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DEPARTMENT OF CIVICS AND ETHICAL STUDIES

RESEARCH THESIS

**ASSES THE ROLE INDIGENOUS CONFLICT RESOLUTION
PRACTICIES: THE CASE OF WEJERAT COMMUNITY IN
SOUTHEAST TIGRAY, ETHIOPIA**

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Abstract

This research was carried out to assess the position of the role of indigenous conflict resolution mechanism and democratization of the Wejerat community in the southern part of Tigray. To conduct this study, the researcher employed the qualitative methodology. Focus group discussions, in depth interview and participant observation were used to obtain the necessary data from the sample respondents in four tabeyas namely Gonkua, Bahri Tseba and Senale and sebebera. On top of this, the research observed at various scholarly articles related to the role of indigenous conflict resolution and promoting peace. The findings of the study showed that conflict prevails in Wejerat community. The conflicts are mostly caused by Hizaeti (grazing land), farm land .The study also revealed that in the traditional conflict resolution, the community mostly employs the win - win approach on which there is neither a loser nor a winner, but issues are compromised for mutual gain. Moreover, it was found that indigenous conflict resolution mechanism seem to be more appropriate than the modern ones or the court in conflict resolution because they are not easily exposed to bribery , are good at bringing sustainable peace, and they are more helpful in time management.

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CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Naturally human beings request secure life. To realize this, they establish strong cultural values that enable them to tone down dilemmas beyond state institutions. Hence, in the political history of human beings, almost no society has ever lived out of the sphere of social order and admin. The cultural and indigenous values in general and conflict resolution values in particular for the purpose of keeping collective security, peace, justice and order is highly considerable (Abrha, 2005). In contrary to this, conflict exists in all walks of humankind. If meaningful interaction exists, the conflict occurs in all kinds of human relationships and settings. Conflict is inherent. We cannot avoid it though we can minimize it through the using of various dispute settlement mechanisms like socio-cultural values. Indigenous social and cultural values could be a challenge and an opportunity to make peace. What matters is the way we apply them in the given context, the right time and the right values (Mayer, 2000). Ethiopia as multicultural and multilingual country has many of these Indigenous essential peace-making values in different societal institutions. In many parts of Ethiopia, various communities have developed their own cultural values and social knowledge to govern their relations and to mitigate conflicts (Ambaye, 2008; Uthman, 2008 :). Since time immemorial leadership has been part and parcel of Ethiopian culture where spiritually guided mediation is deep rooted in the Ethiopian history. Even foreign visitors like Alvares and Almeida as cited in the work of Ephraim wrote and gave their witness about this proven high moral status and very sophisticated dispute settlement system in Ethiopia three hundred years ago (Ephraim, 2008:). These social and cultural values could serve as opportunities to solve issues of national importance even in 21st century Ethiopia beyond communal and family disputes (ibid; Tarekegn 2008 :). When conflicts occur, these social institutions play an imperative role normalize all these problems.

The northeast and central highlands of Ethiopia practiced with decentralized administration for many centuries up until the turn of the 20th century. Tigray which has its own strong indigenous and traditional devices for conflict resolution in line with the recognized state institutions.

These sirit and customary mechanisms operate even in the absence of such formal institutions (Assefa, 2010 :). The Wejerat people are one of the Ethiopian societies found in South East Tigray who own strong strong cultural values with rich social knowledge common among others to manage intra and inter-group conflict (Abrha, 2005 2011). The principal socio-cultural and political ideology of the Wejerat people is termed as Kanchi (literally means ‘equality’). It is used to be the foci of communal life where ethical standards are established to govern the people for centuries prior to the introduction of modern administration to the land of Wejerat (ibid). Some of the principal components of the Kanchi system among others responsible and intact to date to address intra and inter-group disputes are Demer Ahiwat, Rikbe kahinat or guba-e likawnt (priest’s institution-church), Debarte and Gereb (ibid). These institutions have substantial role to play in enhancing peace, justice, order and security in their cultural and institutional perspectives though they lack credit and attention from the side of government. This article is thus intended to give a reader a glimpse into how the Wejerat people are managing social relations to bring about peace at inter and intra group levels by applying aboriginal diverse indigenous cultural values at their disposals. Finally, it analyzes the value of social knowledge in managing intra-communal and inter-communal relations for the sake of communal peaceful co-existence in the focus area.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

The Wejerat community in Southeast Tigray is well known for its deeply embedded indigenous conflict resolution practices, which are grounded in communal values, social norms, and the moral authority of elders. These mechanisms are not merely tools for dispute settlement; they are cultural institutions that reinforce identity, solidarity, and local governance.

However, in recent decades, such systems have been increasingly challenged by rapid socio-economic changes, urbanization, weakening of traditional authority, and the growing dominance of formal state judicial structures (Murithi, 2006; Asebe, 2012).

