communities' perspectives of women in peacebuilding as well as the barriers of their involvement in peacebuilding. The study employed two theories namely Feminist Peace Theory (FPT) and Women Agency to analyse women's role in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Through the FPT, the paper discussed the long-standing gender inequality and how these gender dynamics play a role in conflict resolution and peace building. Additionally, the study examined how women's agency affects larger cultural and social conceptions of conflict resolution and peace building through the lens of Women Agency.

4.2 Traditional roles of Grusi women in conflict resolution and peacebuilding

The study explored the roles *Grusi* women play in conflict resolution leveraging on the traditional roles assigned to women. The results of the study showed that traditional *Grusi* women play significant roles in peacebuilding and conflict resolution at the family, community and intercommunity levels leveraging on their inherent feminine qualities as mothers, sisters, wives, mediators, peacemakers and their individual agency power.

As mothers, *Grusi* women are accorded the respect and honour of motherhood which signifies maturity, patience, perseverance, self-sacrifice, wisdom, moral guidance and culture. Motherhood in *Grusi* culture is synonymous to womanhood (*pogne*). O'Reily (2024) refers motherhood to anyone doing the work of a mother. Within this framework, by the tradition of the *Grusi* people, mothers are incharge of the general wellbeing of the family, clan or community that they superintend (Jayasundara-Smists, 2022). This makes them focal or central points in conflict resolution, though sometimes women are given limited roles. Within this context, women become the centre of conflict resolution among siblings at the household level, extended family, clan and community level. Therefore, disrespect for a woman in *Grusi* culture is considered a grievous punishable sin. This was emphasized by one of the women leaders:

“Everyone one was born by a woman (Poka), even a chief (Naba)– So, anyone who disrespects a woman,

disrespects his/her mother).” (Field Interview, July 2024).

Thus, women in the *Grusi* community leverage on this privilege to advocate for peace. This means that even the chief of the community must respect women when it comes to their traditional roles because this is a sacred role for all women as mothers. This statement is buttressed by the works of Begoro (2013) that hold the view that women are in high regard referring to them as mothers who are “supreme” according to Igbo culture. However, the logic maternal agency by Hall, (2021) argues that glorifying *Grusi* women’s role in conflict resolution to maternal qualities seeks to limit the experience and knowledge perpetuate gender inequality.

Invariably, the role of women as mothers in *Grusi* tradition and culture has significance for peacebuilding and conflict resolution. Typically, a *Grusi* home is segmented along gender lines where the woman is in charge of the inner-courts (*zenzaka*) and the man is in charge of the outer-courts (*zenyore*). Much of the critical peace building processes take place in the inner courts where the woman adjudicates and navigates through the issues to an amicable conclusion. Therefore, the traditional settings have created an opportunity for women to use their reproductive skills and agency power of negotiation in peacebuilding. This tends to contradict the feminist peace theory which centres on the idea that traditional approaches to peace and conflict resolution often overlook the perspective and experience of women (Friedan, 1963). The findings of the study showed that at the community level, there is a clear separation of powers on gender lines where men and women hardly take decisions conjunctively. Each gender has its own processes and procedures for addressing issues and only sometimes invites the other gender to play supplementary roles. This point proves Hall’s (2021) logic of agency questions of; who decides? who acts? who is called upon? to support or complement. Thus, the individual agency should be seen as functional rather than been controlled. Although, this separation of power perpetuates hierarchal norms by putting males in charge of decision making and relegating women to supplementary or supporting roles, the study contended that such system of separations of power promotes the exercise of women’s agency to give meaningful inputs that could influence positive decisions in conflict resolution and peace building.

Another significant traditional role of women that position them in conflict resolution and peace building is the inter married role commonly called “dual loyalty”. According to the *Grusi* tradition, a married woman has two equal loyalties, one to the husband’s family and community and the other to her father’s family and community. This unique role of

women puts them at a buffer zone (neutral zone) which makes them suitable candidates for peacebuilding. These traditional arrangements, within *Grusi* culture make women natural peacemakers. However, some scholars argued that this concept sidelines women's contribution in conflict resolution because of their double allegiances to two families (Hall, 2021). Also, the limited roles within the family alone restrict the agency power of women who have the capacity to contribute more to the society. Pankhurst's (2008) critiqued this by advocating for redefinition of peace roles for women that permit women to fully and equally participate together with men in decision making spaces beyond the natural peace maker conundrum. Also, to buttress this point Hall (2021) argued strongly on the logic of maternal agency that women are crucial peace agents that intersect their maternal and women agency and peace to act in a broader context to the benefit of societies at large.

The findings of the study also revealed a woman lamenting on the dilemma of dual loyalty: *"It's really very difficult for women during conflicts. We suffer a lot. But you see, its complicated when your husband's community is fighting your father's community. This is what people don't understand, especially you men. ... Who will I support, my husband's community or my father's family? Imagine my husband's family going out to kill my brothers and my father and uncles, hmmmm. Imagine my father's side coming to kill my husband or children. I can't think of this. That's why they say, the woman (Pog-eliga) belongs to two families, two communities and should act as a mediator between families and communities"*. (Field interview, July 2024).

The study argues that, though the dual loyalty positions women as natural peace makers during conflict involving communities of their husband's family and their father's family, analysing it from women's agency restricts or limits women from exercising their objective power and skills. This dual loyalty may compel them to try not to offend both families by avoiding a decisive or drastic measures that can promote peacebuilding. This tends to support Nkumbuku (2013) study on "Social Cultural Factors Affecting women in decision making and conflict resolution", that women in patriarchal communities struggle to achieve autonomy in decision-making due to family and cultural pressures.

