BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

The Role of Traditional Leaders in A Conflict Resolution in Zimbabwe. A Case Study of Guruve Rural District.

BY

Irene Mbangana (B222426B)

Supervisor: DR T. Katsinde

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Abstract

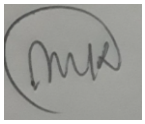
This dissertation examined the role of Traditional Leaders (TL) in conflict resolution in Zimbabwe, case study of Guruve rural district. The study particularly focused on family elders, village heads and chief. The study sought to assess how these tradition leaders contribute to resolving conflicts and the effectiveness of their methods. The study was guided by conflict transformation theory and the Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) theory to provide a framework for understanding the roles of traditional leaders in resolving conflicts. The study adopted both qualitative and quantitative research within a case study research design. The qualitative approach enabled the researcher to gain in-depth understanding of participants' experience, perceptions and views regarding traditional conflict resolution mechanisms, while the quantitative approach provided measurable data on the prevalence and effectiveness of these mechanisms. Data was collected from 50 respondents through questionnaires and 6 respondents through semi structure interviews. The targeted population included community members, village heads and chiefs. Data was descriptive explanations, tables and graphs. The findings revealed that Traditional Leaders (TL) play a significant role in resolving family disputes, land conflicts, inheritance disputes, domestic violence cases and other community disagreements. The study established that traditional conflict resolution mechanisms are widely respected because they are culturally accepted, promote community values and norms, and promote reconciliation and restoration of relationships rather than punishment. The study concluded that traditional leaders remain important in promoting peace, justice and social stability in rural Zimbabwe. by advocating for a hybrid model that recognized and empowered Traditional Leaders within the broader national peace building and governance architecture in Zimbabwe.

Declaration Form

I, B222426B declare that this dissertation titled Roles of Traditional Leaders in Conflict Resolution in Zimbabwe. A case of Guruve district is my own original work and all sources of information used in this dissertation have been acknowledged and properly referenced according to academic standards.

Student:  Date: 13/08/2026

Supervisor:  Date: 25/08/26

Chairperson:  Date:02/09/2026

Dedication

This work is dedicated to my parents who were supporting me especially my mother she has been my pillar of strength. And also my uncle and auntie (Mr and Mrs Marusho) without them I would not have come this far. They had been helping me financially and emotionally.

Acknowlements

I would like to acknowledge my parents and my uncle and auntie for making this study be worked on and be finished. I also express my gratitude to my supervisor with his guidance since day one till this study was done despite him having busy schedule he was willing to help me through it.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

BUSE…… Bindura University of Science Education

IKS…… Indigenous Knowledge System

CR……. Conflict Resolution

TL……. Traditional Leaders

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

Conflict is an inherent aspect of human interaction and manifests at various levels interpersonal, communal, national, and even international. Traditional leaders offer culturally rooted mechanisms that have historically supported peaceful coexistence and communal harmony, especially in African contexts (Chigwata, 2016). In Zimbabwe, indigenous approaches to conflict resolution remain deeply embedded in rural and peri-urban communities. These systems rely on traditional authorities starting from the family leaders going to the village heads then lastly to the chiefs and they mediate conflicts through dialogue, reconciliation, and restorative practices (Mashingaidze, 2013).

Before colonialism, Zimbabwean societies resolved disputes through customary law, which was largely unwritten but understood and practiced within the cultural norms of various ethnic groups, particularly the Shona and Ndebele (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009). Conflict resolution was not solely about punishment, but about restoring relationships, maintaining social order, and reintegrating offenders into the community. Mechanisms included the payment of compensation (kuripa ngozi), public apologies, storytelling, and ritual ceremonies designed to bring closure and reconciliation (Mangena & Chavunduka, 2019). These practices emphasized communal consensus, respect for elders, and the prioritization of collective over individual interests.

Colonialism disrupted and devalued these indigenous systems by introducing Western legal institutions that centralized authority and organised laws in ways foreign to local

traditions. The colonial state systematically undermined the legitimacy of traditional leadership and marginalized indigenous dispute resolution mechanisms (Ranger, 1983). This trend continued into post-independence Zimbabwe, where the formal legal system largely inherited from the colonial administration coexists uneasily with customary practices. Despite constitutional recognition of customary law and traditional leadership structures, indigenous systems often receive limited institutional support and are sometimes viewed as out-dated or incompatible with human rights norms (Chuma, 2020).

Nevertheless, traditional leaders have persisted and, in many rural parts of Zimbabwe, remain the primary mode of conflict resolution in this case of Guruve in particular. This is particularly true in areas where formal legal institutions are perceived as inaccessible, expensive, disconnected from local realities or culturaly disconnected (Matereke, 2010). traditional leaders offer more accessible, culturally relevant, and often more trusted alternatives to state-based legal systems. They also support peace building through local ownership of conflict resolution processes and alignment with community values (Murithi, 2006). For example, traditional leaders often resolve disputes over land, inheritance, marriage, and interpersonal grievances through deliberative forums such as dare (community court), which emphasizes restoration rather than retribution (Mawere, 2010).

This dissertation aims to examine the role of traditional leaders in conflict resolution in Zimbabwe by exploring their historical foundations and current practices. It will analyse the roles played by traditional authorities, community perceptions of indigenous justice, and the challenges posed by legal pluralism, globalization, and political interference. Understanding and strengthening traditional leaders could contribute to more culturally appropriate, inclusive, and sustainable conflict resolution mechanisms, especially in under-served and marginalized communities.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Despite the existence of formal legal and judicial system in Zimbabwe, many communities particularly in rural areas continues to rely on traditional leaders for resolving conflicts. These traditional mechanisms are often more accessible, culturally relevant and trusted than state led legal processes. However, the role and effectiveness of traditional leaders in contemporary conflict resolution remain under-researched and under-recognised in both academic and policy circles. This has led to a gap in understanding how these systems function in practice and what challenges or opportunities they present in promoting sustainable peace. Therefore, there is a critical need to examine the contributions of traditional leaders to conflict resolution in Zimbabwe.

1.3 Aim

The aim of the study is to analyse the roles of traditional leaders in conflict resolution in Zimbabwe.

1.4 Research Objectives

a. To analyse the role of family leaders in solving family conflicts or issues.
b. To assess the role of village heads in solving conflict at family levels, interpersonal and inter-community levels conflicts.
c. To assess the role of chiefs in conflict resolution which is the final stage when solving conflicts

1.5 Research questions

a. What are the roles of family leaders in solving family conflicts or issues?

b. What are the roles of village heads in solving conflicts at family levels, interpersonal level and inter-community levels conflicts
c. What is the role of chiefs in solving conflicts at all levels either family level, interpersonal level and inter-community level as the final stage in solving conflicts.

1.6 Assumptions of the study

It is assumed that traditional leaders are still actively practicing and being trusted by communities in Zimbabwe for resolving conflicts.

This assumption is based on previous research indicating that traditional conflict resolution mechanisms remain relevant, especially in rural areas where formal legal institutions may be inaccessible or culturally disconnected (Mashingaidze, 2013; Mawere, 2010). These systems are often valued for their restorative nature, community involvement, and emphasis on social harmony.

According to Chigwata, 2026 it is assumed that participants including traditional leaders, community members, and legal practitioners will provide honest and accurate information about their experiences and perceptions of conflict resolution practices.

This assumption underpins the qualitative design of the study and is consistent with the principle that rich, in-depth data relies on the openness and trustworthiness of participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). It is expected that ethical safeguards, such as informed consent and confidentiality, will help foster honest responses.

1.7 Significance of study

This study is significant because it contributes to the growing recognition of traditional leaders as legitimate and effective mechanisms for conflict resolution, particularly in post-colonial African societies such as Zimbabwe. While formal legal systems remain dominant,

they are often inaccessible to marginalized populations due to economic, linguistic, and cultural barriers (Chigwata, 2016). In contrast, traditional leaders are rooted in local customs and values, prioritize restorative justice, and promote communal harmony (Mangena & Chavunduka, 2019). This research provides a deeper understanding of how indigenous methods operate in practice, thereby addressing a critical gap in literature where African conflict resolution models are often under-researched or dismissed as informal or out dated (Shizha & Makuvaza, 2017).

The study holds importance for multiple stakeholders. Policymakers and legal reformers can use its findings to explore how traditional justice systems can be integrated into national peace building strategies in ways that are culturally appropriate and sustainable. For traditional leaders and communities, the research affirms the value of their practices and offers a platform for greater recognition within state structures. Peace building practitioners and NGOs working in rural Zimbabwe may also benefit from evidence-based insights to design more effective and inclusive interventions. Government ministries such as Ministry of local government and rural development may use the findings to strengthen traditional leadership systems and community governance. Courts and legal practitioners also benefits from the findings of the study. The judicial and legal professionals may beefits by understanding how traditional justices systems complement formal courts in resolving minor disputes. Academically, this study contributes to the fields of legal pluralism, conflict transformation, and indigenous studies, providing a model that can be applied in other African contexts experiencing similar legal dualism (Murithi, 2006; Mawere, 2010). Ultimately, by acknowledging and elevating indigenous approaches, the study promotes more inclusive justice systems that reflect the lived realities of Zimbabwean communities.

1.8 Delimitations of the study

This study is delimited to selected rural community in Zimbabwe which is Guruve Rural District in Mashonaland central province and indigenous knowledge system is being practised in conflict resolution. The research focuses specifically on roles played by traditional leaders such as family leaders, village heads and chiefs in resolving conflict within the district. The research is limited to selected communities in Guruve and targets traditional leaders and community members with knowledge and experience in traditional conflict resolution practices. The research is limited to interpersonal conflicts, family disputes, land disagreements, and community-level conflicts, excluding or not covering large-scale political or armed conflicts. The study is further delimited to the period during which the research is being conducted and therefore may not cover changes that may occur after the completion of the research. Furthermore, the study focuses on a customary and traditional approaches to conflict resolution and does not extensively examine formal court systems or mode legal procedures used outside traditional leadership structures. Additionally, the study uses a qualitative approach, relying on questionnaires, focus groups discussions, and document analysis if they are accessible and does not include quantitative measurement of conflict outcomes. These choices were made to allow for an in-depth, culturally grounded exploration of indigenous practices within manageable geographic and thematic boundaries.

1.9 Limitations of the study

One limitation of this study is its reliance on qualitative data which, while rich in depth, may not be generalizable to all communities in Zimbabwe. The study is also limited by the potential for respondent bias, as participant especially traditional leaders may present idealized versions of traditional leaders to protect cultural pride or legitimacy. Language

and translation challenges may also affect the accuracy of data interpretation, as some indigenous terms and concepts related to conflict resolution may not have direct English equivalents. And also access to certain communities or sensitive conflict cases may be restricted, limiting the scope of fieldwork. There are measures taken in dealing with the limitations for the research to be successful. Accessibility challenges were addressed by arranging appointment with respondents in advance. The researcher arranged the appointment with the chief in advance and was given a day to come. To address respondents' fear and unwillingness to provide information, the researcher assured participants of confidentiality and anonymity. Respondents were informed that te information gathers would be used strictly for academic purposes only. This help build trust and encourage honest responses. Language barriers were minimized by using local languages during interviews where necessary. The researcher also translate responses carefully to maintain the original meaning of the information provided by participants.

1.10 Definition of key terms

Traditional leaders refers to the cumulative, community based knowledge, practices and beliefs developed by local people over generations often transmitted orally and rooted in cultural traditions, spirituality and environment relationships (Shizha, E., & Makuvaza, N. 2017).