The Tigray region has experienced prolonged armed conflict and political instability, which have disrupted social structures and displaced large sections of the population. These conditions have affected the operational capacity and legitimacy of

indigenous conflict resolution institutions, including those of the Wejerat community. Furthermore, the influence of modern legal frameworks often creates tensions between statutory and customary systems, resulting in jurisdictional ambiguity and reduced recognition of traditional mechanisms (Gebre, 2010).

Despite their historical significance and potential to complement formal justice systems, there is limited empirical research documenting the specific processes, actors, and effectiveness of the Wejerat indigenous conflict resolution system in the current context. Existing studies on indigenous justice in Ethiopia tend to focus on widely known systems, such as the Gadaa in Oromia or the Shimagelle in Amhara, leaving smaller ethnic communities like the Wejerat under-researched (Pankhurst, 2003). This gap limits policy-relevant knowledge that could inform peacebuilding and legal pluralism in post-conflict Tigray.

The absence of systematic academic inquiry into the Wejerat case also means that its resilience, adaptability, and potential integration into formal peace and justice mechanisms remain poorly understood. Addressing this gap is particularly important in the post-conflict recovery period, where community-driven reconciliation and culturally grounded dispute resolution can play a key role in rebuilding trust and social stability. This study seeks to fill this void by critically examining the historical foundations, operational processes, challenges, and future prospects of the Wejerat indigenous conflict resolution system in Southeast Tigray.

1.3 Objectives

1.3.1 General Objectives

The main objective of this study is to investigate the indigenous conflict resolution and promoting peace in Wejerat community.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of this research are:

- To identify the cause of conflict in wejerat community.
- To asses the various indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms in the community.
- To explore the role of indigenous conflict resolution in create peace in the society.

1.4 Research Questions

Having identified the main objectives of the study, the points below are the principal questions of the research.

- What are the sources of conflict in Wejerat community?
- What are these role of indigenous conflict resolution in creating peace in the community
- what are these various conflict resolution mechanisms in wejerat community?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The study of indigenous conflict resolution mechanism among the wejerat people of south east tigray was important from the following perspectives: The findings of this study entitled, indigenous conflict resolution mechanism among the wejerat people of Southeast tigray: An exploratory study, are designed to give a brief, reliable and state-of-the-art account on the role of indigenous conflict resolution mechanism in resolving the different causes of conflict found in the study area based on the worldview of the people and other corresponding social, cultural, and economic practices of the society at large. For the reason that the people in the study area lack sufficient professional writings on the role of the indigenous institutions in conflict resolution, the current study is supposed to throw in at least few of those needy areas of the issue through initiating and provoking those potential researchers and providing them with basic and preliminary information on subject under study. Besides, this study intended to provide some information to the government and non-governmental bodies on the role of indigenous institution in conflict resolution in the study area. Also, the public organizations and any interested bodies may consider it as the reference in promoting the indigenous values of the people in general and the mechanism of indigenous conflict resolution in particular. It is also supposed to serve as a significant and reliable ground for policy makers, legal personnel and development partners (government bodies, nongovernmental organizations, etc.) in their activities towards initiating, executing, handling and supervising the holistic and sustainable development of the study area.

1.6 Scope of the study

The study will be limited to investigate indigenous conflict resolution mechanism applications among wejerat people. The case of wejerat woreda comprises of eight tabyas and they have their own indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms. However the study will be delimited only four Kebele namely *gonka, sebebera, senale, and bahery hatsey*.

In addition to this to geographical delimitation they will be also delimited in terms of cases to be assessed among many conflict cases in wejerat Woreda series selected as focuses.

1.7 Limitation of the study

Like other studies this studies also not without it limitation. Conducting this researcher has been faced the following limitation. The first limitation that was faced the researcher is the constraint of money and time to conduct such a qualitative research obviously demands time and finance. Therefore constraint of time and finance was the major limitation of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

it is necessary to point out varying theoretical underpinnings concerning conflict resolution and culture. This part of the research discuss the review of literature relevant the role of indigenous conflict resolution in promoting peace

2.1 understanding Conflict and Conflict Resolution

Different scholars state the term conflict in different ways. A conflict exists whenever incompatible activities occur . . . one party is interfering, disrupting, obstructing, or in some other way making another party's actions less effective.” (M. Deutsch, 1973)

Conflict is a normal part of life, and sometimes it is a n e c e s s a r y part of life.

The important issue is how we handle conflict. If we resolve our conflicts by fighting, then conflicts become something negative. If we handle it in a positive way, then conflict can help us learn more about ourselves and others.

“Conflict is an interactive process manifested in incompatibility, disagreement, or dissonance within or between social entities (i.e. individual, group, organization, etc.)” (. Rahim, 2001)

Different scholars explain the sources of conflict differently. For instance, According to Desalegn et al (2005:), the main cause of conflicts in Ethiopia is development or lack of it (underdevelopment) which he further explains as:

- Disagreements between different users over the allocation of waters land rights, or maintenance issues.
- Conflicts between users and the authority responsible for the project over inappropriate design of infrastructure, peasant relocations, water change, or management issues.
- Conflict between project between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries and,

- Conflict between donor agencies and the recipient country over design, management environmental impact, and financial issues.