4.3 Women in peacebuilding and conflict resolution: The case of the Doba and Kandiga conflict

Women in *Grusi* culture play a significant role in peace building and conflict resolution. As demonstrated in section 4.2, women in the traditional *Grusi* context leverage their positions as mothers, sisters and married women to resolve conflicts and build peace at the family, community and intercommunity levels. This contradicts the logic of maternal agency that argued that this perception or notion limits or tie the role of women in conflict resolution to mere nurturing rather than recognising them as agents of change (Hall, 2021). This was manifested in the Doba and Kandiga conflict where women deployed varied innovative strategies within their traditional roles to resolve the conflict and to build peace. This point resonates with the definition of women agency by Ortiz *et al*, (2016) as, the capacity for decision-making which is crucial for enhancing their position within both their society and households. Some of the successful roles and strategies deployed in peacebuilding during the Doba and Kandiga conflict by Grusi women included the following: prayers, appeals for calm, the use of rituals (*bonto* and *calabash*), formation of intermarried women networks (*Payaasi* and *isi*), enskinment of peace queens (*Suma'asum Pognaba*), sensitization and peace advocacy through peace festivals, peace walks, traditional art and morals, workshops, and the facilitation of peace talks using traditional *Grusi* kinship mechanisms. These measures were undertaken not only by Doba and Kandiga women but Grusi women across borders or their neighbours from Sirigu, Yua, Mirigu and Nabango who mobilised themselves in solidarity with the suffering women of Doba and Kandiga. They organized a peace walk with a petition to ensure government and traditional authorities intervened for a cessation of the fighting (Jayasundara-Smits, 2022)

4.3.1 Prayers and Appeal for Calm

As I mentioned in my findings of the study, the above showed that women played spiritual roles during conflicts. One of these roles was prayer and appeal for calm. This took several forms including personal prayers and prayer intercession from churches, mosques and traditional prayers. Although, the African Traditional Religion and culture forms the cultural foundation of the people, Christianity has become more dominant especially among the youthful population. Apart from personal prayer, prayer requests were frequently made during Sunday and daily church services and group prayers asking for divine intervention to calm down nerves and to avoid an all-out war. One of the participants who belongs to the

women's wing of her Church; the Christian Mothers Association, described how they constantly prayed for the peace of the area.

*“As mothers, our duty is prayer for our children and the peace of the land. If there is no peace, its women and children that suffer the most. Virgin Mary being the mother of our Jesus, and Queen of Peace, will intercede for our sins and bring us. We have been making mass requests for the peace of the area and we believe God has listened to our cry, had mercy on us and granted us the peace. We know it is not over, so, we still continue to pray daily for the sustenance of the peace that we now enjoy. At least, for now its no longer *zoya zoya zoya* (run run run). We trust that we will continue to live together happily”.* (Field Interview, July 2024).

Beside prayers, the women also made efforts to appeal to their families not to take part in fighting, asking their husbands and male relatives not to fight, encouraging them to relocate to nearby towns and communities to avoid fighting. For instance, one of the participants described her experience:

“Hmmm. It's not easy. After the first fighting in 2019, I convinced my husband to go to my brother who owns a cocoa farmland in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. When my husband left, I secretly contacted my brother asking him to prevent my husband from returning home. So, my brother gave part of his farmland to my husband in order to keep him busy, and to prevent him from coming home to participate in the subsequent fighting. Hmmm! We all know each other very well...When you hear gunshots, your heart is broken... whether its your side or their side, its somebody you know, perhaps even your relative or friend, that is being killed. (Field Interview, July 2024).

This story resonates with several other women who discussed various strategies such as preventing male students (who were in boarding school at the time of the unrests) from coming home during vacation and times of fighting and discouraging workers from returning home during the conflict, both aimed at calming down the situation and reducing the risk of deaths of relatives. During the research, participants also revealed how women, as active agents in conflict-affected areas employed powerful strategies to influence peacebuilding efforts. Their approach went beyond traditional roles, as they utilized personal and family dynamics to exert pressure on men who were engaged in the conflict. One participant vividly expressed her frustration and urgency women felt, using the threats of halting childbirth to challenge her husband's participation in the conflict. By drawing on the danger they faced, the woman

underscored the critical role women played in discouraging conflict and fostering peace within their communities.

“We threatened them of not giving birth again because they are busy destroying the fruits of our labour (killing humans), why will I burden myself to carry pregnancy when in that state you could be killed by the opponents. This is because if their (men) interest is in the killing, then the number of children I have already is enough, I can’t be running and carrying or pulling other younger once as well as carrying pregnancy as well” (Fiel Interview, July 2024).

These strategies by these women do not only aim to bring peace, but also emphasised the efforts women put with emotions to restore peace in their communities. Thus, promoting active participation of women in peace process and conflict resolution goes beyond a mere formality of allowing women to take part in the discussions, but rather acknowledges the important roles women can play, as well as the consequences that women’s continuous absence in contributing to sustainable peace may presented. The findings also confirmed the arguments advanced by Hall (2021) on women agency that women play crucial roles in peace building by using their bonds with family to negotiate for peace. Thus, in the Grusi traditions, women’s roles and symbolism are often connected to peace and life giving in patriarchal societies. They have the unique effect, functioning outside of conventional masculine power structures by exerting considerable influence on conflict related behaviours or decision.

4.3.2 Jute leaves and Calabash Rituals (bonto la wane malema)

The study revealed a special ritual for peace building performed by only women in the community. This special ritual is the springling of jute leaves in a new calabash (*bonto la wane*) by women which signifies that they are weak or have no strength to fight but are seeking for peace to prevail. This traditional ritual by *Grusi* women involves women mixing the jute leaves (*bonto*) with water in a brand-new calabash (*wane*) to obtain a slimy concoction. The mixture or concoction in the calabash is repeatedly swirled amidst incantations of “slimy, slimy, slimy, invoking the gods of the land for peace and health of all combatants (from both sides). The ritual is an expression of women’s neutrality in the conflict and their prayers for cessation of fighting. The slippery nature of the concoction (*bonto*) also signifies that when weapons are fired in the battlefield they should slip and miss the target. This finding confirms the literature of Shepherd (2008) who argued that, during times of conflict women are more than just victims or bystanders but agents of peace. The incredible courage and leadership,

even in the most difficult and dangerous circumstances showed women's women agency in peace building.

One of the participants narrated her experience; *"Its mandatory for a woman to have bonto and new calabashes. So, we have them already. Each time the fighting starts, then each woman, especially we the elderly women would prepare the bonto and come to the fields and start the incantation. We don't wish to see the fighting, so I wish is that the ancestors and gods of the land should touch the hearts of the fighters to laydown their weapons. We also wish that no one is hurt, wounded or killed. This our role, as mothers, sisters and wives. As women, we protect lives, and don't want to see it destroyed in our very eyes"*. (Field Interviews, July 2024). Thus, the woman is the pillar of the family and constitute a powerful force in society. Also, as mothers, women are widely perceived as impartial and emotionally balanced which enables them build bridges, amend differences and restore broken relationships (Kabira and Nzioki, 1993).