Conflict resolution is the process of addressing and managing disputes or disagreements between individual or groups in a manner that promotes peaceful outcomes and restores relationships. It may include negation, mediation, reconciliation and other problem solving strategies (Deutsch, M., Coleman, P. T., & Marcus, E. C., 2014). Merry, S. E. (1988).

Legal pluralism refers to the coexistence of multiple legal system within a given society or geographical area, including formal state law, customary law and religious law each with its own norms, institutions and enforcement mechanisms.

According to Chigwata, T. C. (2016) customary law is the body of unwritten norms, rules, and practices that are accepted as binding by a particular community often enforced by traditional authorities such as chiefs or elders. It is deeply rooted in local values and cultural traditions.

Traditional leadership refers to a system of governance rooted in indigenous authority structures, typically le by chiefs, headmen or elders who are entrusted with upholding customs, mediating conflicts and preserving communal order an identity (Logan, C. 2009).

11 Dissertation outline

Chapter One: Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the study. It introduces the background to the research problem, the statement of the problem, research questions, objectives, and the purpose of the study. It also includes the significance of the study, the scope and delimitations, limitations, assumptions, and a brief definition of key terms. The chapter sets the foundation for the research by outlining why the topic is relevant and what the study seeks to achieve.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This chapter critically reviews existing literature related to traditional leaders, conflict resolution. It examines both global and Zimbabwean contexts, identifying theoretical frameworks and key debates in the field. The chapter also highlights the research gap that

this study addresses. The theoretical or conceptual framework guiding the study is also presented here.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

Chapter Three outlines the research design, methodology, and data collection methods used in the study. It explains the qualitative approach (e.g., case study design), sampling techniques (e.g., purposive sampling), research instruments (e.g., questionnaires, focus groups), and procedures for data collection and analysis (e.g., thematic analysis). It also includes ethical considerations and how validity and reliability (or trustworthiness in qualitative research) is ensured.

Chapter Four: Data Presentation, Analysis, and Interpretation

This chapter presents the research findings based on the data collected from the field. It organizes responses thematically according to the research questions and objectives. The chapter provides direct quotes from participants where appropriate and analyses the findings in relation to the literature and conceptual framework discussed in Chapter Two. Interpretation of the results is provided to show how traditional leaders are practiced, perceived, and positioned within Zimbabwe's conflict resolution landscape.

Chapter Five: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The final chapter discusses the key findings of the study in detail, drawing connections between the empirical results and the research objectives. It presents the overall conclusions of the study and highlights the implications for policy, traditional leadership, and the justice sector. The chapter also provides practical recommendations for integrating traditional leaders into national peace building strategies. Suggestions for future research and final reflections conclude the dissertation.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, scholarly literature relevant to the role in conflict resolution used by traditional leaders in Zimbabwe and comparable to other countries or even globally was reviewed. This chapter presents the theoretical framework, literature review guided by the objectives and research gaps in the Role of traditional leaders in conflict resolution in Zimbabwe. It provides an overview of key theories underpinning the study such as conflict transformation theory and the indigenous knowledge systems theory as lenses for understanding how traditional institutions manage and transform conflicts. The chapter will also provide literature review guided by the objectives at three interrelated levels, the family, village head and chief in order to understand their effectiveness in maintaining peace and social cohesion within communities. The literature review then explores scholarly views of family leaders, village heads and chiefs in resolving different types of disputes. The chapter will then concludes by identifying existing research gaps demonstrating the need for this study to provide updated, context-specific insights into indigenous conflict resolution practices in Zimbabwe.

2.2 Theoretical framework.

The connection of traditional leaders and conflict resolution can be framed through two interrelated theories conflict transformation theory by Lederach, 1995 and the Indigenous Systems (IKS) theory by Hoppers, 2002. These theoretical frameworks provide a holistic understanding of how traditional leaders in Zimbabwe address conflict within their communities.

2.2.1 Conflict Transformation Theory

The first theory used to give a full explanation of the role of traditional leaders in conflict resolution is the conflict transformation theory. It was proposed by John Paul Lederach (1995). Ledarach emphasising was that, conflict should not only be resolved but should be transformed into an opportunity for positive change. This theory moves beyond immediate problem solving to focus on addressing the underlying social, cultural and relational structures that produce conflict. It aligns with traditional approaches in Zimbabwe, where conflict damaged relationships, not merely punishing offenders. Lederach's emphasis on rebuilding relationships resonates with the African philosophy of Ubuntu/hunhu which prioritizes collective wellbeing, empathy and interdependence (Murith, 2006; Murove, 2009).

2.2.2 Indigineous Knowledge System Theory

The other theory which was used is the indigenous knowledge system theory. This theory recognises local community based systems of knowledge as valid and essential for solving social problems (Hoppers, 2002). The Zimbabwean context, indigenous knowledge includes customs, rituals, oral traditions and taboos and it shapes how disputes are mediated by family heads, village leaders and chiefs. The theory emphasise that local wisdom is not static but dynamic, adapting to contemporary challenges while maintaining its cultural integrity (Mapara, 2013). Therefore, using these two theories jointly frame the study by explaining how traditional leaders use locally grounded practices to promote peace, social cohesion and justice in their communities.

2.2.3 The role of family leader.

Family elders serve as the first and most immediate level of conflict resolution in many African societies. They are responsible for addressing disputes within the family, including marital disagreements, inheritance issues, and conflicts between siblings. Their

authority is derived from age, experience, and cultural knowledge, which positions them as custodians of family values and traditions.

According to T. O. Elias (1956), most disputes in African societies begin and are often resolved at the family level before escalating to higher authorities. Family elders typically use mediation and negotiation techniques, bringing disputing parties together to discuss their grievances openly and seek mutually acceptable solutions.

When a problem arises in the family, the first step they take is to consult the family leaders before going anywhere they can take another step when the issues was not resolved. The family leaders or elders include parents, uncles, aunties and grandparents. They form the foundation of indigenous conflict resolution system in Zimbabwe. According to chigidi (2009) family elders rely on dialogue, counselling and moral persuasion to mediate conflicts such as marital misunderstandings, inheritance disputes or generational tensions. The approach they use or that guide them when solving the disputes includes cultural norms, emphasizing respect, reconciliation and restoration of family unity.

Mashingaidze (2015) notes that the involvement of family heads helps prevent disputes from escalating because early resolution maintains harmony and prevents extra intervention. In the Shona and Ndebele traditions family meetings (dare remhuri or indaba yomndeni) are used to air grievances openly and reach consensus. This process promotes social accountability and emotional healing (Nyathi, 2017). Despite challenges, family based conflict resolution remains central to traditional justice because it builds trust and strengthens kinship bonds.

One of the key strengths of family elders is their ability to preserve family unity. Their primary goal is not to assign blame but to restore relationships and maintain harmony within

the family. As noted by Kwasi Wiredu (1996), African conflict resolution emphasizes reconciliation and consensus, particularly within kinship structures.

However, the effectiveness of family elders may be limited by factors such as bias, especially when elders are closely related to the disputing parties. Additionally, their authority may not extend to complex or serious disputes, necessitating referral to higher levels such as village heads or chiefs.

2.2.4 The role of village heads.

Village heads occupy an intermediate position in the traditional leadership hierarchy, acting as a link between family elders and chiefs. They are responsible for resolving disputes that extend beyond individual families and affect the broader community.

Village heads commonly handle conflicts related to land boundaries, resource allocation, and interpersonal disputes among community members. Their proximity to the community allows them to understand local dynamics and address issues promptly. The United Nations Development Programme (2012) emphasizes the importance of local leaders in resolving land disputes, which are among the most common sources of conflict in rural areas.

Village heads are the second to be consulted when the conflict escalated to the extent that family leaders could not resolve the conflict, then the village heads (sabhuku) are consulted. Village heads are crucial intermediaries in local governance and conflict management. They handle disputes that go beyond the family level such as land boundaries, livestock theft and interpersonal conflicts. According to Nyathi (2017), village heads preside over community hearings (dare remusha) where disputants present their cases before elders and witness. These sessions are guided b fairness, dialogue and collective decision making.

Mapara (2013) and Maware (2014) argue that the effectiveness of village heads lies in their ability to draw upon communal consensus and moral authority rather than coercion. Village heads rulings emphasize reconciliation and compensation rather than punishment. As defenders of local custom, they maintain social cohesion and continuity of indigenous values. However, they also face challenges such as lack of formal legal recognition and external political interference (Mukamuri, 2017). Despite these constraints, village heads remain vital in ensuring that minor and interpersonal conflicts do not escalate to higher levels or disrupt community peace.

In performing their role, village heads rely heavily on mediation, dialogue, and consultation with elders. They ensure that all parties are heard and that decisions are made fairly. This participatory approach enhances the legitimacy and acceptance of their decisions.

Village heads also play a crucial role in referring cases to chiefs when necessary. Disputes that are complex, unresolved, or involve multiple families or villages are escalated to higher authorities. Despite their important role, village heads may face challenges such as limited authority and perceptions of bias.

2.2.5 The role of chiefs.

Chiefs represent the highest level of traditional authority in many African societies and play a central role in conflict resolution. They preside over customary courts and handle serious and complex disputes, including land conflicts, inheritance disputes, and inter-community disagreements.

According to H. W. O. Okoth-Ogendo (1991), traditional governance systems are hierarchical, with chiefs occupying the apex of authority. Chiefs derive their legitimacy from cultural traditions, community recognition, and customary law.

Chiefs (ishe or nkosi) this is the last stage of traditional conflict resolution. Chiefs serve as the highest level of traditional authority in conflict resolution within Zimbabwe's indigenous governance system. They oversee disputes referred from families and villages and preside over customary courts (dare). Chiefs play a dual role, they are both judicial figures and cultural custodians ensuring that justice is delivered in line with ancestral values and local traditions (Ncube, 2011).

Chironga (2015) notes that chiefs emphasize reconciliation and moral restoration through rituals compensation and community cleansing ceremonies. Chief's authority stems from ancestral lineage and community recognition granting them legitimacy I enforcing decisions. Bourdillon (1998) and Chavhunduka (1999) highlight that chiefs decision are respected because they are seen as aligning with the moral fabric of the community. However, modern challenges such as the Influence of statuary laws and the Traditional Leaders Act (1998) sometimes limit their jurisdiction and autonomy (Chigwata, 2016). Nonetheless their role I promoting restorative justice and maintain cultural continuity remains essential in Zimbabwe's rural conflict resolution landscape.

Chiefs also emphasize reconciliation and restoration of relationships. They encourage dialogue, forgiveness, and mutual understanding among disputing parties. In many cases, chiefs require compensation or restitution as a way of repairing harm and restoring social harmony. Furthermore, chiefs ensure peace and stability within their communities. The African Union (2014) recognizes traditional leaders as custodians of peace and key actors in local governance. Despite their importance, chiefs face challenges such as the influence of modern legal systems, changing societal values, and occasional perceptions of bias. In some cases, their decisions may be contested or referred to formal courts.

2.3 chapter summary

In summary, this chapter has outlined and explain the gaps that are there in the research. It explained the theories that this study used which are conflict transformation theory and indigenous knowledge system theory. It has also briefly explained the roles of all the protocols involved in the traditional conflict resolution. These protocols are, the family leader, village heads and chiefs.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN.

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology procedures that guided the study on the roles of Traditional leaders in conflict resolution in Zimbabwe case study of Guruve. The chapter also

describes the research design, study population and sample, sampling techniques or methods to be used, research instruments, of data collection methods, pilot testing/pretesting the questionnaire, ethical considerations. This study used qualitative research using questionnaires, interviews and it aims to show how the research was systematically conducted to generate valid, reliable and credible results.