In any social structure, conflicts are arise over different opportunities for an adequate reward. For all these conflicts to happen we have conflict resolution methods.

Conflict resolution methods may include negotiation, mediation and arbitration.

Negotiation is a conflict resolution method by dialogue or discussion between two parties.

Mediation refers to a conflict resolution method on which decisions are not given.

“Although it still allows disputing parties considerable flexibility in reaching a resolution, mediation is quite a bit more structured and formalized than general negotiation because it employs a neutral, third-party mediator to assist the parties with reaching a consensual agreement”(Adams,2010).

Whereas arbitration is a way of setting a conflict on which the third party is involved and gives decisions. “...after reviewing evidence and hearing arguments from all interested parties, are given the power to impose their determination as to how a dispute should be resolved (ibid).”

2.2 Approaches’ of conflict resolution

- **Avoiding:** Low assertiveness, low cooperativeness - In the avoiding strategy, individuals tend to sidestep or ignore conflicts altogether. They may avoid expressing their own concerns and refrain from addressing the concerns of the other party. This approach is often used when the issue is deemed unimportant or when individuals want to delay dealing with the conflict. In IT management, you may recognize avoiding as a conflict resolution strategy when someone simply ignores a problem, a deadline, or even you. Of course, this type of avoidance could very well happen in any other type of industry, too.
- **Competing:** High assertiveness, low cooperativeness - The competing strategy involves a high level of assertiveness to satisfy one’s own concerns, often at the expense of the other party’s needs. Individuals using this strategy seek to win, dominate, or achieve their goals without much regard for collaboration or compromise. It is effective in situations where quick, decisive action is required.
- 3. **Accommodating:** Low assertiveness, high cooperativeness - Accommodating involves prioritizing the needs and concerns of the other party over one’s own. This strategy is characterized by a high level of cooperativeness and a low level of assertiveness. It is often used

when individuals want to maintain harmony in relationships, value the relationship more than the specific issue, or when the issue is not crucial to them. Not surprisingly, where IT managers may have to draw a hard line – on hard skills and hardware – they may be able to flex when it comes to softer skills such as communication, team member training, work schedule flexibility, and task assignment.

4. Compromising: Moderate assertiveness, moderate cooperativeness - Compromising aims to find a middle ground where both parties make concessions to reach a mutually acceptable solution. This strategy involves a moderate level of assertiveness and cooperativeness. It is useful when maintaining the relationship is important, and neither party's concerns can be fully addressed without some level of sacrifice.

- **Collaborating:** High assertiveness, high cooperativeness - Collaborating is a win-win strategy that seeks to address the concerns of both parties fully. It involves high assertiveness in pursuing one's own needs and high cooperativeness in understanding and meeting the needs of the other party. This strategy is ideal for complex issues where both perspectives are valuable, and a creative, integrative solution is possible. Theories and Models Employed in Conflict Resolution Conflict resolution as discipline has developed theoretical insights into the nature and sources of conflict and how conflicts can be resolved through peaceful methods to effectuate durable settlements (Meha Dixit, 2011).

2.3 Types of Conflict

2.3.1 Intra-Personal Conflict

Intra-personal conflict arises within an individual, due to divergent goals and multiple roles that the individual is expected to play.

Goal conflicts arise when an individual faces the problem of choosing among many competing goals. Role conflicts occur when the expectations of an individual's role are materially different or opposite and the individual can meet a particular expectation only at the cost of other expectations. It also occurs because of role ambiguity. Role ambiguity occurs when an individual is not clear about his duties and responsibilities.

2.3.2 Interpersonal Conflict

Interpersonal conflict occurs when two or more persons interact with each other. Such interaction may take place between peers or between seniors and subordinates.

The conflict between them might arise due to differences in the choices made by them. It occurs as a result of an individual's inability to conform to the norms of the group.

The main causes of this conflict are – personality differences, perceptions, power and status differences, clash of values and interests, scarcity of resources, etc.

2.3.3. Inter-Group Conflict

Such conflict occurs between two or more groups in an organization. Intergroup conflicts arise for organizational causes rather than interpersonal purposes.

Conflicts between production and sales departments, between management and unions, are examples of inter-group conflicts. The major reasons for such conflicts are competition for scarce resources, task interdependence, joint decision-making, introduction to change, and incompatible goals.

2.3.4. Inter-Organizational Conflict

This type of conflict arises between two organizations, because of business competition. Both conflicting parties usually engage in providing similar types of products or services. As a result, both parties become barriers to each other's success.