Although, the *bonto* and calabash ritual seems to be of more a symbolic gesture rather than a conflict preventive or control mechanism, the women were confident about its effectiveness. Another participant expressed her believe in the practise as follows; *"Eh! It's very effective! Each time the fighting starts, the moment we go out to make the practice, that same day, the fighting and destruction will stop. If you do it with a clean heart it works! Remember, every house has a woman, a mother! Imagine the cry of all the mothers together with the Tingane (earth god) for the protection of the children! Why won't it work!"* (Field Interview, July 2024).

Other participants also squeezed *"the CALABASH AND THE 'BONTO' isn't the man job. When the men are on the battlefield, this is the least women can do to ensure the fight isn't continuous. This shows women are peacebuilders, ...the gods are wiser than man"* (field interview, July 2024).

The study contends that these statements showed the importance of collective shared roles of men and women to attain a sustainable conflict resolution as affirmed by scholars and activist of feminist theory. Thus, the finding of the study clearly showed that cultural norms and beliefs shaped the roles and clearly influenced gender equality in the representation in conflict resolution and peace building process among the *Grusi* society. However, this cultural arrangement contradicts Nkumbuku (2013) assertions that women's only recognised role is giving birth, family care, and sex objects for the husband. Thus, culture has created a space that influence the role of women in conflict resolution both positively. Hence, this

finding of the study also confirmed women's agency to actively advocate for gender equality in conflict resolution.

4.3.3 Formation of daughters, maternal nieces and nephews' networks (Payaasi and Isi network)

According to Zuure *et al.* (2020) African traditional societies have a long-standing conflict resolution and peacebuilding mechanisms rooted in their social, cultural, political, and spiritual systems. The study found out that, *Payaasi* and *Isi* have been a regular phenomenon in *Grusi* culture, traditional and social life. They are intermarital groups that existed long ago. These networks have special roles during conflicts. Specifically, the networks comprise of women who are intermarried and their children (*Payaasi* and *Isi* networks). So, during conflicts between her husband's community and the father's community, the women and her children are traditionally considered not to pose any threat to the women's family and community. This buffer zone or special traditional privilege positioned these networks very crucial in peace negotiation and hamartian support.

During conflicts, these networks or groups act as the local "humanitarian aid" supplying food and other aids to victims. The study revealed that this was very important during the conflict in supplying food and medical aid to the wounded, elderly and vulnerable in the community. One participant narrated how these networks helped her father from dying *"the payaasis and Isi group actually helped a lot, my father was wounded, and the leg was so bad he could not walk, when I contacted the group, they came with a nurse to treat him. During the treatment the advised my father not to fight again after getting healed. So, after he was able to walk, he left the community and did not take part in the fight again (Field interview, July 2024).*

This revelation in the study was a keen moment because, this meant that the *Payaasi* networks were not only offering humanitarian aids. They leveraged on this opportunity to serves as peace ambassadors.

The traditional laws governing the *payaasi* and *isi* freedom of movement in both fighting communities without been threatened or harmed shaped the roles played by these networks which was very crucial in peacebuilding.

Analysing this statement from the perspective of women agency, the actions of the women and their children showed innovations to leverage on any opportunity presented to

them to promote peace building. The skills of the women to effectively combine humanitarian work with peace advocacy made them a focal point of entry of any peace building process. Also, the separation and the designation of specific roles for women in the feminist perspective buttressed the argument that women should be given equal opportunities to showcase their agency (Sahin *et al.*, 2022).

This finding also affirmed the work of Tongeren, (2013) who asserted that, Wajir women in Kenya established Wajir Peace and Development Committee to help in peace-building efforts after the 1991 brutal conflict which claimed over 1200 lives. The study found that the formation of the *Payaasi* and *Isi* network aim, was not only to contribute to the speedy resolution of the Doba and Kandiga protracted conflict, but to provide an avenue for the resolution of conflicts at the household, community and intercommunity levels. Based on the objectives of the *Payaasi* and *Isi* network various traditional strategies and programmes including enskinment of peace queens and advocacy works were carried out to promote peace building (Jayasundara-Smits, 2022).

4.3.4 Enskinment of Peace Queens

As part of the efforts to reassert women's traditional roles in a modern era, the *Payaasi* groups lobbied their traditional authorities (chiefs, queen mothers and elders) to accept the idea of installing women peace queens (*Suma'asum Pog-naba*) in the communities to drive the peace process and to seek for a solution to the many conflicts and disputes in the area. Consequently, these *Pog-naduma* were enskinned and outdoored in the neighbouring communities of Doba and Kandiga (Yua, Sirigu, Mirigu, and Nabango). Their main task was to mobilise women within the communities to address conflicts ranging from petty conflicts to serious conflicts affecting the peace and development of the communities. This finding is connected to Moran (2007) who described how women movement in Liberia called Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace organized across ethnic and religious divides to call for cessation of fighting and an end to the Liberian second civil war. This tends to support the feminist and maternal agency of the *Grusi* women's skills, experience and capacity to organize these women movement to negotiate for peace (Hall, 2021).

The study also found that, the mobilization of the women resulted into the installation of the peace queens or peace ambassadors marked an era for the institutionalisation of the role of women in conflict resolution and peacebuilding leveraging on their traditionally entrenched roles as mothers, sisters, wives and peacemakers. An elderly interviewee showed

her appreciation for this initiative and how it could promote sustainable peace in the traditional settings without involving the military who sometimes abuse powers and maltreat innocent people. She recalled her memory of the collaboration men and women played during conflicts in the past. She lamented

“In past, men and women used to operate side-by-side in conflict resolution and peace building, but modern governance system has rubbed women of their participation in local governance including peace and conflict resolution.