3.2 Research approach

A research approach refers to overall strategy or plan you use to conduct your research. It is how you collect, analyse and interpret data in order to answer your research question. This study adopts a qualitative research approach to explore the role of traditional leaders in conflict resolution in Guruve rural district. The qualitative approach is appropriate because it allows for an in-depth understanding of social processes, cultural practices and community perspective. Data was collected through interviews and questionnaire enabling the researcher to capture to capture detailed experiences and views of participants. This approach is suitable for addressing the research objective, which focus for understanding. The study adopted qualitative research design because it I appropriate for this study since indigenous conflict resolution relies heavily on cultural norms, values, oral traditions and lived community experiences. The researcher chose qualitative research design because these elements cannot be captured through numerical or statistical measurements and also qualitative design allows detailed, descriptive and narrative data from participants who are directly involved in traditional conflict resolution processes (Kumar, R. 2019).

Mason, J. (2018), this study is descriptive in nature, meaning it sought to describe and explain the existing roles played by family leaders, village heads and chiefs without manipulating any social conditions. The design enabled the researcher to present an in-depth understanding of how Traditional Leaders functions within communities.

3.3 Research Design

Research design is the overall plan or structure that guides how your study is conducted. It explains how you will collect, measure and analyse data in orders to answer the research questions. There are many way to carry out a re and the researcher choses to use a case study. According to Robert K. Yin (2018), a case study is an empirical methods that investigate a contemporary phenomenon within its real-world setting. In this case Guruve Rural District in Mashonaland province is the case being studied. A case study allows collection of detailed and rich information, use different data collection methods such as interviews, questionnaire and observations, understand social, cultural and traditional practices in their natural setting, analyse a problem deeply rather than broadly. A case study focuses on a specific case or area, it provide detailed and in-depth information, it studies phenomena in their natural environment, it uses multiple methods of data collection, it is commonly used in social science research. The researcher chose to use a case study design because the study focused on in-depth investigation of the roles of traditional leaders in resolving conflicts within Guruve rural district. A case study design provided an opportunity to gather rich and detailed data using different methods such as interviews, questionnaires and observations. It also helped the researcher to understand social relationships, cultural beliefs, customs and traditional leadership structures involved in conflict resolution in Guruve District.

Furthermore, the cases study design was suitable because the research concentrated on one geographical area. By focusing on Guruve Rural District, the researcher was able to conduct a deeper analysis of the effectiveness and challenges of traditional conflict resolution systems.

Although the case study was chosen, there are also other research design that could have been used such as experimental research design. This used to test cause and effect relationships between variables under controlled conditions. It is commonly used in scientific studies and was not suitable for this research because the study focused on social and cultural issues.

Survey research design it involved collecting information from large population using questionnaires and interviews. It is mainly used to gather opinions and attitudes and views from many respondents.

Explanatory research design is used when little information is known about a topic. It helps researcher gain preliminary understanding of a phenomenon. However the researcher found the case study design to be most suitable because it allowed for a detailed and contextual analysis of traditional conflict resolution practices in Guruve rural district.

3.4 Target Population

The target population refers to the group o people from whom the researcher intends to collect data for the study. According to William G. Zikmund (2013), a target population is the complete group of individuals, objects or events sharing common characteristics that are relevant to a research study. The population that was targeted consisted of family leaders (fathers, grandparents, mothers, and uncles), village heads, chiefs and community members in Guruve rural district. These targeted populations was selected because they are directly involved in traditional conflict resolution processes within the community. Chiefs were included because they are recognised traditional leader responsible for maintaining peace and resolving disputes in rural areas. Village heads were also targeted since they handle many community conflicts at local level before cases are referred to chiefs.

Family elders formed part of the target population because they play an important role in mediating family disputes marriage conflicts, inheritance disagreements, and other domestic issues within family clans. Community members were included because they re the beneficiaries and participants in traditional conflict resolution systems and could provide views on the effectiveness of these traditional leaders. The target population enabled researcher to gather diverse information and opinions regarding the roles, effectiveness and challenges faced by traditional leaders in resolving conflicts in Guruve rural district.

3.5 Sample

A sample is a subset of the target population selected to participate in a study. According to William G. Zikmund (2013) a sample is a portion of the population carefully chosen to represent the entire group, allowing the researcher to draw conclusions about the whole population. Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2018), on selecting the sample, a purposive sampling technique was used to select participants with relevant experiences. It enables the researcher to target individuals who actively engage in conflict resolution processes. The researcher targeted 50 community members and these were the main responders, 5 village heads 1 chief. The numbers may vary depending on accessibility ad saturating but were chosen to ensure a wide range of perspectives

3.6 Sampling techniques

Sampling techniques in research are statistical methods for selecting a sample representative of the population to study the population's characteristics. Different sampling strategies can be used based on the characteristics of the population, the study purpose and available resources (Renu Bisht, 2023). There are two most common sampling methods, probability sampling and non-probability sampling.

According to Research life (2023) probability sampling is called a random sampling and everyone has equal chance of being selected in the final sample and there are different types of probability sampling which are simple random sampling, systematic random sampling, stratified sampling, cluster sampling. Probability sampling has many advantages such as representativeness, statistical inference, precision and reliability, generalizability, minimization of selection bias.

Non-probability sampling involves selecting individuals based on non-random criteria, often relying on the researcher's judgment or predefined criteria. While it is easier and more economical, it tends to introduce sampling bias resulting in weaker inferences compared to probability sampling (Renu Bisht, 2023). Types of non-probability sampling include convenience sampling, consecutive sampling, quota sampling, purposive or judgmental sampling, snowball sampling. Some its advantages include, generating a hypothesis, qualitative research, convenience and pragmatism.

The researcher chooses to use purposive sampling because the researcher has the option to choose expertise to sample relevant to the study. It is commonly used in qualitative research for in-depth understanding. The reason the researcher chooses purposive sapling is that they got the opportunity to pick participants with specific traits, experience or knowledge relevant to the study's goals, rather than randomly electing them. Some of its advantages are the researcher as room for judgment, participants chosen with specific criteria, and it focus on depth data (Renu Bisht, 2024).

3.7 Research instruments

The study used Questionnaires and semi- structured interviews as research instruments to have in-depth knowledge or information on how Indigenous Knowledge System works (Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. 2018).

3.8.1 Questionnaires

Flick, U. (2018), on questionnaires, structured questionnaires was used because it contains both closed and open-ended questions. It was used to the community members and village heard (sabhuku). The questionnaire aimed to gather community perceptions and experiences with indigenous conflict resolution mechanism (Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. 2018). There are many advantages of using questionnaires and some of them include easy administering, standardized questions make it simple to distribute and collect data, efficient data collection, quick and cost effective way to gather information from a large sample, reduced bias, minimizes interviewer bias as questions are pre-defined. There are also disadvantages of using questionnaires and some of them include limited depth, predefined questions may not capture nuanced or complex responses, lack of flexibility, no room for probing or follow-up questions.

3.8.2 Semi-structured interviews

Interviews were used to gather rich and explanatory data. The interview was for the village heads and chief to understand their roles in conflict resolution (Flick, U. 2018). There are advantages of using interviews they are flexible, allow for probing and follow-up questions to gather more in-depth information, rich data, encourages respondents to share detailed qualitative insights, adaptability; interviewer can adjust questions based on respondent's answers. According to John W. Creswell, there are also disadvantages, time consuming,

conducting and analysing semi-structured interviews can be labour intensive, interviewer bias, and interviewers may influence respondent's answers through tone, body language or probing.

3.9 Data collection procedures

The researcher asked for permission before caring out the research. The researcher was given a fieldwork letter to carry the study from the school department chairperson. The researcher also sought permission from guruve council and was given permission letter to conduct the research. The researcher also seek permission from the village heads and chief before caring out the research to their community and participants were also informed about the purpose of the study. With permission the responses were recorded in notebooks for accuracy. Questionnaires were be distributed to the community members and were collected for analysis.

3.10 Data presentation

Data presentation refers to the process of organizing**,** summarizing and displaying collected data in a clear and understandable form so that I can be easily interpreted and analysed. In this study, the data collected on the roles of family elders, village heads and chiefs in conflict resolution in Guruve district was presente using both ualitative nd quantitative methods.

Quantitative data presentation through questionnaires was presented using tables, percentages and frequency distributions. This allowed the researcher to summarise responses from a laerger group of participants ina clear and systematic way. It made it easer to compare opinions across different categories od responsents such as chief, village heads, family elders ans community members. Graphs such as bar charts and pe charts were also used where necessary to visually present data on common types of conflicts and the frequency of conflict

resolution cases handles by traditional leaders. This helped to enhance understanding and interpretation of the findings.

Qualitative data presentation through interviews and questionnaires was presented in a narrative form. The reponses from chiefs village heads family elders and community members were described and organised into themes. Direct quotations from respondents were also used to support the finfings and provide authenticity to the data presentated. This allowed the researcher to capture participants' views, experiwnces and opinons in their own words.

Data presentation in this study combined both statistical presentation and descriptive narration. This mixed approach ensured tha the finding were clearly communicated and provided a comprehensive understanding of traditional conflicts resolution systems in Guruve rural district.

3.11 Data analysis

The study employed thematic analysis (Braun, V., & Clarke, V. 2006). After data collection all interview transcripts, field notes and questionnaire responses were carefully read and organised. The researcher identified patterns, repeated ideas and meaningful statements. These were grouped I into themes that aligned with the research objectives. The objectives are to analyse the role of family leaders in solving family conflicts or issues, to assess the role of village heads in solving conflict at family levels, interpersonal and inter-community levels conflicts and to assess the role of chiefs in conflict resolution which is the final stage when solving conflicts. Thematic approach enabled the researcher to interpret participants and present them in an organised, meaningful way.

3.12 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations are important principles that guide researcher in conducting research in a responsible and acceptable manner. Silverman, D. (2021), the study complied with ethical standards to protect participation and ensure responsible research. The key ethical considerations were, informed consent, participants were informed about purpose of the study, procedures involved and the significance of their participation. According to John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell (2018), informed cosent ensure that participants willing or voluntarily agreed to take part in research after being informed and understand its nature and purpose of the study.

Confidentiality personal identities were kept private and information was treated with respect and information provided by participants was not disclosed by participants was not disclosed to unauthorised persons data collection during interviews and questionnaires was used strictly for academic purposes only. According to Earl Babbie (2016), confidentiality helps to build trust between the researcher and participants.

The identities of respondents were protected by avoiding the use of names in research report. This was done to protect participants from possible social or personal harm. Researcher mad sure that there as no harm, the researcher avoided any activities that could cause emotional, social or cultural harm.

Voluntary participation participant in the study were free to withdraw at any time without negative consequences. According to Louis Cohen Lawrence Manion and Keith Morrison (2018) state that voluntary participation protects the rights and freedom of research participants.

The researcher respected cultural beliefs, traditions and values of the people throughout the study. Respondents were treated with dignity, fairness and respect during interviews and discussions.

3.13 Chapter summary

This chapter presented the methodology used in the study; including the research approach, research deigns sampling procedures, data collection methods and ethical considerations. A qualitative, descriptive design was chosen to capture the cultural depth of indigenous conflict resolution practices. The finding will be presented in the next chapter. Managed to distribute 50 questionnaires to the community members and all the questionnaire were returned giving responses. And also interviewed 5 village heads and 1 chief. It took one day for the data collection and the data was collected at the chief's court. Faced the challenge of illiteracy, people were not able to read I had to explain what was in the questionnaires for many community members. So of the members refused to answer the questionnaires.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS.