2.4 Defining Indigenous Conflict Resolution Mechanisms

If people live in society or group, there are conflicts arising from differences in interest, prejudice, needs, and ambitions. When conflicts occur between groups, societies adopt their own indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms. Indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms are grass roots and community-based mechanisms of solving conflicts arising within or between individuals, groups and communities according to their customary set of practices that are present in all communities. They are age-long and ancient set of practices and part of social system which play important role in the reconciliation, maintenance and improvement of societal relationships. The mechanisms are deep-rooted and contained in the custom, culture and traditions of the society.

Although indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms differ from society to society, region to region, and culture to culture, there are certain features that indigenous institutions share. These are: include the following features

Context specific: One of the features of indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms is that each indigenous institution has its own distinct structure of resolution which dictates how various forms of conflict should be resolved. Indigenous conflict resolution approaches vary considerably from society to society, from region to region, from community to community. There are as many different indigenous approaches to conflict resolution as there are different societies and communities with a specific history, a specific culture and specific custom. There is no one single and general principle and procedure of “indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms”. Rather, indigenous conflict resolution approaches are always context specific.

Voluntary and consensual proceedings: Indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms generally require voluntary participation of both conflicting parties and reaching agreement to abide by the outcomes. Indigenous institutions do not have the kind of coercive mechanism as does the formal or modern system and rely on social pressure and exclusion from the community to deal with noncompliance.

Accepted and flexible norms, rules and values: Conflict resolution mechanisms generally deliver justice in accordance with norms, rules and values that are generally known and accepted by societies. However, the rules and evidence are often flexible and can be adapted to particular cases and circumstances.

Negotiation and compromise: Indigenous conflict resolution systems generally involve negotiation between the conflicting parties to try and resolve the case amicably. This usually involves both parties accepting some measure of responsibility for the dispute and agreeing to the decision

Dynamism and responsiveness to change: indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms are not static but evolve over generations to their current status, and can respond to changes in views and values. Many have evolved in recent times and changed over the past periods to become more formalized in response to interactions with the formal systems and regional, national or international pressures.

Restoration and maintenance of peaceful co-existence: Indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms aim to restore peace and harmony between the conflicting party members, neighbors, clans or local groups so that the former accuser can continue to live together in frequent interaction.

Forgiveness and compensation: Indigenous conflict resolution institutions often require the loser or wrongdoer to ask forgiveness and/ or pay compensation, rather than imposing physical punishment or imprisonment. Compensation is often paid by one individual, family or clan to another in the form of restorative penalty that enables parties to be reconciled.

2.5 Conceptual frame work

2.5.1 Indigenous conflict resolution mechanism.

Traditional conflict resolution mechanism is a social capital defined as the capability of social norms and customs to held members of group together by effectively setting and facilitating the terms of their relationship. Sustainability facilitates collective action for achieving mutually beneficial ends (Ferd-manesah, 2005). Over the years, there have developed inter groups conflict over land, increasing reliance on formal contracts to regulate relationship and create understanding , and shifts in methods of conflict resolution in that meditational statutory approaches based on court procedures(Fredmensa,2005).The immediate objective of such conflict resolution is to end the broken or damaged relationship, rectify wrongs, and restore justice. Another aim is to ensure the full integration of parties into their societies again, and adopt the mood of co-operation. The objective of conflict resolution, therefore is to move away from accusations to settle hurt feeling and to reach compromise that my help improve future relationship. The effectiveness of the process and sustainability of the outcomes generally attributed to such factors as simplicity participatory nature, adoptable, flexibility ,complete relevance and comprehensiveness (Brock –utne, 2001) indigenous conflict resolution mechanism focus on the principle of empathy ,sharing and cooperation in dealing with common problems which underline the essence of humanity (Murithi,2006). Cultural approaches to resolving and managing disputes play a vital role in promoting peace and social order in communities, cultural values and provide the basis for interaction and norms by which individual and communities live this also sharing and equitable distribution of resources, those promoting Acclimate for peace. African culture principle relates to the very essence of existence and being human and how all humans are inextricably related. Therefore peacemaking is underscored by the principles of

reciprocity, inclusivity and sense of shared destiny between people.

It provides a value system for giving and receiving forgiveness. This is because society places greater emphasis on communal life. Therefore creating and sustaining positive mutual relations are shared tasks involving every one. It is believed that people are linked to each other including disputants as perpetrators or victims (Murithi, 2006).

2.5.2 Indigenous Conflict Resolution Method in Africa

Indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms in Africa are generally closely bound with socio political and economic realities of the life style of the communities. These mechanisms are rooted in culture and history of African people and are in one way or another unique to each community (Rabor and Karimi, 2014).

According to (Paul F, 2014) African customary conflict resolution is at its core consensual under taking the process is voluntary and any decision must be based on mutual while the officiating chiefs or elder do have authority to ultimately make decision of consult of the parties involved in the conflict as well as that of the community is what trivially validates the decision making process. The goal of customary dispute resolution to achieve solution that meet the need of all and can be honored by all whether, it is as local as the bush man trying to reach a consensus in the contained community of the Kalahari desert or as global as Nelson Mandela a practicing patient consensus building in the world stage (Emulate,2013).