When I was growing up in those day, the men used to be in-charge of the outer-courtyard (zinyore) whilst the women were in-charge of the inner-courtyard (zinzaka) in terms of decision-making. This process allowed for women to deal with their issues without interference from men although the process allowed for the consultation from both sides. But things have changed completely, men now do everything without consulting or engaging women. But now that we have these peace queens, I hope it would go a long way to restore the old traditional practice zinzaka for us to deal with our own affairs.” (Field Interview, July 2024).

These statements align with the feminist peace theory that emphasise on the recognition of women as agents of change not passive and natural peace markers (Hall, 2021). The actions of these women to lobby and negotiation for their right to be agents of peace and not mere participants illustrated women’s agency power. This contends in my view that women when given the opportunity will use their maternal agency power to navigate through the traditional structures to promote peace.

4.3.5 Sensitisation and Advocacy for Peace

Another critical role the Payaasi and Isi network played in conflict resolution was their advocacy for peace through sensitisation. These took the form of community sensitisation, leadership seminars, radio sensitisation, festivals of peace and culture, peace walks and moral wall paintings. It also involved stakeholder forums and community durbars facilitated by a women’s organisation in Sirigu (a neighbouring community of Doba and Kandiga); SWOPA. The women used these strategies to foster peaceful relations among the conflict communities of Doba and Kandiga. These programmes served as triggering processes for the intervention by the women. During these durbars, the women discussed the need to organise themselves to intervene in the ongoing conflicts and to prepare to deal with future conflicts. Testimonies from respondents indicate that it was during one of the stakeholder forums and leadership seminars that Kandiga and Doba Youth for the first time since the start of the conflict, sat

side-by-side to discuss issues relating to the conflict (see Fig. 4.1). This helped to dispel fears, build trust and foster friendly relations among them. This is in line with Abdulai and Ibrahim's (2017) report that women established peace groups and worked assiduously to bring rival factions together for dialogue, and to adopt tolerance, and non-violence as the strategies for the resolution of the conflict in Dagbon.

Figure 4.1 Kandiga and Doba youth co-chairing the youth group discussion session.



Source: Photo 2022, Sirigu

The *poyaasi* and *isi* groups (see Figure 4.2) were formed following the community sensitisation process and their leaders given training to equip them for the advocacy programmes and to explore areas of intervention in the Doba and Kandiga conflict.

Figure 4.2. *Payaasi* leadership training



Source: Photo SWOPA, 2022

After the training, the leaders to the *Payaasi* group were swiftly formed and trained Community Peace Volunteer (CPV) in their respective communities to facilitate peace education, resolve conflicts or report same for redress at the intercommunity network level. These CPVs formed the backbone of driven development process led by women through intermarital relations. The CPV and the *Payaasi* leadership also initiated weekly radio peace

advocacy programme (see figure 4.3) which according to the respondent were well patronised. Hence the agency of women to mobilize their families through dialogue for peace underlines the concept of “everyday peacebuilding” by (Vaittinen *et al.*, 2021).

Figure 4.3 Payaasi network on radio peace sensitization



Source: Photo Nabina Radio Navrongo 2022

Complementing radio and community sensitisation activities were the festivals of peace and culture (*suma'asum buure kibisi*) which involved traditional food fairs, cultural displays, indigenous music and dance. The respondents revealed how the festivals were able to bring the people of Doba and Kandiga together for the first time, in Kandiga when the women of Doba attended the Kandiga festival. One respondent described her experience in the following:

“I was thrilled to be the among the first from Doba to go to Kandiga for the first since the war started. Some of my friends were afraid, but I was confident that no one will harm me. While we were in Kandiga eating and partying, my husband called me many times, but I didn't notice the call because of the noise. When I finally returned his call, he was stricken with fear. Then, I told it was all joy and merry making. We danced with the Kandiga people, and it was all joy. That was when I knew that, this ugly war was over. I could feel the peace all over. On our way back, we sat in the bucket of the pick-truck and were singing at the top our voices. Indeed, we could hide our joy.” (Field Interview, July 2024).

The *Payaasi* and *Isi* groups equally carried out wall painting and murals depicting peace and prosperity. Traditionally, *Grusi* women are fond of making wall designs to decorate their building and to depict different meanings including peace. The use of the “peace art”

approach by the women left indelible marks on the walls of the buildings in the community reminding them of peace every time. This finding resonates with Bakut (2013) who nostalgically and polemically advocates for the incorporation of indigenous mechanisms that exemplify women’s participation in modern conflict and peace affairs at the family, community and national levels. Evidently, this wall painting or mural as a cultural or traditional mechanism referred to as “Cultural Diplomacy” (see Figure 4.4) exhibited by daughters of Doba married in Kandiga served as a reminder of the need for reconciliation and peace with fathers’ community.

Figure 4.4. Wall painting by Payaasi and Isi network



Source: photo Kandiga, 2022

4.3.6 Triggering and Facilitation of Resolution of the Conflict

One monumental event in the *Payaasi* and *Isi* activities was peace walks and appeals to the paramount chiefs within the area to take up the challenge of resolving the Doba and Kandiga conflict. The *Payaasi* groups led by the peace queens (*Suma'asum Pog-naba*) embarked on peace walks to their paramount chiefs to demand for the recognition of women’s traditional roles in conflict resolution and peace building in the area and to demand an immediate end to the

violent conflict between Doba and Kandiga and to initiate steps towards peaceful resolution of the conflict using enduring traditional mechanisms based on kinship relations.

A participant narrated; *“If you look at it, we are all one people. We speak the same language, we are from the same ancestor, so why should we kill one another because of land! And the funny thing about this war is that, after killing each other, we still must sit down and talk before the issue can be resolved. So, why waste time to fight knowing that it won’t solve the prob-lem? So, we organised peace walk to the chief’s palace to relay our concerns to him. Our colleagues from the other communities did same. So, with one voice, we were able to get the Paramount chiefs working in our favour. First the Paramount Chief of Sirigu, Nav-rongo, and then the rest followed them, with all the women working in the scenes and be-hind the scenes to deliver peace.”* (Field Interviews, July 2024).

Similarly, Issifu, (2015) asserts that, in the heat of the Guinea Bissau election violence in 2004, the army’s attempt to clamp down on protesters was halted by local women’s groups whose advocacy triggered a dialogue process and eventually a peaceful resolution of the impasse. This in brave action of the women showed their agency power to negotiate in peace building through a more diplomatic approach.