4.1 Introduction.

This chapter presents, analyse and discusses the data collected from field on the topic with say, the roles of traditional leaders in resolving conflict in Zimbabwe case study of Guruve rural district. The data was gathered using questionnaires to community members and interviews for the village heads and chief. The objectives were to analyse the role of family elders in conflict resolution, to analyse the role of village heads in conflict resolution and to assess the role chiefs in resolving conflicts in Guruve rural district. The chapter will be looking or focusing on the demographic characteristics of respondents on the questionnaires of the community and discuss the bio data of the interviewed participant. Then moves to present the data from the objective and answering the research question of the study, analyse it and discuss the responses of the participants.

4.2 Biographical Data.

This is the information in section A of the questionnaire, which was use on the main group of the participants and they were community members. The characteristics includes gander, age group, years lived in the community. The total number of questionnaires which were distributed to the community members was 50 and all the questionnaires were returned giving responses.

Figure 1 4.2.1 Gender

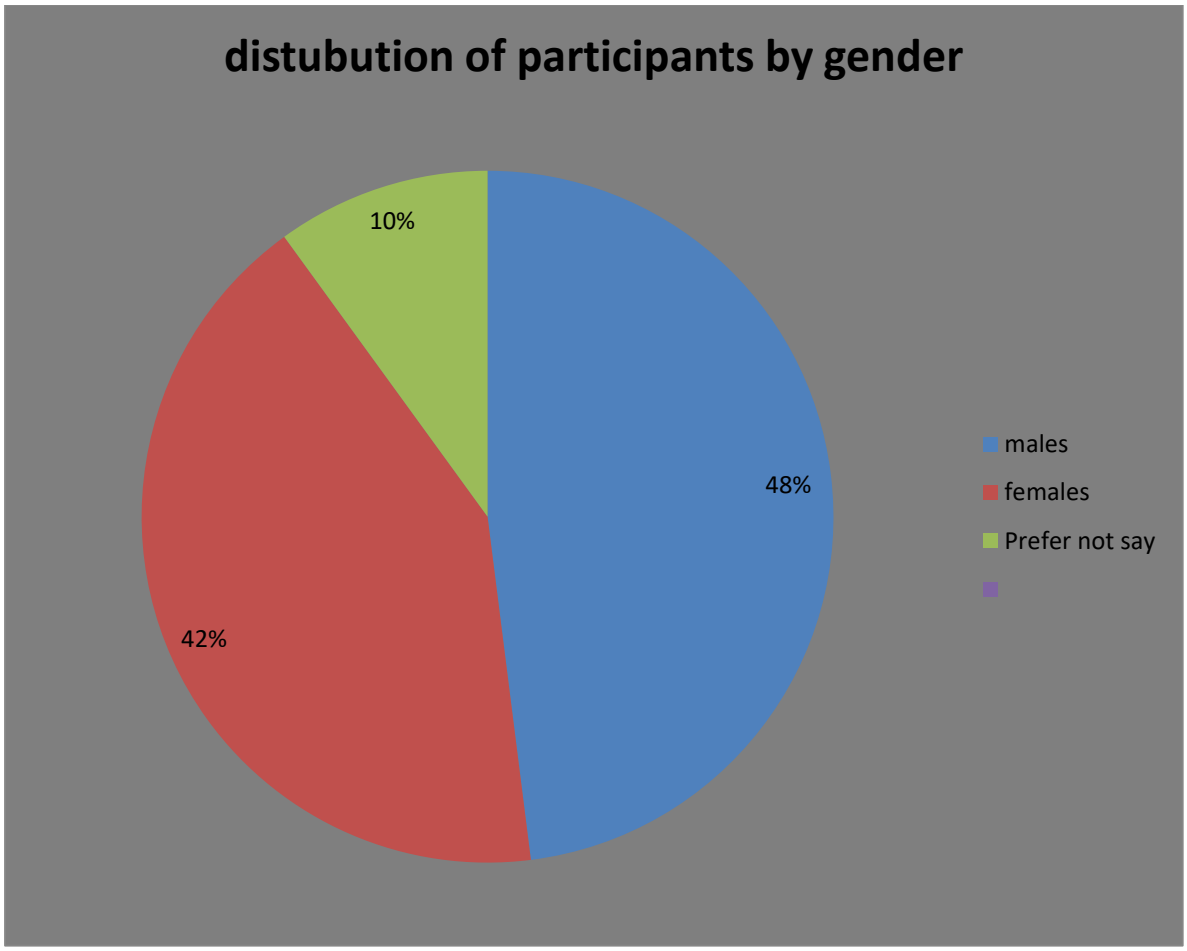


Fig 4.2.1 Gender (No.50)

The data in the Fig 4.2.1 shows that the majority of respondents 24(48%) were males, 21(42%) were females and 5(10%) preferred not to say. The respondent's demographic information revealed that gender plays a significant role in the roles of the traditional leaders in resolving conflicts. It shows that there was no gender inequality between the participants because both genders participated. Even though the percentage number of males were slightly more that more than of females, there was gender equality.

Table 1 4.2.2 Age

Table 4.2.2 Age (No. 50)

Age groups in years	Frequency	Percentage
18-30	18	36%
31-40	8	16%
40-50	15	30%
50+	9	18%
Total	50	100%

Table 4.2.2 showed that the majority of respondents 18(36%) they were in the age group of 18-30 years, the least respondents 8(36%) were people who were engaged from 31-40 years.

Most respondents were in the economically active age group suggesting that they are directly involved in the economic affairs. The demographic information revelled that age is important because it shows that the youths are directly affected by conflicts or rather commit more of conflicts.

Figure 2 4.2.3 Period of Residence

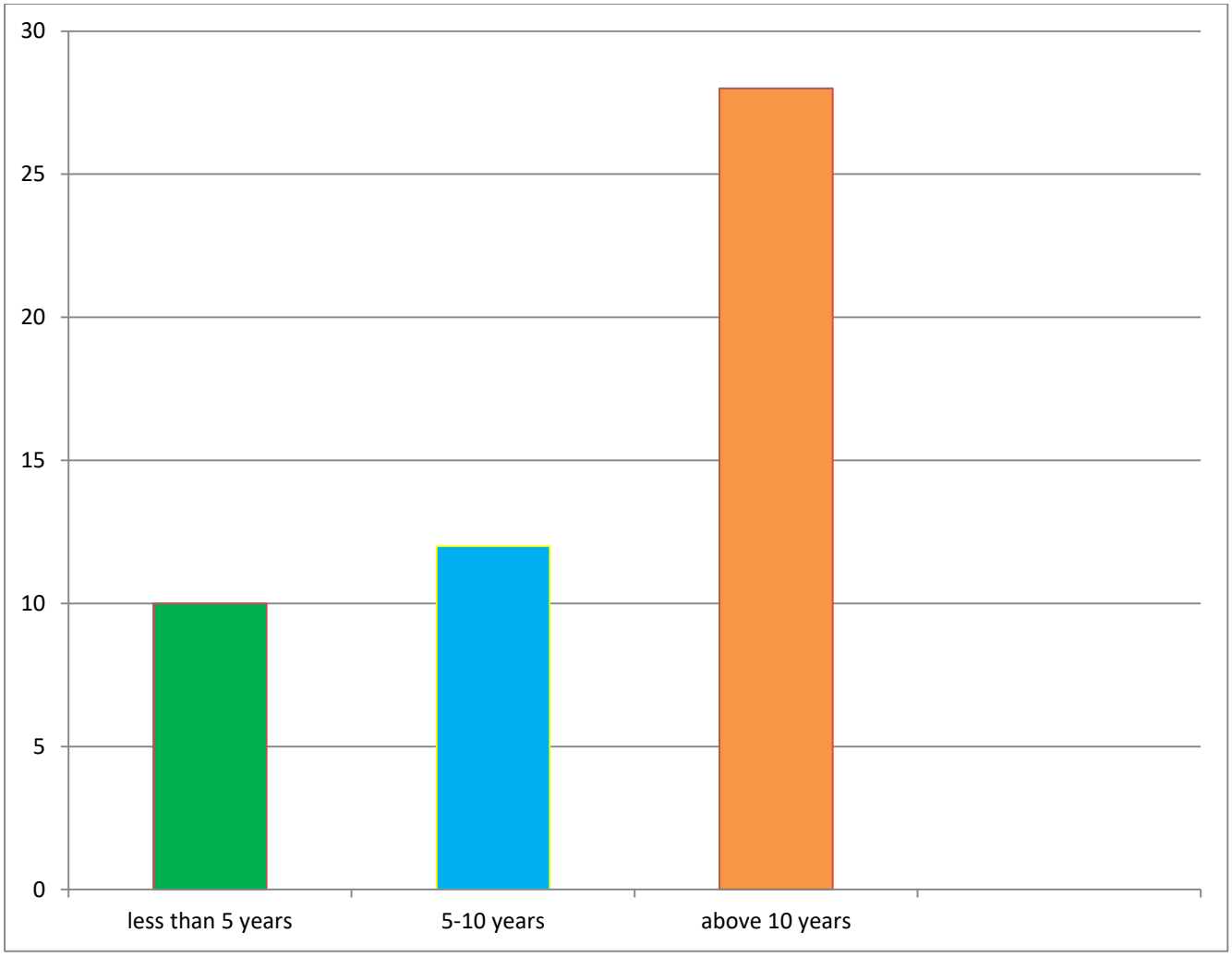


Fig 4.2.3 **Period of Residence (No.50)**

Data presented above indicates that the majority of respondents 28 (56%) had lived in Guruve for a period of more than 10 years. Then following group, with more respondents 12 (24%) who had lived in Guruve for 5-10 years. Some of the respondents they were saying they were born in Guruve rural district. The respondent's demographic shows that more people had lived in Guruve for many years. This means that they are familiar and are more experienced with the roles of traditional leaders in their area**.**

Table 2 4.3 Role of Family Elders

Table 4.3 Role of family elders

Statement	Yes	No	Sometimes	Total
1. Family elders help resolve conflicts	39(78%)	5(10%)	6(12%)	50
2. Family elders' decisions respected	27(54%)	5(10%)	18(36%)	50
3. Family elders resolve only family conflicts	17(36%)	24(48%)	9 (18%)	50
4. Aunties solve marriage issues	41(82%)	2(4%)	7(14%)	50
5. Grandfathers solve inheritance matters	40(80%)	3(6%)	7(14%)	50
6. Family elders' decisions effective	17(34%)	8(16%)	25(50%)	50
7. Family elders use mediation when solving conflicts	29(58%)	6(12%)	15(30%)	50

The information in Table 4.3 show the roles played by family elders such as unties, uncles, grandparents in resolving conflicts, their effectiveness and respected of decisions and methods they use in resolving conflicts.

4.3.1 Family Elders Help Resolve Conflict

Family elders help in conflict resolution, out of 50 respondents 39(78%) agreed that family elders help in resolving conflicts, 5(10%) respondents they did not agree that family elders do solve conflicts.

The chief also agreed that family elders are involved in conflict resolution,

'Family elders resolve family conflicts at lower level and they report difficult cases to me. I work with them closely and also consult some of them before passing a judgement.' (The chief's words, 2026)

The results presented shows that family elders help in resolving conflict and they are the first to be consulted before going to the higher officials like village heads and chiefs. This is supported by other scholars such as Chigidi (2009) he said family leaders or elders include parents, uncles, aunties and grandparents. They form the foundation of indigenous conflict resolution system in Zimbabwe. According Chigidi (2009) to family elders rely on dialogue, counselling and moral persuasion to mediate conflicts such as marital misunderstandings, inheritance disputes or generational tensions.