Indigenous conflict reconciliation is also a predominant cultural value in many African dispute resolution systems indigenous dispute resolution authorities focus on restoring harmony to the community, encouraging consensus, and reconciling competing interests. An offending party may be to apologize to the community or to apologize to the community or to specific individual before any statement is finalized. In the criminal context customary dispute resolution emphasizes bringing the offender back into the community. Indigenous reconciliation is linked to mutual consent, as both the victim has to agree to the final outcome (Jacqueline, 2015)

2.6 The theoretical frame work of the study.

2.6.1 Karl Marx conflict theory

Karl Marx views that the more the rate or degree of inequality in the distribution of the relatively available or the scarce resource in the society, the greater is the basic conflict of interest between

it is dominant and subordinate segments, unlike the structural function a list the concept of social class is more than descriptive category; social class is used to explain how and why societies change.

Conflict theory is rooted in sociology where it is used to explain differences between classes within society and competition for scarce resources including economic wealth, political power and social status.

The famous social philosopher Karl Marx (1818-1883) sometimes referred to as the father of conflict theory. His thinking was profoundly influenced by an earlier German philosopher, George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831).

According to this theory, social life is based up on “ conflicts of interest” between the society’s two class system. The bourgeoisie those who own and control the means of production in society and the proletariat (those who simply sell their labor power in the market place of capitalism).

Social class is used to explain how and why societies change. The theory believed that humans make their own history and considers that conflicting issues related to production constitute the central engine of the history of human societies. Historical materialism revelations end of conflicts with abolition of private property (White, 2008; 226).

2.6.2 Dahrendorf conflict theory

Dahrendorf views conflict as an unending class struggle between authority figures and their subordinates that never end but mere temporarily regulated. He criticized Marx for his mere affirmation of the origin of conflict as the repression of the powerless by powerful and indicating the cores the overthrow of the owner of the means of the production of the workers/powerless. Dahrendorf provides that the conflict is caused by many factors irrespective of the political and economic system.

Dahrendorf (1958), introduces to the theory of conflict the view of productive and constrictive conflict. He sees conflict as necessary for achieving an end in the society for realization of social goals. He holds that social conflict produces change in the system which is necessary and good. A Dahrendorf attempt was to determine a systematic locus and a specific framework theory of conflict in sociological analysis.

2.6.3 Structural, functional theory

Different social theories were developed to explain the importance of stability in certain social structure.

Structural functionalism is one among classical sociological theories dealing with the need for social stability and how order can be maintained in the process of social life as object of sociological study (Durkheim, 1895). Durkheim's early studies show that how much the established social norms and customs are important in maintaining harmony and order within the social structure.

Weber sees conflict as highly contingent on the emergence of "charismatic leaders" who could mobilize subordinates are more likely to pursue conflict with super ordinates when they withdraw legitimacy from political authority when the correlation among members in class status, groups, and political hierarchies is high, discontinuity or degrees of inequality. The resource distribution with social hierarchies is high and when social mobility and social hierarchies of power, prestige and wealth are low.

Conflict between super ordinates and subordinates becomes more likely when charismatic leaders can mobilize resentment of subordinates. When charismatic leaders are successful in conflict, pressure mounts to routines authority through new system of rules and administration. As system of rules and administration authority is imposed, the more likely are new subordinates to withdraw legitimacy from political authority and pursue conflict with the new subordinates especially when new traditionally and astrictive forms of political domination are imposed by elites.

Indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms are crucial for fostering peaceful and sustainable communities by leveraging cultural values and local knowledge. They offer a more accessible, affordable, and culturally relevant approach compared to formal legal systems, often promoting lasting resolutions and strengthening community bonds.

This research identifies the following key importance's of indigenous conflict resolution practices.

2.7 Cultural Significance of Traditional Conflict Resolution Methods

Traditional conflict resolution methods are deeply rooted in the cultural and spiritual practices of

Indigenous communities. These methods are often closely tied to the community's history, language, and traditions, and are passed down from generation to generation through oral storytelling and cultural practices.

For example, in many Indigenous cultures, conflict resolution is closely tied to spiritual practices such as smudging, prayer, and ceremony. These practices help to create a sacred and respectful atmosphere for conflict resolution, and are believed to promote healing, forgiveness, and reconciliation.

- **Cost-Effectiveness and Speed:**

Indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms are important for reducing the delay and cost of conflict resolution. Many poor people are deprived of access to justice simply for the reason that they cannot have enough money to pay the transportation, accommodation and legal representation costs to go through with the court processes.

- **Community Involvement and Empowerment:**

Indigenous processes actively involve community members, particularly elders and respected leaders, in finding solutions, fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility.

- **Restorative Justice and Reconciliation:**

Many indigenous approaches emphasize healing, reconciliation, and restoring relationships, rather than simply assigning blame or punishment.

Indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms provide a great opportunity for sustainable conflict resolution, peacemaking and the delivery of responsive justice. Since indigenous conflict

resolution mechanisms are more reachable, inexpensive and transparent, they help for the maintenance of law and order in the local communities. In addition, since elders are living and working in the community, they are close enough to the effect of the conflict. This makes elders

to be accessible to the people and understand the conflict dynamics in a better way which helps them to provide resolutions that best suits local circumstances than the court system. Hence, indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms provide an alternative forum to access justice for those

members of the community who are not well served by courts.

- **Sustainability and Resilience;**

By addressing the root causes of conflict and promoting social cohesion, indigenous mechanisms can contribute to long-term peace and stability within communities.

- **Complementary to Formal Systems:**

In many contexts, indigenous mechanisms work alongside formal legal systems, providing a more holistic approach to justice and conflict management.

Conflict resolution encourages or creates healthy relationship between or among individuals and groups.

Elizabeth (2008) notes that “With most conflicts, it is important to find a resolution. This seems like a statement of the obvious, but many people suppress their anger or just ‘go a long to get along’. They think that by addressing a conflict they are creating one, simply quiet when upset.

Unfortunately, this is not a healthy and long-term strategy” for two reasons. Firstly, if conflicts are not resolved as quickly as possible, they might hurt the interaction. Secondly, unresolved conflict has a detrimental effect on one’s health and life span.

Elizabeth (2008) states certain guidelines below so that conflict resolutions are easier.

Get in touch with your feelings: An important component of conflict resolution involves only you knowing how you feel and why you feel that way. It may seem your feelings should already be obvious to you, but this isn’t always the case (ibid). From this, one can perceive that sometimes we don’t feel ok, but we don’t know what the reason is behind. Some other times, we feel the other guy isn’t doing what he/she is expected to do; however, we are not really informed of what we need from them. Thus, we can have better communication with the other guy we need to get in touch with our feelings and thoughts, psychotherapists.

Hone your listening skills: When it comes to effective conflict resolution, how effectively we listen is at least as important as how effectively we express ourselves (ibid). The writer also states that it’s vital to understand the other person’s perspective rather than just our own, if we are to come to a resolution. In other words, sharpening up one’s listening skill is very helpful in conflict resolution. In other words, good listening is decisive in conflict resolution. The more we are active in listening, the more we become good problem solvers.

Practice assertive communication: communicating your feelings and needs clearly is also an important aspect of conflict resolution. As you probably know, saying the wrong can be like throwing fuel on a fire, and making a conflict worse (ibid). Put other words, telling what's on your mind in a very clear language quickens conflict resolution. This should not be in a way that offends the other guy.

Seek a solution: Once you understand the other person's perspective, and they understand yours, it's time to find a resolution to the conflict, a solution you both can live within (ibid). According to her, sometimes a simple and obvious answer comes up once both parties understand the other person's perspective. It is possible to understand from this that if conflict happened because of a misconception of the other person's idea it can be easily resolved by pardoning and having an open discussion then after. In cases where two people totally disagree on an issue, sometimes it's good to agree to disagree.

Know when it's not working: Because of the toll that ongoing conflict can exact from a person sometimes it's advisable to put some distance in the relationship or cut ties completely(ibid). According to the writer, in cases of abuse, for example, simple conflict resolution techniques can only take so far, and personal safety needs to take priority. In other words, there are two options here. Firstly, a relationship needs to be continued by resolving the conflict that occurred. Secondly, the interaction should be off, if it's not helpful

. **CAUSES OF CONFLICT** There are different ways of examining the nature of a conflict and identifying the factors that give rise to it. Even though one precipitating event may lead to an open confrontation, most conflicts arise from a complex and multiple set of factors that may include the history shared by people across the divide, the social, political, economic and cultural dynamics, the nature of the issues at stake etc. Thus a distinction needs to be made between

1.. The proximate or immediate causes

2. The underlying causes

Proximate Causes Proximate causes are those events, which may trigger violence for example, the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand of Austria in June 1914, which was the immediate cause of the beginning of the First World War.

Underlying Causes Underlying causes are the fundamental and long-term causes, which create conditions in which immediate triggers of conflict occur. The immediate and underlying causes are interconnected but in conflict resolution more attention needs to be paid to identifying the underlying and root causes if we want to work towards sustainable peace. Theoretical

explanations of the underlying causes of conflict focus on either the human agency or the social structural conditions. Theories under each of these categories are a reflection of the ‘nature versus nurture’ debate: whether human beings are primarily affected by genes or by social interactions.

Human Nature and Conflict Theories focusing on the agency-based explanation seek to answer questions such as is conflict inherent in human beings? Are human beings genetically programmed for violence? These theories locate the causes of conflict at the level of the individual or collective agency, based on human behavior.