Figure 4.5 Payaasi groups on a walk to the Chief Palace



Source: photo 2022, Doba

4.4 Challenges affecting women participation in conflict resolution and peacebuilding among the Grusi

According to Weber (1946), in patriarchal communities the roles of women are defined and shaped by traditional and cultural settings. This system is mostly dominated by men in leadership positions who make decisions and laws which are binding on every member of the community. In such instances women are not able to make decisions that affect themselves. These caveats usually limit the opportunities of women to exercise the power of agency when it comes to women's voice within the patriarchal communities (Weber, 1963; Ari, 2024)

The study revealed various cultural, social and traditional barriers that prevent the full participation of women in conflict resolution and peace building within the *Grusi* people. As illustrated below, all the interviews revealed that women in Doba and Kandiga and its environs initiated the resolution and peacebuilding efforts in the protracted land dispute. However, certain cultural protocols which placed men at the forefront had to be observed during the final reconciliation process particularly the cleansing of the spilled blood of those who died during the conflict.

“Because we are women, they did not allow us to finish up what we started, they said because they are men and the head of our families, they are the ones to finish off from where we reached.”

This statement meant that in the *Grusi* tradition has limited the roles given to women in conflict resolution. This cultural stereotyping of women's efforts in peacebuilding have been thwarted by the constructed male-dominated society. Women are least recognised as peace mediators based on the gender roles assigned to them as vulnerable and caretakers at home (Hall, 2021). Hence in their bid to resolve any conflict they are faced with, these deep-rooted norms and assigned roles serve as barriers to them. Again, even when they strive to attain the right strategies to resolve the conflict, recognitions are not given to them, because men must lead or grant permission before they can execute their actions. Though the feminist theory suggests that participation of women in conflict resolution should not be defined by gender roles, the findings of this study suggest that women's independence is limited and may serve as a hindrance to their ability to take further initiatives that could lead to conflict resolution.

This intends to support Badmus (2009) and Puechguirbal (2010) who criticised the traditional patriarchal African system describing it as disempowering women through various discriminatory cultural practices emanating from the patriarchal essentialism.

The study also revealed that women were widely believed to be gossips who can easily be convinced to reveal any information to their husbands, children, parents, or siblings. This belief is exacerbated by the fact that many women in these communities are intermarried with men from rival groups. As a result, the men fear that due to the familial ties of such women to both sides of the conflict, they may invertedly or deliberately reveal plans to the opposing side. This belief in my opinion is not entirely true because leaking this information could result in early warnings and responses which will prevent the escalation of conflicts. This was expressed by one participant during the FGDs,

“Culturally they believe that women are gossips or can easily be convinced to give out information especially to their husbands, children, parents and siblings. And since most of us are intermarried from the rivalry community the men fear women will leak their plans, so women are excluded from conflicts issues” (Field interview July 2024)

This perception leads to the systematic exclusion of women from any form of conflict related discussions or negotiations. The cultural stereotype of women as untrustworthy informants is ingrained in patriarchal norms that marginalise women and delegitimize their ability to contribute to the peace processes (Hall, 2021). Women are seen not as potential mediators or problem solvers but as liabilities who may unintentionally prolong the conflict by sharing sensitive information. This belief denies women the

opportunity to engage meaningfully in conflict resolution, despite their proximity, knowledge and experience to the effects of the disputes (Hall, 2021).

Again, the cultural belief that menstruating women are unfit to participate in conflict resolution and peacebuilding processes or battlefield, presents another significant challenge to women's involvement in the Doba and Kandiga disputes resolution efforts. In Grusi traditional societies like Doba and Kandiga, menstruation is seen as a mark of impurity (bad luck) rendering women unsuitable for participation in discussion related to the conflict as confirmed by one interviewee below.

'Because women menstruate, we are classified unfit to participate in peace process or participate in the battlefield. July 2024'

This statement also denotes that, women who are menstruating are often excluded from conflict resolution and peacebuilding activities, including negotiations, decision-making processes, and supportive roles on the battlefield. This exclusion stems from patriarchal views that associate's menstruation with uncleanness, effectively disqualifying women from contributing to conflict resolution and peacebuilding processes. As a result, women are systematically barred from offering their insights, experiences, and solution to the conflict, further entrenching the idea that indigenous conflict resolution is a male-dominated activity which is tool for gender inequality (Hall, 2021).

Chapter 5 Summary, Conclusion and Recommendation

5.1 Summary

In summary of this study, the researcher explored the feminist peace theory, maternal and women agency to unpack the discourse of women's participation in indigenous conflict resolution peacebuilding using the experience of the Grusi women to achieve the following objectives.

Firstly, the paper assessed the traditional roles and responsibilities of women in conflict resolution and peacebuilding among *Grusi* communities. The study found that, Grusi women use traditional strategies such as mothers, sisters (Payaasi network) to advocate for peace during the conflict. They also leverage on their intermarital status known as dual loyalty from the husband home and from the father's community to act as peace mediators. This was because during the conflict, these women had access to the feuding parties to appeal for calm since they had ties to both parties.

The second objective of the study examined the strategies women employed in peacebuilding and conflict resolution using their traditional structures. Under this, the study found that, women used prayer and negotiations to appeal for calm during the conflict through pouring libations, church prayers and Mosques. The finding also revealed that, women used their bodies to form shields to prevent the men from fighting. They also perform traditional rituals of spreading ashes which signified the boundary of peace lines during conflicts.

The final objective of the study delved into the challenges and barriers associated with women's roles in conflict resolution. Under this, the study found that, the major challenges and barriers hindering the participation of women in conflict resolution and peacebuilding were embedded in their cultural practices. For instance, gender roles assigned to men and women were defined and shaped by traditional structured placing men as the head and decision makers. The study found, in the traditional system women are only recognised as caregivers, although on many occasion women rose to the occasion to challenge themselves and took actions through their power of agency. This concept of recognising and limiting the role of women in conflict resolution to mere caregiving, nurturing or mediators rather than recognising women's agency or actors of change is contrary to the logic of maternal agency. The concept of maternal agency focused on the recognition of the full potentials of women in peace building through their skills, capacity, experience and knowledge and actors of change.