The involvement of family elders in conflict resolution is important as shown by the results this is because; according to Mashingaidze (2015) it helps prevent disputes from escalating because early resolution maintains harmony and prevent intervention. In the Shona and Ndebele traditions family meetings (dare remhuri or indaba yomndeni) are used to air grievances openly and reach consensus.

Family elders do solve conflicts, particularly at the initial stages. They act as mediators who aim to restore harmony within the family. Their role complements that of village heads and chiefs. This forms a hierarchical traditional conflicts resolution system.

4.3.2 Respected of Family Elders Decisions.

As shown in the Table 4.3, it shows that family elders' decisions are respected because 27(54%) of respondents agreed that family decisions are respected, 5(10%) of respondents denied that family elders' decisions respected.

'Family elders solve conflicts at lower level and I consult them before passing my decision or judgement.' (The chief's words, 2026)

'Family elders' decisions are not respected because they cannot pass a judgememt alone without going to the village heads of chief.' (one of the village heads, 2026)

'Yes cases are referred to formal courts when they involve serious crimes such as murders, rape'. (one of the village heads, 20026)

This is similar to the question that family elders' decisions are effective. This is supported by 17(34%) of respondents who agreed that family elders' decisions are effective, 8(16%) respondents did not agree that family decisions are effective and 25(25%) said their decisions are sometimes respected not always.

According to United Nations Development Programme (2012), traditional and informal justice including family elders is essential in resolving disputes at the grassroots level, particularly in Africa. Mashingaidze (2015) notes that the involvement of family heads helps prevent disputes from escalating because early resolution maintains harmony and prevents extra intervention. This is strengthened by the Shona and Ndebele traditions family meetings (dare remhuri or indaba yomndeni) that done to air grievances openly and reach consensus.

Family elders typically handle disputes at the household level, however they escalate conflicts to community leaders when they are unable to resolve them, when the issues are complex or involve multiple families or when impartiality is required. This hierarchical approach ensures that conflicts are addressed at the appropriate level of authority (Elias, 1956; UNDP, 2012). The United Nations (2020), states that serious offenses are escalated to ensure justice and protection or rights. Such criminals includes, assaults, theft, sexual violence among

others they are often referred beyond the family to traditional leaders and sometimes to formal courts. This is supported by the chief's respond when he was interviewed.

Family elders' decisions they are respected and they are effective because they do pose a conflict from escalating. But their role is not to pass a judgement so they report conflicts to community elders when disputes exceed their authority, become complex, involve wider groups or require impartial and formal intervention. This reflects the layered structur of traditional conflicts resolution where authority increases from the family level to the community level.

4.3.3 Family Elders Only Resolve Family Conflicts.

The results are shown in the Table 4.4 which illustrates that family elders only resolve family conflicts because 17(36%) respondents agreed that family elders only solve family conflicts, 24(48%) respondents did not agree that family elders only solve family conflicts.

Kwasi Wiredu (1996) highlights that, elders facilitate consensus not only within households but also across kinship groups. Family elders may also intervene in conflicts between extended families, clan-related disagreements, marriage related disputes involving multiple families. *'I solve land boundaries disputes, family inheritance conflict and livestock damage to crops.'* (one of the village heads, 2026)

Conflicts that extent beyond family require intervention from leaders with jurisdiction over the whole community. African Union (AU) (2014), highlights that broader community disputes are handle at higher traditional leadership levels.

Family elders primarily resolve family and kinship based conflicts, but their role is not strictly limited to the household. They also contribute to extended family and community it disputes, mainly in an serious or complex conflicts are handled by higher traditional authorities.

4.4.4 Aunties Solve Marriage Issues

The results in the Table 4.4 shows that aunties solve marriage issues, respondents 41(82%) agreed that aunties solve marriage issues, 2(4%) did not agree that aunties solve marriage issues.

> *'I first here the statement of the complainant then cistern to the witness statement and then I pass a judgment. When I am solving the marriage issues I require the auntie to give a testimony first.* (Words of the chief, 2026)

Accoding to John S. Mbiti (1969) marriage in African societies is a communal affair involving extended family members such as aunts. Aunties provide guidance on marital responsibilities, gender roles within marriage, conflicts management between spouses. Ifi Amadiume (1987) highlights the import role of senior women in mediation domestic and marital conflicts. When disputes arise auntie's acts as neutral intermediaries, listen to both sides, promote reconciliation and understanding. They are often preferred because they are approachable and trusted.

The United Nations Development Programme (2012) recognizes that informal actor including family members play a key role in resolving domestic disputes at grassroots level. In many cases, spouses (especially wives) report marital problems first to aunties before escalating to elders or community leaders.

T.O. Elias (1956) explains that serious disputes move up the hierarchy of traditional authority. Aunties typically handle minor or moderate marital issues and they do not make final binding decisions. Serious cases for instance divorce, abuse they escalate to family elders, village heads, chief or formal courts.

Aunties do play a significant role in resolving marriage issues, particularly as advisors and mediators. However teri role is mainly informal and supportive, but more serious disputes are handled by senior elders or traditional authorities.

4.4.5 Grandparents Solve Inheritance Conflicts

The results shown in the Table4.3 shows that grandparents solve inheritance conflicts supported by respondents 40(80%) agreed that grandparents solve inheritance conflicts, 3(6%) did not agree that grandparents solve inheritance conflicts.

'I regularly resolve family inheritance conflicts. (one of the village heads, 2026)

'I solve conflicts such as cutting down of trees illegally, marriage issues, family inheritance and land conflicts. (words of the chief, 2026)

The UNDP (2012), highlights that many disputes in Africa are initially handled within informal structures. Inheritance disputes are often first discussed within a family, within grandparents involved before escalation.

T.O. Elias (1956), notes that elders rely on customary knowledge and lineage history when resolving disputes such as inheritance. Grandparents possess knowledge about family lineage property ownership and past agreements, clarify heirs based on tradition. This make them important.

The African Union (2014) explains that dispute resolution follows a hierarchical system from family to community leadership. Grandparents may not fully resolve complex inheritance disputes, cases involving multiple families or legal complications. Such case are not solved at family level rather they are referred to village heads or chiefs and sometimes to the formal courts.

This means that grandparent they do not fully resolve the conflict alone and pass an effective judgement without consulting the village heads and the chief. Grandparents do play a role in resolving inheritance conflicts, especially at the family level where theirs knowledge and authority are respected. However their role mainly mediatory and advisory, but more serous are complex disputes are escalated to higher traditional or formal institutions.

4.3.6 Family Elders Use Mediation When Resolving Conflicts

The results on the Table 4.3 shows that family elders use mediation when resolving conflicts because 29(58%) respondents agreed that family elders solve conflicts sing mediation, 6(12%) respondents did not agree that family elders uses mediation in conflict resolution.

Mediation is the primary method used by family elders to bring disputing parties together, allow each side to present their case and guide discussion toward a mutually acceptable solution. Their role is not to impose punishment but to facilitate agreement. T.O. Elias explains that African customary law emphasizes reconciliation through dialogue led by elders.

The United Nations Development Programme (2012) notes that information mediators including elders are widely used due to their accessibility and legitimacy. Family elders are easily accessible, trusted by family members and familiar with the background mediation of disputes. This enhances the effectiveness of mediation by family elders.

Family elder play a crucial role in conflicts because they act as mediators in disputes involving family members and aim to restore harmony through consensus-based approaches. Studies have shown that most conflicts in African societies are first addressed within the family before being escalated to community leaders such as village head and chiefs (Elias, 1956, UNDP, 2012)

Family elders use storytelling and proverbs, moral guidance and cultural norms and values. This makes mediation culturally acceptable and effective. Family elders primarily use mediation as a method of resolving conflicts. Their approach focuses on dialogue, consensus and reconciliation rather than punishment. This makes mediation a centeral and effective tool in maintaining harmony within families and communities.

Figure 3 4.4 Role of Village Heads

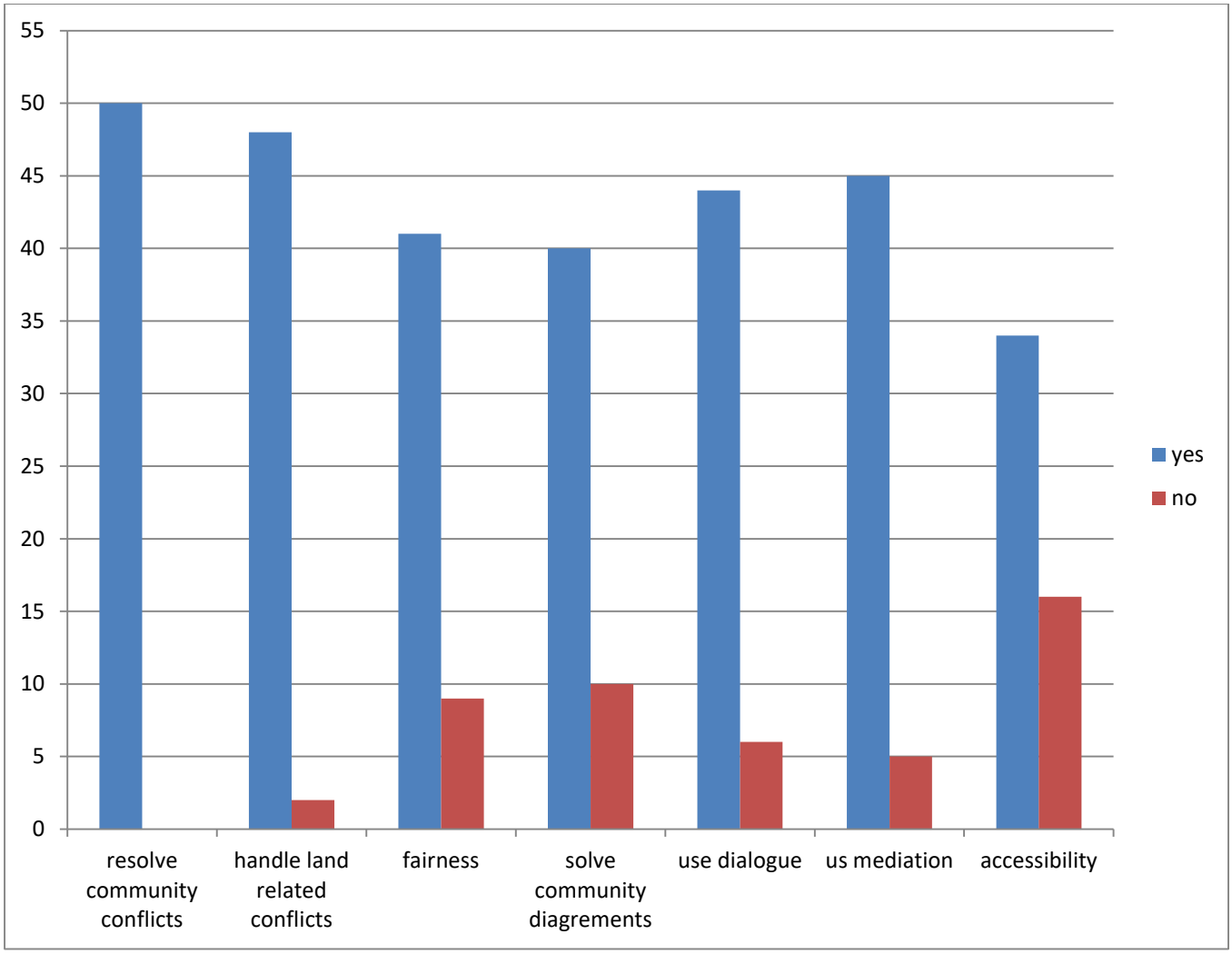


Fig4.4 Role of Village Heads

The information in Fig 4.4 shows the roles played by village heads such types of conflicts they resolve, their effectiveness, respected of their decisions and methods they use in resolving conflicts. These results are from 50 participants who filled the questionnaires.