One set of theories argues that aggressive behavior is innate and biologically programmed in the human species. Thomas Hobbes believed that human beings are selfish by nature and “that humanity is characterized by careless, and indeed relentless, thirst for power.” Edmund Burke “saw humanity as inherently conflictual.” Sigmund Freud contends that aggression “is carried out in the name of self-preservation, and is inherent to humans.” Aggression helps human beings to protect and enhance their existence. However, Gandhi was in a different league altogether as he believed in the essential goodness of human beings. He had a very positive view of human nature and believed that humans could respond to “the call of the spirit” and rise above selfishness and violence.

Another explanation of the agency-based theory is psychoanalytical. This theory argues that early differentiation among human beings between ‘self’ and ‘other’ manifests itself in a deep psychological need for enemies.

The socio-psychological perspective focuses on processes of group formation and differentiation, mainly the role that images, (mis) perceptions, stereotyping, and dehumanisation play in the decision-making, which leads to violent conflict. The psycho-cultural viewpoint provides accounts of conflict behaviour in terms of culturally shared images and perceptions of the external world.

Society and Conflict Conflict occurs in human interactions that take place within the context of the family, the community and the society. When individuals or groups believe that the family/society does not meet their interests, they try to change the social and familial norms and structures by force, which often leads to situations of violent conflict. Thus socio-structural theories argue that aggression is not innate but its expression depends on factors external to the individual. Structural theories lay emphasis on the organisation of society that creates the causes and conditions for conflict. Unjust social structures and institutions play a significant role in creating and perpetuating social conflicts. Social structures and institutions often favour some groups of people / communities and by extension disfavour others. This emerges as an important source of violent conflict.

i. Albert Bandura argued that there are three primary sources of human aggression: familial settings, sub-cultural context and symbolic modeling.

a) Social learning takes place first and foremost in the family and human beings learn appropriate behaviour within family settings. Bandura argues that families that have conflicts all the time are most likely to have conflictual children. Thus violent families produce violent offspring. Additionally, American psychiatrist, James Gilligan, known for his work with some of the most “violent criminals” living in America’s prisons, put forth the theory that childhood abuse creates violent personalities. Gilligan pointed out that most of the “criminals” living in American prisons had had a brutal childhood- many had been beaten, sexually assaulted, prostituted or neglected to a life-threatening degree by their parents. He thus concluded that childhood abuse and neglect can create violent personalities that will then manifest violent behaviour in social institutions

b) Subcultures are another source of social learning leading to aggression. Bandura argues: “The highest rates of aggressive behaviour are found in environments where aggressive models abound and where aggressiveness is regarded as a highly valued attribute.” However, all people raised in violent environments may not be violent because “many people may simply aspire not to be violent.” Bandura does suggest, though, that there is a strong capacity to instruct a group in the ways of violence. He makes his point in suggesting that the military is an excellent example of making otherwise relatively non-violent persons violent.

c) Another major source of social learning is symbolic sources such as television. “Television transmits pictures of violence, impressions of violence and even the symbolic culture of violence. We learn how to cope with ‘reality’ through television, and are susceptible to its messages. This is especially true among the young of society.” ii. iii. iv. v. vi.

The non-fulfillment of basic human needs is another cause of conflict. John Burton propounded the basic human needs theory. Needs refer to basic human requirements for the continuation and propagation of life: material (food, shelter, health care, employment- freedom from want), cultural (right to religion, language) and social needs (respect, dignity and freedom from fear). The need for life to be perceived as being predictable and safe is extremely important. These needs are non-negotiable and universal and their satisfaction is essential for human development and social stability. These universal needs must be satisfied if protracted social conflicts are to be resolved. Thus the primary source of human behaviour is the satisfaction of human needs; however, these needs have to be satisfied within the social context. If the universal needs are not met in socially accepted ways, individuals/communities resort to violence in order to meet these needs. Gandhi had a need-based conception of society and conflict. In his view, conflict is the

result of structural denial of human needs. The creation of new structures is necessary for the satisfaction of human needs. This would require a method of struggle that satisfies three conditions: destruction of need-denying structures, creation of need-satisfying structures and respecting the needs of the conflicting parties during the struggle.

The Gandhian approach to conflict resolution, i.e., Satyagraha was an attempt to satisfy all three conditions. Thus satisfaction of needs was central to conflict resolution.

An additional set of theories draw on critical social theory particularly the feminist and post-structuralist perspectives. These emphasise the central importance of social discourse- the language we use, the social practices we engage in- these generate exclusionist identities (us/them, insider/outsider).

Karl Marx located conflict in the economic structure. Marx's theory of class conflict argues that social institutions and structures reflect the material reality of society. The economic structure (economic determinism) has dominated over politics in the development of human history (historical materialism). As long as capitalists control the means of production, they would also wield power over social structures, making them inherently unjust towards the working class giving rise to conflicts between the capitalists and the proletariat (working class). **However**, Antonio Gramsci, a neo-Marxist, rejected the excessive emphasis on economic determinism. He introduced the theory of "ideological hegemony". This Understanding Sources of Conflict 53 theory takes into account not only the control of means of production by the ruling capitalist class, but it also encompasses a whole range of values, attitudes, beliefs, cultural norms and legal precepts which serve to justify the interests of the dominant class. Thus, it is the ideological hegemony of the ruling class that when challenged by the masses, gives rise to conflict. vii.