5.2 Conclusion

In conclusion, based on the analyses used the feminist theory that intersect with the Logic of maternal and women agency to explain the significant roles of women in peace building leveraging their power and not the convectional assumption that women are mere victims of conflict when given the equal opportunities. The findings of the study affirmed this position that forming human shield and spreading of ashes symbolises the physical barricades against the perpetuation and escalation of violence. These actions also highlighted the feminist view of the embodiment power in peace building. For example, the spreading of the ashes usually signifies a boundary of peace leveraging the cultural roles of women as nurturers to symbolises peace meditation.

This implies that, a sign of civil disobedience and resistance by the women to influence the decision of the men. It also showed how passionate and willing women can put their lives in the line of war to promote peace justifying the theory that women are peace makers. This crucial traditional ritual activity of the spreading of ashes resonates with the feminist theory which signifies peace borders. It showed that peace can be attained if the beliefs of the people are understood and place women at the centre of the decision-making body. For example, in the case of this study, the people of Grusi belief that the ashes served as a linkage between them and the gods and once they belief the gods are protecting them in wars, they will never defy that belief. It also emphasis the fact that peace building transcends political negotiations but also involves cultural deep-rooted practices within the communities.

Another theory the study engaged in the analysis was the agency power of women in their role in conflict resolution and peace building which focused on the ability of women to navigate the constraints of systemic traditional structures deploying or leveraging on their cultural knowledge to promote peace. The findings in the studies confirmed the agency of women to mediate peace through the cultural dynamic structures. For instance, the threat of denial of childbirth by women to their husbands shows their capacity to use their agency power to bargain with men in their decisions making. In my view it is worth noting that women knowing the vulnerability of men when it comes to sex and childbirth in their bid capitalised on the men weakness and succeeded in using their bodies. Also, the negotiations between women and their sons and husbands reinforces the concept that women's power of negotiations rescinds around their inner circles to influence household decisions. The agency

power of women to mobilize their families through dialogue for peace underlines the concept of “everyday peacebuilding”.

This finding reflects my opinion that mothers negotiate by putting her life online, women try to take minimum risk and because of their love and the role as the bond of the family they try to influence the family decisions on risk. The study showed that women play very important roles in conflict resolution using their unique culturally embedded and social roles through their effective exercise of their agency power.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on my findings, I proposed several recommendations to effectively address the barriers or challenges women face in participating in indigenous conflict resolution and peacebuilding among Grusi patriarchal communities. First, there is a need for traditional institutions to reevaluate its patriarchal structures to promote gender equality of women and men to ensure inclusivity. Women contribution to indigenous conflict resolution and peacebuilding should be recognised

Second, there should be a capacity building and training programs organised for Grusi women to enhance their conflict management skills. This training programs should emphasize on leadership, mediation and negotiation skills as well as providing access to resources, legal support thereby empowering a more capable and resilient peacebuilding community.

Finally, in order to preserve and modify traditional methods, it is essential to encourage older women and younger women to share information across generations in indigenous dispute resolution. Mentorship programs can be instituted by the communities to help foster this dialogue, encourage both creativity and adherence to traditional peacebuilding.

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Appendix 1 Research questionnaire

Name of interviewer.....

Name of interviewee.....

Code.....

Area code.....

Date.....

Introduction

My name is Roland Akwara, I am a student at the International Institute of Social Studies (ISS) currently pursuing an MA in Development Studies (Major: Social Justice Perspectives). I am conducting research in fulfillment of my program, focusing on the role of women in conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Northern Ghana.

The study is for academic purpose only and your responses will be kept strictly confidential, and you have the right to discontinue the interview at any time. Please feel comfortable answering the questions, and do not hesitate to ask for clarification if anything is unclear.

Section 1: Biographical and Demographic Data

1. Gender:

Male Female Other

2. Age:

18-25 26-35 36-45 46-55 6 and above

3. Educational Level:

No formal education Primary education Secondary education
 Vocational Tertiary education

4. Position in community:

Chief Queen mother Elder Member Others (Please specify)

5. Occupation:

Farmer Trader Teacher Civil servant
 Unemployed Other (please specify)

6. Marital Status:

Single Married Divorced Widowed

7. Ethnic Group:

Nankani Kasena Kusasi Balsa
 Mamprusi Bimoba Other (please specify)

8. Religious Affiliation:

- Christianity Islam Traditional religion
 Other (please specify)

Section 2: Role of Women in Conflict Resolution

8. **Have you ever been involved in any conflict resolution activities in your community?**

- Yes
 No

If yes how.....

9. **Do you believe women play a significant role in conflict resolution in your community?**

- Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree
 Strongly disagree.

10. **How often do women participate in conflict resolution activities in your community?**

- Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never

11. **In your opinion, how effective are women in resolving conflicts compared to men?**

- Much more effective More effective Equally effective
 Less effective Much less effective

12. **Are women given leadership roles in conflict resolution committees or groups in your community?**

- Yes
 No

If yes what roles.....

13. **What kind of support do women receive from the community in their conflict resolution efforts?**

- Strong support Moderate support Little support No support.

14. **Do you think women face any barriers in participating in conflict resolution?**

- Yes
 No

15. **Do women in your community receive any training for conflict resolution?**

- Yes
 No

Why or what kind of training?....

16. **How do you rate the overall impact of women's involvement in conflict resolution on community peace and stability?**

Very high High Moderate Low Very low

17. **Would you support more women being involved in conflict resolution activities in your community?**

Strongly support Support Neutral Oppose Strongly oppose.

18. **Do you think involving more women in conflict resolution could lead to more sustainable peace in your community?**

Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree.

Why.....

19. **Have you observed any positive changes in the community due to women's involvement in conflict resolution?**

Yes
 No

If yes what are the changes

Research Interview Guide

Introduction

1. Introduce myself and explain the purpose of the study.

2. Assure confidentiality and obtain informed consent.
3. Explain the structure of the interview and its duration. (30-60minutes)

Interview Questions

Question 1: What are the Specific Contributions of Women to conflict resolution?