4.5.1 Village Heads Take Part in Resolving Community Conflicts

The results shown in Fig.4.4, shows that village heads they take part in the resolving of community conflicts with 50(100%). This shows that out of 50 participants who take part in questionnaire answering, they all agreed that village heads take part in the community conflicts.

'I solve disputes between community members like conflict where cattle stray into others' fields and damaged the crops.' (One of the village heads, 2026)

This proves village heads do solve community conflicts as proven by the participants. Village heard authority are usually the first authority to handle disputes beyond the family elder they are the first responsible for maintaining peace within their villages. They receive cases that have been escalating from family elders. According to T.O. Elias (1956), explains that African customary systems follow a hierarchical structure where disputes move from family elders to village heads.

Village heads they are involved in solving community conflicts because they apply traditional norms and values. They also ensure that decisions align with community customs this means they are important in the traditional hierarchic structure on conflict resolution.

This is similar to village elder take part in resolving community disagreements. The results shows that participants 40(80%) agreed that village heads do solve community disagreement and participants 10(20%) do not agree that village heads solve community disagreements.

'I solve family and community misunderstandings or disagreements.' (one of the village heads, 2026)

'I report serious cases which I cannot solve alone in my own court without the chief's decision and seek guidance when necessary.' (One of the village heads, 2026)

'I report serious cases to the chief.' (One of the village heads, 2026)

Village heads are responsible for preventing escalation of conflicts and promoting unity and social cohesion. African union (2014) recognizes traditional leaders as key actors in peace-building and conflict prevention at the grassroots level.

Village heads also do not solve all the community conflicts there are some of the conflict they do not solve on their own. This is by village heads who were interviewed on how they work or collaborate with the chief.

Village heads refer cases to chiefs when disputes are complex or unresolved and also the chief report to formal courts when legal issues arise. The United Nations Development Programme (2012) notes that, traditional leaders operate along formal systems referring serious cases when necessary.

Village heads play a central role in resolving community conflicts. They act as mediatirs, decision makers and customary law. Their position within the traditional leadership hierarchy makes them essential for maintaining peace and stability at the local level.

4.4.2 Village Heads Handle Land Related Disputes

The results shown in Fig.4.4 illustrates that village heads do solve land disputes with 48(96%) participants who agree that they do take part in land disputes and 2(4%) participants did not agree that village heads take part in community disagreements.

> *'I frequently solve land boundaries disputes, family inheritance conflict and livestock damage to crops.'* (One of the village heads, 2026)

> *'I solve land and boundaries disputes.'* (one of the village heads, 2026)

Village heads are crucial intermediaries in local governance and conflict management. They handle disputes that go beyond the family level such as land boundaries, livestock theft and interpersonal conflicts according to (Nyathi, 2017).

H.W.O. Okoth-Ogendo (1991) notes that land in African societies is governed through customary systems administered by local leaders. Village heads have knowledge of land

boundaries and community history, apply customary law in determining land in African society is go and they ensure fir distribution of land.

Village heads play a crntral role in resolving land disputes at the community level. Their authority knowledge of customary land systems and mediation skills make them essential managing and related conflicts. However, more complex cases are escalated to higher traditional or formal leagal authorities.

4.4.3 Village Heads' Fairness in Resolving Conflicts

The results shown in Fig.4.4 points out that village heads are fair when they are passing their decisions in resolving conflicts. This is supported with participants 41(82%) agree that village heads they are fair when they are resolving conflicts and 9(18%) participants who did not agree that village heads are involved in resolving conflicts hence the matter is referred to the chief or the formal courts.

The village heads agreed to the provision of fairness when they were asked on how the ensure fairness and transparency in their judgement. They agree say,

> *'I listen to both parties, gather witness, consult elders and then give judgement based on customary law.'* (one of the village heads, 2026)

> *'I proposed a solution that restores harmony rather than just punishing one side.'* (one of the village heads, 2026)

Village heads ensure that each is given a chance to present their side of story , ensure no one is judged without being head. This reflects that principle of natural justice. T.O. Elias (1956) emphasizes that customary courts allow both parties to be head before decisions are made.

Village heads ensure that there is fairness and transparency because they consult with elders before making a judgement. Village heads often consult family elders or a council of elders, seek advice before making final decisions. This ensure that decisions are not based on one person's opinion. H.W.O Okoth-Ogendo (1991) highlights that, traditional dispute resolution involves collective decision making.

Village heafs ensur that there is transparency by making hearings conducted in public and they are open to community members. This reduces bias and increases accountability. The United Nations Development Progrmme (2012) notes that transparency enhances trust in informal justice systems.

Village heads ensure fairness and transparency inpassing judgement by applying principles such as equal hearing, consultation, use of customary law, transparency, and consensus building. These practices promote justice, legitimacy and acceptance of decisions within the commuty.```

4.4.4 Village Heads Use Dialogue When Resolving Conflicts

The result shown in Fig4.4 shows that out of 50 participants 44(88%) agreed that villge heads use dialogue when resolving conflicts and out of 50 participants 6(12%) did not agree that village heads use dialogue when resolving conflicts.

This supported by a village heads who agreed the use of mediation when resolving conflicts. The said

> *'I encourage consensus building when resolving conflicts.'* (One of the village heads, 2026)

Village heads promote consensus through dialogue they encourage mutual understanding, guide parties toward agreement and im for solutions acceptable to all. Kwasi

Wiredu (1996) emphasizes tha dialogue and consensus are fundamental to African indigenous conflict resolution.

According to Nyathi (2017), village heads preside over community hearings (dare remusha) where disputants present their cases before elders and witness. These sessions are guided b fairness, dialogue and collective decision making

By encouraging dialogue, village heads reduce tension early, prevents violence from escalating and preserve relationships between parties. The United Nations Development Programme (2012) notes that dialogue based approaches are effective in preventing escalating of disputes.

Village heads extensively use dialogue in resolving conflicts. It is key methods that promotes participation, consensus, fairness and reconciliation. Dialogue based approaches make traditional conflict resolution effective and cultural appropriate.

4.4.5 Village Heads Use Mediation between Parties When Solving Conflicts

The results shown in Fig4.5 illustrates that village heads they use mediation between parties who are complaining when resolving conflicts with participants 45(90%) and participants 5(10%) did not agree that village heads mediate the parties in conflicts when resolving conflicts. Hence push the matter to the chief.

> *'I called both parties, allow discussion and mediate for a peaceful agreement.'* (one of the village heads, 2026)

> *'I listen, mediation and agreement.'* (One of the village heads, 2026)

These village heads responses in interviews support that village heads use mediation in resolving conflicts. Village heads commonly bring disputing parties together, facilitate discussions between them and guide them toward a mutually acceptable solution. Their role is

more about facilitating agreement than imposing punishment. T.O. Elias (1956) explains that customary dispute resolution emphasizes reconciliation through mediation led by local authorities.

Rather than imposing decisions, village heads encourage dialogue between disputing parties, seek mutually acceptable solutions and promote reconciliation. Kwasi Wiredu (1956) notes that consensus buiding is central to fairness in African traditional justice systems.

By mediating disputes early, village heads prevent conflicts from becoming violent, reduce the need for formal legal intervention. African Union (2014) recognises the role of traditional leaders in preventing and managing local conflicts through peaceful means.

Village heads actively use mediation as key method of resolving conflicts their mediation approach focuses on dialogue, consensus and reconciliation, making it effective in maintaining peace and social cohesion within communities.

4.4.6 Village Heads Are Accessible When Conflict is in Report

The results in Fig4.4 demonstrate participants 34(68%) agreed that village heads are accessible when they want to report and 16(32%) did not agree that village heads they are available when want to report their case. The figures are almost half to half; this means that some cases are reported to the chief directly without consulting the village heads.

According to the statistics above from the Fig4.5 it shows that village heads are accessible when there is a conflict that needs to be reported. Many people agreed that village heads are readily available to attend the people.

Even if though the statistics of the participants are almost half to half, people who agreed there are more than those who did not agree to it. This makes village heads effective in there court when passing judgement in conflict resolution.

Figure 4 4.5 Role of Chiefs In Conflict Resolution

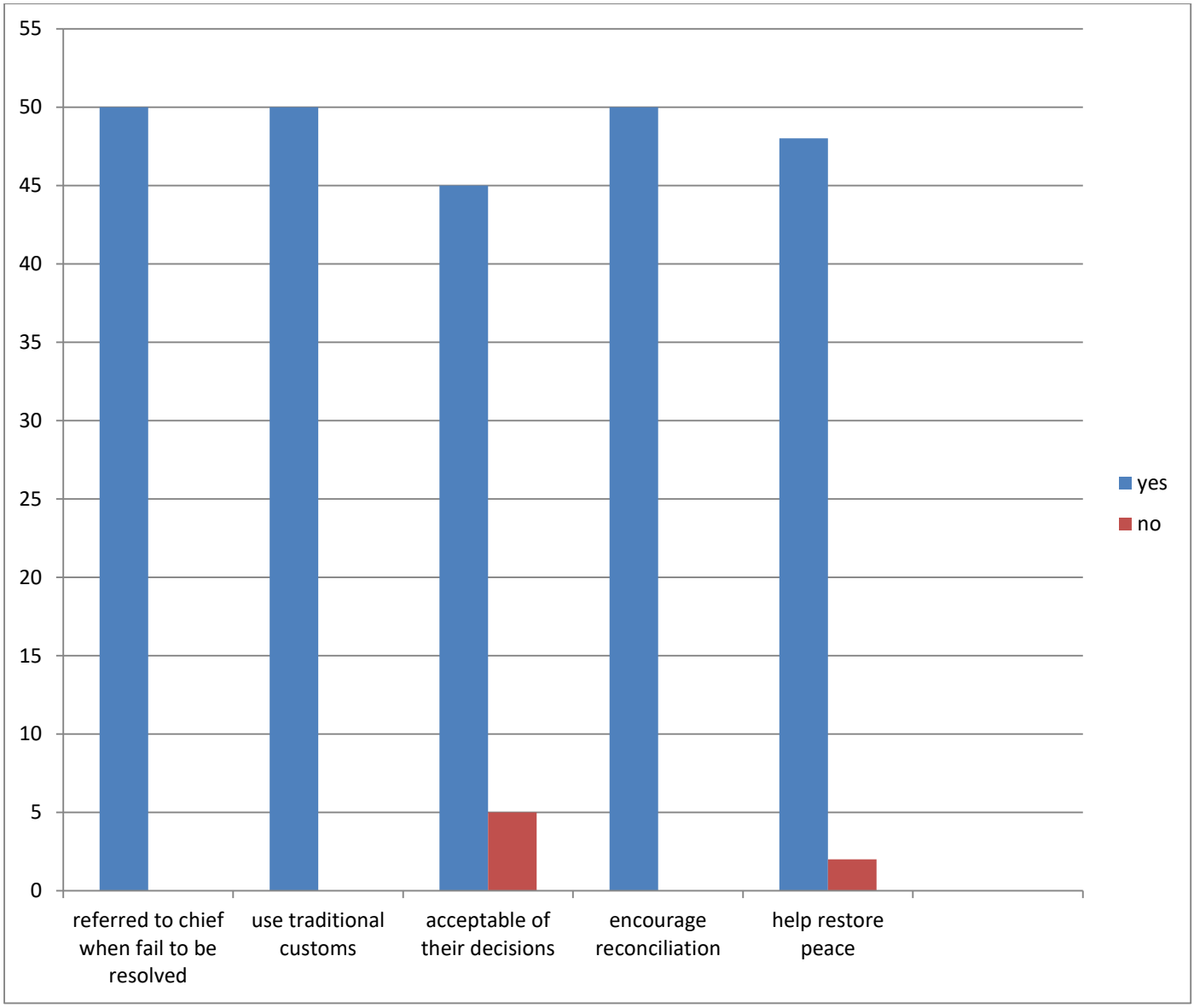


Fig.4.5 Role of Chiefs In Conflict Resolution

The results shown in the Fig.4.5 shows that the chief is the last stage in the informal conflict resolution process. The Fig shows that matters are referred to chief when they are not resolved, what customs they use when resolving conflicts, are the decisions they pass acceptable, if they encourage reconciliation and if they help to restore peace between the conflicting parties. And the above data is from the 50 participants who filled the questionnaires.

4.5.1 Cases Referred To Chief When Fail to Be Resolved

The results in Fig4.5 shows that, the chief pass final judgement when the village heads and family elders fail to solve the conflict. This is proved by the participants 50(100%) had agreed that the chief is the one to pass final judgement when the lower levels failed to solve the conflict.

> *'I receive cases to my court when the village head fail to solve the conflict on their own. When the cases are more complex and involve serous cases such as murder, rape these kind of conflicts are difficult and need my judgement and sometimes I refer them to the formal courts.* (Words of the chief, 2026)

Chiefs play a dual role, they are both judicial figures and cultural custodians ensuring that justice is delivered in line with ancestral values and local traditions (Ncube, 2011). When lower levels fail to resolve the dispute, family or village heads cannot reach a resolution they go to the chief. If one or both parties are dissatisfied with the outcome the case is escalated to the chief for final determination. T.O. Elias (1956) explains that disputes in customary systems move upward when unresolved at lower levels.

When the conflict is serious or complex for example rape, murder, long standing authority of the chief these require the authority of the chief. The United Nations Development Programme (2012) notes that complex disputes are often handle by higher traditional authorities.

When the conflict involves multiple village of families, disputes affecting more than one village, inter-family or inter-community conflict referred to the chief who has broader jurisdiction. Kwasi Wired (1996)emphasizes broader leadership involvement in multi-party disputes.

Conflicts are referred to the chief when they are unresolved, complex, involve wider communities or require authority and impartiality.

4.5.2 Use Traditional Customs

The results in Fig4.5 demonstrate that the chief is a spiritual figure because they use traditional customs when resolving conflicts. Participants 50(100%) they all agreed that the chief use traditional customs when he's resolving conflicts.

Chief conformed that he uses customary law when resolving conflicts he said,

'I use customary law, cultural norms and values and community rules passed down through generations.' (Words of the chief, 2026)

'I always consult elders because they are custodians of culture and poses wisdom and experience.' (Words of the chief, 2026)

Chiefs resolve disputes based on established traditions, cultural norms and values and community rules passed down through generations. These customs guide decisions on issues such as land, marriage and inheritance. T.O. Elias (1956) explains that african customary law forms the basis of decision-making by traditional authorities like chiefs.

Chiefs work with council of elders and seek advice before making judgment. Consulting elders ensure decisions reflect collective wisdom. H.W.O. Okoth-Ogendo (1991) notes that customary governance involves collective decision-making guided by traditional

Chief extensively use traditional customs in resolving conflicts. These customs guide decision-making, promote reconciliation and ensure that outcomes are culturally acceptable. Although they may interact with formal legal systems, customary law remains the foundation of their authority.

4.5.3 Chief's Decisions Are Accepted

The result in Fig4.5 shows that, the chief's decisions are generally accepted by the community wen resolving conflicts. Participants 45(90%) agreed that the chief's decisions are respected and they are not to be questioned and participants 5(10%) did not agree that chief's decisions are accepted generally hence matter id moved to the formal courts.

Chief agreed that his decisions are his decisions are accepted and it is supported by the statistics of the participants. He said,

> *'Yes most of my decisions are accepted because they are based on fairness and traditions.'* (Words of the chief, 2026)

> *'Some cases are referred to formal courts when they involve serious cases such a murder and rape and also when complainant did not agree with my decision.'* (Words of the chief, 2026)

The study showed that when chief decisions are not accepted they resort to formal legal systems. This is supported by African Union (2014) recognizes traditional leaders as custodians of peace and key actors in local governance. Despite their importance, chiefs face challenges such as the influence of modern legal systems, changing societal values, and occasional perceptions of bias. In some cases, their decisions may be contested or referred to formal courts.

They refer serious criminal cases to formal courts, align decisions with national laws where necessary. Even though they may interact with formal legal systems, customary law remains the foundation of their authority.

4.5.4 Chiefs Encourages Reconciliation Between Conflicting Parties.

The results shown in Fig.4.5, shows that, the chief uses reconciliation between conflicting parties. Participants 50(100%) agreed that chiefs support reconciliation between community members fully because the participants agreed to it.

Chiefs encourage reconciliation they focus on restoring relationships aim on repair broken relationships, promote unity within the community and avoid long-term hostility. Unlike formal courts the emphasis is on peace and harmony not punishment. Kwasi Wired (1999) explains that African conflict resolution prioritizes reconciliation and consensus over adversarial outcomes.

Use of mediation and dialogue by chiefs they bring parties together for discussions, encourage open communication and guide both sides toward mutual understanding. T.O. Elias (1956) notes that traditional leader rely on mediation to achieve reconciliation.

Involvement of elders and community when resolving conflicts, chiefs consult councils of elders, involve respected community members. This collective process strengthens reconciliation and acceptance.

Use of cultural practices chief may employ traditional rituals, proverbs and moral teachings. These reinforce reconciliation and social cohesion. The United Nations Development Programme (2012) highlight that, informal justice systems emphasize restorative approaches.

Chiefs actively encourage reconciliation by using mediation, dialogue, cultural practices, and restorative measure. Their goal is to ensure that conflicts end with peaceful coexistence and restored relationships which are essential for community stability.

4.5.5 Chief Decision Restore Peace in Community

The result in Fig4.5 shows that, the chief is a peace practitioner with his decisions as agreed by the majority of the participants. Participants 48(96%) agreed that chief's decisions help restore peace in the community and 2(4%) did not agree that chef's decision help to restore peace in the community.

The chief emphases on reconciliation rather than punishment. Chiefs focused on healing relationships, promoting forgiveness, reintegrating conflicting parties into the community. This reduces hostility and prevents future conflicts. Kwasi Wiredu (1996) argues that African traditional systems practise reconciliation and social harmony.

Chiefs decision the restore peace in the community because they prevent future conflicts. Chief offer guidance and warnings and reinforce community norms. This helps maintain lasting peace and stability.

Chief decisions play a crucial role in restoring and maintaining peace by emphasizing reconciliation, community participation, and cultural accepted solutions. Their authority and approach ensure that conflicts are resolved in ways that promote long-term harmony and stability.

4.7 Chapter Summary

Chapter four focused on the presentation, analysis and discussion of the data obtained from the field. It sought to provide the answers to the research objectives that were highlighted

in the introduction and as well in chapter one. The chapter also tent to answer the research question in chapter one which are, what are the roles of family leaders in solving family conflicts or issues?, what are the roles of village heads in solving conflicts at family levels, interpersonal level and inter-community levels conflicts and what are the roles of chiefs in solving conflicts at all levels either family level, interpersonal level and inter-community level as the final stage in solving conflicts. This chapter has been structured in a way that the first part presented the bio data of the participants in data collection, then move to present on the first objective of the study up to the third objective which is the last part to be presented. The findings of the study have been also discussed in relation to the other relevant literature.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction.

This chapter summarises the whole project as well as the findings concerning the roles of the traditional leaders in conflict resolution in Zimbabwe a case study of Guruve rural district. The study was carried researching towards the roles of family elders in solving family conflicts or issues, the roles of village heads in solving conflicts at family levels, interpersonal level and inter-community levels conflicts and the role of chiefs in solving conflicts at all levels either family level, interpersonal level and inter-community level as the final stage in solving conflicts. Summary of key findings were presented in line with the specific objectives of the research. Conclusions were drawn from the overall findings of the research whilst recommendations were formulated on the basis of the analysis of participants' responses.

5.2 Summary

5.2.1 Summary of the Whole Project

Chapter One of this study provided a general overview including the background of the study as well as the significance of the study. Chapter provided the problem of the study, aim of the study, objectives and research questions of the study and it acted as the foundation of this study providing the definition of key terms along with the delimitation and limitations of the study as well as chapter conclusion.

Chapter Two reviewed literature review focusing on the most relevant literature to the study.it highlighted views from secondary data sources used in shaping the study. Chapter two reviewed the work from other researchers and scholar who also researched on the roles of

traditional leaders. The chapter also presented the theoretical framework which the study based on.

Chapter Three outlines and explains the methodology which is relevant in caring out the research, it also included the information of the research design. The chapter provided the best instruments used for data collection and data analysis methods used in conducting the research.

Chapter Four was focusing on data presentation and analysis linking new knowledge to fill the gaps identified in literature review. The data was presented in form of tables, pie chart bar graphs and texts. The finding were grouped in themes and subthemes of research objectives as well as research questions.

Chapter Five is the last chapter and it presented the whole study. It presented the summary and conclusions drawn from the study, it also presented the recommendations in areas for future studies.

5.2.2 Summary of the Research Findings.

The first objective was to analyse the role of family leaders in solving family conflicts or issues. The research revealed that there are several roles played by family elders the likes of grandparents, aunties, parents and uncles. They solve different types of conflict which are in the family such as inheritance conflict which is solved by grandparents or grandfathers.

Aunties the resolve conflict like marriage issues. When a couple got into a fight or a conflict, they first consult the auntie before they go anywhere with the issues or before the conflict escalates to the village heads. If they fail to solve the conflict they flow the traditional informal hierarchy. The conflict escalates to the village heads then to the chief if they fail to resolve it or if it involves multiple complainers.

Family elders involve methods such as counselling, mediation when they are resolving conflicts. Their decisions are effective and they are accepted by the family members and sometimes they are not accepted that's where they resort to the village head.

The second objective was to assess the role of village heads in solving conflict at family levels, interpersonal and inter-community levels conflicts. Participants' response shows that village heads are the second to be consulted with the conflicts which cannot be solved at family levels such as land related conflicts, community conflicts and disagreements. They use different methods in resolving the conflict such as mediation, dialogue. Their decisions are effective and they are accepted by the community and if they are not accepted they go to the chief. And they are accessible for the complaints from the people.

The third objective was to assess the role of chiefs in conflict resolution which is the final stage when solving conflicts. The chief resolve all types of conflicts at all levels. The data gathered shows that the chief is the last person in the hierarchy of informal conflict resolution. The chief pass the final judgement and his decisions are accepted by the community because they are traditionally rooted and passed from generations. If they did not accept the decision given by the chief, he consults the formal courts.