1. What instances (period or stages of the conflict resolution) were women involved in resolving the conflicts between Doba and Kandiga areas?
 - Follow-up: What actions did they take?
 - Follow-up: What were the outcomes of these actions?
2. In what ways have women been involved in peacebuilding efforts in these conflicts?
 - Follow-up: Can you provide examples of peacebuilding activities led by women?
 - Follow-up: How successful were these activities?
3. What unique contributions do women bring to the resolution and peacebuilding processes?
 - Follow-up: How do these contributions differ from those of men?

Question 2: What are the Socio-cultural Norms and Gender Dynamics in conflict resolutions?

4. What are the prevailing socio-cultural norms regarding the roles of women in your community?
 - Follow-up: How do these norms affect women's participation in conflict resolution?
5. How do gender dynamics influence the involvement of women in peacebuilding processes?
 - Follow-up: Are there any specific challenges that women face due to these dynamics?
6. Have there been any changes in these norms and dynamics over time?
 - Follow-up: What factors contributed to these changes?

Question 3: What are the Strategies and Approaches women employ in conflict resolution?

7. **What strategies have women-led initiatives employed to address conflicts in Doba and Kandiga?**
 - Follow-up: Which strategies have been most effective?
8. **Can you describe any specific approaches that have promoted reconciliation?**
 - Follow-up: How were these approaches received by the community?
9. **What obstacles have women-led initiatives faced, and how have they overcome them?**
 - Follow-up: Can you provide examples?

Question 4: How do Traditional Authorities Support or Hinder women participation in conflict resolutions?

10. How have traditional authorities responded to women's involvement in conflict resolution?
 - Follow-up: Can you provide specific examples of support or hindrance?
11. In what ways do traditional authorities either facilitate or obstruct women's participation?
 - Follow-up: What are the reasons behind their support or opposition?
12. Have there been any efforts by traditional authorities to integrate women more into these processes?
 - Follow-up: Can you describe these efforts?

Question 5: what are the Traditional and cultural structures (norms and values) that challenge the inclusive participation of women in conflict resolution? What are some of the traditional and cultural norms in Ghana that define the roles of men and women?

1. How do these norms influence the participation of women in public decision-making processes?
2. Are there specific cultural values that support or hinder women's involvement in conflict resolution? Can you provide examples?
3. How do these norms influence the participation of women in public decision-making processes?
4. What strategies do you think could be effective in overcoming the traditional and cultural barriers that women face in conflict resolution?

Focus Group Discussion (FGD) Guide Discussion Questions

1. What specific roles have women played in resolving conflicts in Doba and Kandiga?
 - Follow-up: Can you share any personal experiences or observations?

2. How do socio-cultural norms influence women's participation in conflict resolution and peacebuilding?
 - Follow-up: Are these norms changing, and if so, how?
3. What strategies have been effective in women-led peacebuilding initiatives?
 - Follow-up: What obstacles have these initiatives encountered?
4. How do traditional authorities impact women's involvement in conflict resolution?
 - Follow-up: Can you discuss specific instances of support or hindrance from these authorities?
5. What lessons have been learned from women's participation in conflict resolution in Gurune culture?
 - Follow-up: How can these lessons be applied to enhance peacebuilding efforts in other regions?
6. What recommendations would you make to promote gender-sensitive peacebuilding initiatives?
 - Follow-up: What specific actions should be taken by the community and policymakers?
7. How can the community further support the meaningful participation of women in conflict resolution and peacebuilding?
 - Follow-up: What role can education, training, and policy changes play in this?

Appendix 2 Ethical approval

ISS Research Ethics Review Form for RP research carried out by MA students¹

Aim:

This Form aims to help you identify research ethics issues which may come up in the design and delivery of your Research Paper (RP). It builds on the session on Research Ethics session in course 3105 and subsequent discussions with your peers and RP supervisor/reader. We hope the form encourages you to reflect on the ethics issues which may arise.

The process:

The Ethics Review process consists of answering questions in the following two checklists: B1-Low-sensitivity and B2-High-sensitivity. Depending on the answer to these questions you might need to fill section **C-Statement of Research Ethics** too.

The background document "ISS Research Ethics Guidelines for MA Students" provides advice and detailed information on how to complete this form.

Step 1 - Fill checklists B1 and B2

Step 2 - After answering checklists B1 and B2, the process proceeds as follows:

- **If you answer 'yes' to one or more low-sensitivity questions (checklist B1):** please discuss the issues raised with your supervisor and include an overview of the risks, and actions you can take to mitigate them, in the final design of your RP. You can refer to the ISS Research Ethics Guidelines for MA Students for help with this.
- **If you answer 'yes' to one or more high-sensitivity questions (checklist B2),** please complete section 'C' of the form below describing the risks you have identified and how you plan to mitigate against them. Discuss the material with your supervisor, in most cases the supervisor will provide approval for you to go ahead with your research and attach this form to the RP design when you upload it in canvas. If, after consultation with your supervisor, it is felt that additional reflection is needed, please submit this form (sections B1, B2, and C) to the Research Ethics Committee (REC) for review as follows:

When submitting your form to the REC, please send the following to researchethics@iss.nl:

- 1) the completed checklists B1 and B2 (or equivalent if dealing with an external ethics requirement)
- 2) the completed form C 'Statement of Research Ethics'
- 3) a copy of the RP design
- 4) any accompanying documentation, for example, consent forms, Data Management Plans (DMP), ethics clearances from other institutions.

Your application will be reviewed by a reviewer who is not part of your supervisory team. The REC aims to respond to ethics approval requests within a period of 15 working days.

Step 3 - Integrating the Ethics Review process into the RP:

- This Ethics Review Form needs to be added as an annex in your final RP Design document to be uploaded in the Canvas page for course 3105.

¹ This checklist and statement is adapted from the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) Research Ethics Committee and informed by the checklists of two Ethics Review Boards at EUR (ESHCC and ERIM) and the [EU H2020 Guidance – How to complete your ethics self-assessment](#).