5.3 Conclusions

The first question was on the roles of family leaders in solving family conflicts or issues in Zimbabwe a case of Guruve district. The study concludes that the family roles in resolving conflicts and their methods that they use it are important to the Guruve district because they are fundamental to maintain norms and values. Across the whole Zimbabwe they are important because they bring about peace stability and social cohesion. Family elders are also important to the whole world because it help in achieving the no.16 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which is on peace, justice and strong institutions: promote peaceful and inclusive

societies. Family elders help to achieve justice to the family member. This is supported by the indigenous knowledge system theory which recognises local community based systems knowledge as valid essential for solving social problems by Hoppers, (2002). The indigenous knowledge includes customs, rituals oral traditions and taboos it shapes how disputes are mediated by family elders village heads and chiefs.

The second question was on the roles of village heads in solving conflict at family levels, interpersonal and inter-community levels conflicts. Village heads are important to the Guruve district because they provide immediate, culturally accepted and community-based solutions to disputes. To the Zimbabwe village heads are important because they provide justice, prevent conflicts from escalating and the also promote reconciliation. The study concluded that village heads are important to the whole world because they help in the achieving the no16 of the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which is on the peace, justice and strong institutions: promote peaceful and inclusive societies. The village heads are important because they resolve conflicts working towards peace and promote peaceful societies. This I supported by the indigenous knowledge system theory. The theory by Hoppers, (2012) recognises the local community system in solving conflicts and their wisdom.

The third question was on the role of chiefs in solving conflicts at all levels either family level, interpersonal level and inter-community level as the final stage in solving conflicts. The study concludes that chiefs are important to the Guruve district because they maintain peace, justice and social order to the community. Chiefs are important to the whole Zimbabwe because they promote reconciliation and uphold cultural values. The chief is the last person the informal hierarchy to resolve conflicts and promote peaceful society as of no16 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). And also the indigenous knowledge systems theory recognises their local wisdom and knowledge. The transformation theory also supports towards the no16

of SDGs. The theory was proposed by John Paul Lederach, (1995) it emphasises on the transformed of a conflict into an opportunity for positive change. It moves beyond immediate problem solving to focus on addressing the underlying social, cultural and relational structures that produce conflict. The study conclude that it is important because it aligns with traditional approaches in Zimbabwe, where conflict damaged relationships, not merely punishing offenders. Lederach's emphasis on rebuilding relationships resonates with the African philosophy of Ubuntu/hunhu which prioritizes collective wellbeing, empathy and interdependence (Murith, 2006; Murove, 2009).

5.4 Recommendations

The study showed that the roles of family elders in conflict resolution contribute to resolving conflicts. It is recommended that family elders they promote impartiality and fairness. Family elders must be encouraged to remain neutral and unbiased when resolving disputes in family cases involving relatives.

The study shows that the village heads contribute to resolving conflicts and it is recommended that the village heads must uphold fairness, transparency and neutrality when resolving disputes.

The study revealed that chief works with the formal institution when resolving conflicts. It is recommended that the relationship between the chief and the courts be strengthened and allow them to work together without any obstacles between.

5.5 Topic of Further Research

Relationship between traditional leaders and formal courts in promoting peace-building in Zimbabwe.

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APPENDIX I:

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE COMMUNITY MEMBERS

My name is…… (B222426B), an undergraduate student at Bindura University of Science Education (BUSE) studying BSc Honours degree in Peace and Governance. I am conducting a survey in this community to have your knowledge on how local/traditional methods are used to resolve conflicts. Participation is voluntary. Your answers will be confidential and used only for the research. Your feedback will contribute to a better understanding of Indigenous Knowledge System in conflict resolution. You may stop at any time.

Section 1

Introduction and Demographics.

Question	**Options (tick where apliccable)**
Gender	male ( ) female ( ) prefer not to say ( )
Age group	18-30 ( ) 31-40 ( ) 40-50 ( ) Above 50 ( )
Role in the community	Community member ( ) Women's group ( )
Years lived in this community	Less than 5 ( ) 5-10 ( ) More than 10 ( )

Section2

ROLES OF FAMILY ELDERS.

Question	**Yes**	**No**	**sometimes**
1. Do family elders help resolve conflicts?			
2. Are decisions made by family elders respected by family members?			
3. Do family elders only resolve family conflicts?			
4. Do family elders like aunties (tete) solve marriage issues?			

5. Do family elders like Grandfather (sekuru) solve inheritance matters?			
6. Are the solutions given by the famiy elders in solving conflicts effective?			
7. Do family elders use mediation when solving conflicts?			

Section 3

ROLE OF HEADMAN

Question	Yes	No
8. Do headmen take part in resolving community conflicts?		
9. Do headmen handle land related disputes?		
10. Are headmen fair when resolving conflicts?		
11. Do village elders solve community disagreements?		
12. Do village elders use dialogue when solving disputes?		
13. Do headman use mediation between parties wen solving conflicts?		
14. Are head man accessible when a problem need to be reported?		

Section 4

ROLE OF CHIEFS

Question	Yes	No
15. Are cases referred to the chiefs when elders and headman fail to resolve them?		
16. Do chiefs use traditional customs in resolving conflicts?		
17. Are decisions made by chiefs generally accepted by the community		
18. Does the chief encourage reconciliation between conflicting parties?		
19. Do chief' decisions help restore peace in the community?		

Thank you for your time.

APPENDIX II:

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE VILLAGE HEADS

My name is ……. (B222426B) a student at Bindura University of Science Education (BUSE) conducting a research on Indigenous Knowledge Systems and conflict resolution. Your perspective as a village head/chief is very important. Participation is voluntary and confidential.

Section1

Introduction or Profile

Question	Option
Years serving as village head	1-3 years ( ) 3-5 years ( ) 5-7 years ( ) 7-10 years ( ) Above 10 years ( )

Section2

Roles and responsibilities

1. What are the most frequent types of disputes you handle in this community?
   _____
   _____
2. What steps do you follow when resolving a conflict?
   _____
   _____
3. How do you ensure fairness and transparency in your judgments?
   _____
   _____
4. How do you ensure that both parties involved in a dispute are heard fairly?
   _____
   _____
5. How do you work or collaborate with the chief?
   _____
   _____
6. How often do you successfully resolve conflicts without referring them to higher authorities?
   _____
   _____

7. What do you do when a case is not resolved in your court?
   _____
   _____
8. How do community members respond to your conflict resolution efforts?
   _____
   _____
9. How often do you report unsolved disputes to the chief?
   _____
   _____
10. Are there cases where disputes are referred to formal courts? If yes at what circumstances?
    _____
    _____

Thank you for your time, your insights are very valuable.

APPENDIX III:

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE CHIEF

My name is ……(B222426B) a student at Bindura University of Science Education (BUSE). You are invited to take part in a study on Indigenous Knowledge System and conflict resolution. Your perspective as a chief is crucial and participation is voluntary and confidential.

Section1

Introduction and profile

Question	Option
Years serving as village head	3-5 years ( ) 5-7 years ( ) 7-10 years ( ) Above 10 years ( )

Section2

Role in conflict resolution

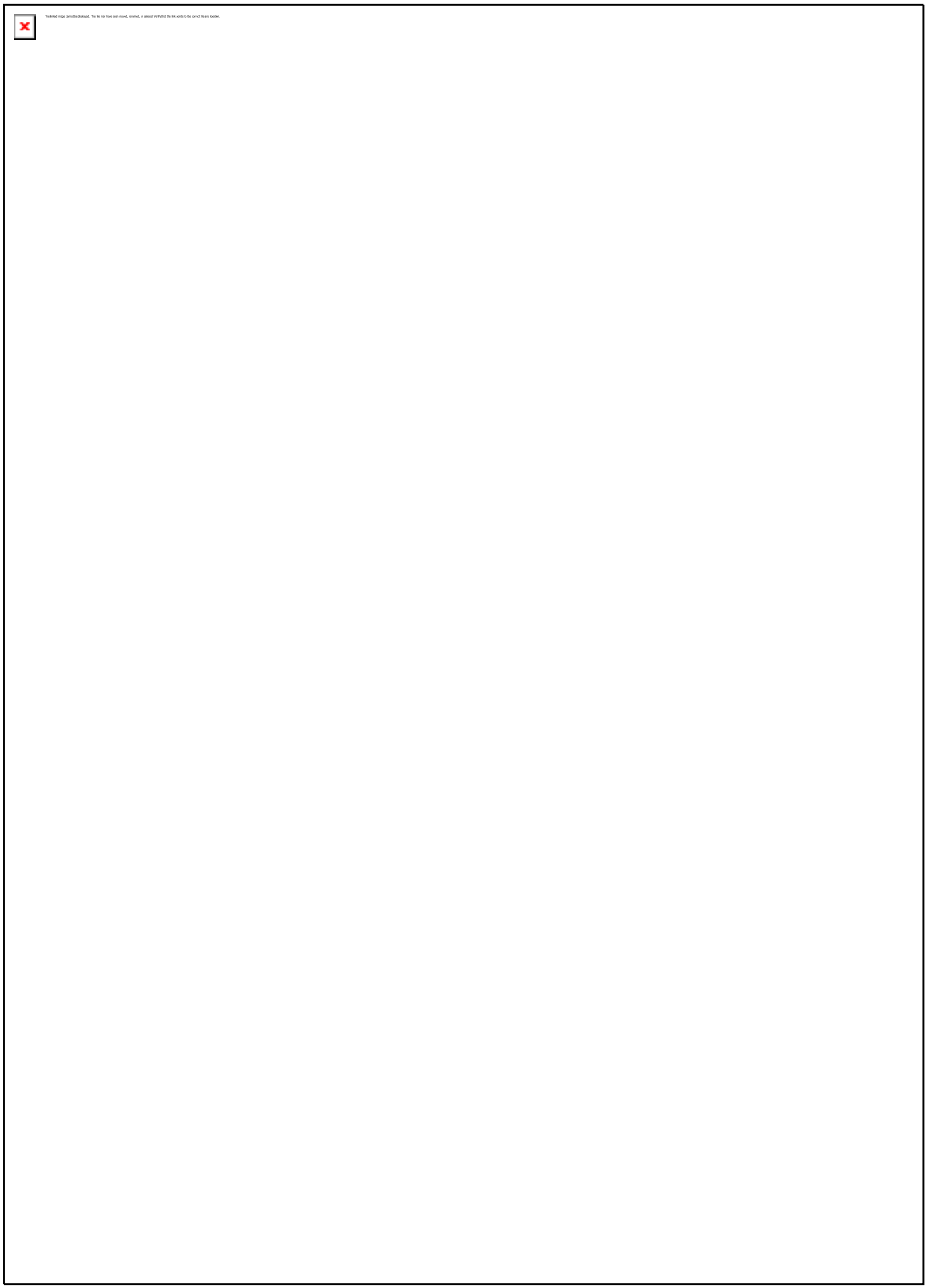
1. What types of conflicts are most commonly brought to you attention? _____
2. At what point are conflicts referred to you rather than handled by family elders or headman?
   _____
   _____
3. Can you describe the process you follow when resolving conflicts?
   _____
   _____
4. What principles or customs guide your decisions in conflict resolution?
   _____
   _____
5. How do you work with family elders and headman in resolving conflicts?
   _____
   _____
6. Do you consult the elders before making final decisions? Why or why not?
   _____
   _____

7. Are your decisions usually accepted and respected? Please explain.
   _____
   _____
8. What actions do you take when people refuse to accept your decisions?
   _____
   _____
9. Are there cases where disputes are referred to formal courts? If yes at what circumstances?
   _____
   _____

Thank you for your time and wisdom, you are appreciated

APPENDIX IV:

FIELD WORK LETTER



APPENDIX X:

APPROVAL LETTER FROM GURUVE COUNCIL