ISS Research Ethics Review Form - MA Research
Project details, Checklists, and Approval Status

A) Project/Proposal details

1. Project/Proposal Title	The Role of Women in Ethnic Conflict Resolution in the Upper East region of Ghana
2. Name of MA student (applicant)	Roland Atogumdeya Akwara
3. Email address of MA student	684493ra@eur.nl
4. Name of Supervisor	Dr. Bilge Sahin
5. Email address of Supervisor	sahin@iss.nl
6. Country/countries where research will take place	Ghana
7. Short description of the proposed research and the context in which it is carried out:	
<p>The research aims to emphasize the vital role of women in solving ethnic conflict and their unofficial contribution to these processes in the Upper East region of Ghana. It will also investigate the barriers that hinder women's inclusion in traditional conflicts resolution methods and explore ways that can address these issues, based on gaps identified in existing literature. By acknowledging and supporting women's contributions, their potential to promote lasting peace and sustainability can fully be realized. Women's unique perspective and approaches can complement traditional and formal conflict resolution mechanisms, leading to a more inclusive and sustainable peacebuilding efforts in the region.</p>	

B) Research checklist

The following checklist acts as a guide to help you think through what areas of research ethics you may need to address. For explanations and guidance please refer to the background document 'ISS Research Ethics Guidelines for MA students'. Please complete both sections (B1 and B2)

<i>Please tick the appropriate box</i>	YES	NO
B1: LOW-SENSITIVITY		
1. Does the research involve the collection and or processing of (primary or secondary) personal data (including personal data in the public domain)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2. Does the research involve participants from whom voluntary informed consent needs to be sought?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
3. Will financial or material incentives (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
4. Will the research require the co-operation of a gatekeeper for access to the groups, communities or individuals to be recruited (e.g., administrator for a private Facebook group, manager of an institutions, government official)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
5. Does the research include benefit-sharing measures for research which takes place with people who could be considered vulnerable? – please revise the background document (Guidelines) for more information.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

If you have ticked 'yes' to any of the above boxes (1-5), please discuss with your supervisor and include more information in your RP design describing the issue raised and how you propose to deal with it during your research.

ISS Research Ethics Review Form - MA Research

B2: HIGH SENSITIVITY	YES	NO
6. Does the research involve the collection or processing of <i>sensitive</i> (primary or secondary) personal data? (e.g. regarding racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade union membership, biometric data, data related to health or a person's sex life or sexual orientation)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Does the research involve participants for whom voluntary and informed consent may require special attention or who can be considered 'vulnerable'? (e.g., children (under 18), people with learning disabilities, undocumented migrants, patients, prisoners)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
8. Will it be necessary for participants to take part in the research without their knowledge and consent (covert observation of people in non-public places)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
9. Will the research be conducted in healthcare institutions, in healthcare settings, or will it involve the recruitment or study of patients or healthcare personnel?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
10. Could the research induce psychological stress or anxiety or cause harm or negative consequences for research participants, researchers, or persons and institutions connected to them?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Could the situation in one or several of the countries where research is carried out put the researcher, individuals taking part in the research, or individuals connected to the researcher, at risk? Presence of an infectious disease such as COVID-19 is considered a risk – please provide information as outlined in the background document (Guidelines).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
12. Does the research require ethical approval or research permission from a local institution or body?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

If you have ticked 'Yes' to one of the above (5-11), please complete section 'C' below describing how you propose to mitigate the risks you have identified. After discussion with your supervisor, please submit the form to the Research Ethics Committee. In addition, if you have ticked 'Yes' to a question on any kind of personal data, please also complete the privacy questionnaire.

ISS Research Ethics Review Form - MA Research

YOU ONLY NEED TO COMPLETE THIS SECTION IF YOU HAVE ANSWERED YES TO ONE OF THE QUESTIONS IN SECTION B2 ABOVE (Questions 5-11)

C) Statement of Research Ethics

Using the background document 'ISS Research Ethics Guidelines for MA students', please address how you are going to deal with the ethics concern identified, including prevention measure to avoid them from manifesting, mitigation strategies to reduce their impact, and preparedness and contingency planning if the risks manifest.

Please number each point to correspond with the relevant checklist question above. Expand this section as needed and add any additional documentation which might not be included in your RP design, such as consent forms.

[TO BE COMPLETED BY MA STUDENT AND DISCUSSED WITH THE SUPERVISOR. IF THE SUPERVISOR FINDS IT NECESSARY TO SEEK FURTHER REVIEW, THE STUDENT MUST SUBMIT THE FORM TO THE RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE]

6. One of my challenges in gathering data will be that, because the conflicts are inter-ethnic origin, participants may fear discrimination and have had negative experiences in the past. They also be afraid of me being a representative of an investigative agent, making them apprehensive about engaging me in discussions. To address this, I will incorporate measures to ensure a safe and inclusive environment for participants. I will maintain strict confidentiality, using anonymous data collection methods, and fostering a non-judgemental atmosphere during discussions. Also, I will implement culturally sensitive approaches and involve community leaders to build trust and encourage open, honest communication. By engaging their leaders, I provide clear information about the research's purpose and ensuring voluntary participation can further alleviate participants concerns and enhance their willingness to contribute effectively.

10. Another focus of my research will be the potential stress or trauma to my participants. This is because, participants or family members who has been victims of conflicts will talk about it and remember incidence of the victims or experiences they went through. So this might have an effect on them. In order to mitigate this, I will make sure participants who are related to victims are not asked sensitive questions related to conflicts, they will be only ask about roles that women can play, the challenges that women faced in resolving conflicts. I will provide a counselor and refer those affected to the professional for counselling. Also, I will make sure to pre-discuss the question with them before I will make an appointment with them to give them a review on how the question will look like, so that people who think they might not feel comfortable in discussing those questions, they are omitted or removed and replaced for that interview. Finally, adhere to the research ethics and prioritize their confidentiality and anonymity.

Approved by Bilge Sahin



19.06.2024

D) Approval from Research Ethics Committee

*To be completed by the Research Ethics Committee only if

Approved by Research Ethics Committee: _____ Date: _____

Additional comments for consideration from Research Ethics Committee:

If the REC needs more information before approving, the REC secretary will be in touch with the MA student. If after requesting more information the REC still has concerns, the REC secretary will ask the supervisor to discuss these with the student. In the unlikely event that there is still no resolution, the REC will refer the application to the Institute Board.