Johan Galtung, in his theory of structural violence, asserts that violence is built into unequal, unjust and unrepresentative social structures. Social structures, systems and institutions deprive some people of their rights and the ability to satisfy their basic human needs; they discriminate between groups, communities and nations to the point of threatening lives and livelihoods and prevent human beings from realising their full potential.

SOURCES OF CONFLICT From the underlying causes, we now move to the specific sources of conflicts, sometim also referred to as issues involved in a conflict or issues at stake in a conflict.

Information Lack of information, misinformation and different interpretations of information can lead to conflict. Disputants may not have sufficient information or even the same information about a given situation. In other instances, groups and individuals may interpret the same data or information in differing ways or they may assign different levels of importance to the same data. Control and manipulation of information is a major weapon in conflict situations

Miscommunication Ineffective communication is another source of conflict. Even if there are no basic incompatibilities between groups and individuals, miscommunication and misunderstanding can lead to conflict. Moreover, stakeholders may have different perceptions about the facts in a situation and until they are clarified, there can be no resolution. Self-centredness, selective perception, emotional bias and prejudices lead to differing perceptions between the stakeholders of a conflict. Lack of skill in communicating one's viewpoint in a clear and respectful manner often results in confusion, hurt and anger, all of which fuel the conflict further. Whether the conflict has objective sources or has arisen due to perceptual or communication problems, the people involved experience it as very real.

Resources This relates to conflict over material resources such as land, money or objects, which are evidently identifiable and can be negotiated. Historically, disputes over access to and control of territory, material, economic and scarce natural resources have been one of the dominant sources of conflict. One major element in the colonial empire building of the 19th and 20th century was the competition for resources and defence of national economic interests which were defined in territorial terms. Here each faction wanted to grab as much as it could; its behaviour and emotions were directed towards maximising gain. In extreme cases, disputants may resort to military action or the threat of it to gain or defend access to resources perceived as vital for survival, for example, the developed Western countries attach a great deal of importance to maintaining their access to oil supplies in the West Asian region and are prepared to undertake extreme measures to do so. 54 Gandian Approach to Peace and Conflict Relationship In the twenty-first century, demands for land, fresh water and other natural resources are growing rapidly due to increase in population as well as consumption. But these resources are limited and Gandhi had very aptly said, "Earth provides enough to satisfy every [person's] need but not for every [person's] greed." Besides, environmental degradation has further complicated the situation and the consequences are being felt the world over. In India, the shortage of water has given rise to several conflicts at the local and regional level.

Relationships relationships are an important facet of human life. Gandhi was in fact always keen to cooperate with the opponent to build relationships, which would form the basis for a sound post-conflict life. As human beings, we have personal (family) and social (community) and/or organisational (business) relationships. In these relationships, people have disagreements over a variety of issues, which is very normal. However, sometimes the interdependence created by these relationships introduces a destructive dimension to these differences, for example, a wife is repeatedly subjected to abuse and domestic violence but is unable to walk out of the relationship because (apart from other social and cultural pressures) she may be economically dependent on her husband, who is aware of this interdependence and uses it to his advantage.

Interests and Needs Non-fulfillment of interests and needs are a major source of conflict. The non-fulfillment of these needs may be either a reality or just a perception. In fact, important needs for identity, respect or participation are often at the heart of conflicts that ostensibly seem to be a contest for material things. Conflicts usually arise because of the denial of following needs: Unfulfilled needs for economic resources or the perception that economic resources are not distributed fairly;

Unfulfilled needs for safety, respect and participation in social life or a perception of unjust relationships and humiliation; and Unfulfilled needs for identity, culture, religious values or a perception that these are threatened.

When the needs of individuals, communities and nations are denied in the above mentioned areas, it leads to structural violence. Vertical structural violence can operate in the following arenas insulting the respective needs:

Repression – political – the insulted need is freedom;
Exploitation – economic – the insulted need is well-being; and
Alienation – cultural – the insulted need is identity. For Gandhi, exploitation was the essence of violence. He saw violence as anything that impeded individual self-realisation and that violence could be either direct or structural in nature. Dehumanisation is a case in point.

Structures Structures- both social and organisational- determine who has access to power and Understanding Sources of Conflict 55 resources, who has the authority to make decisions and who is afforded respect. Conflicts about or within structures often involve issues of justice and competing goals.

Power Power can mean different things – legitimacy, authority, force, or the ability to coerce. It is a vital ingredient in conflict situations; conflicts either centre on the search for more power or a fear of losing the same. However, power is intangible; it cannot be counted. But

power does not exist in a vacuum; it is present in, and based on, relationships. Besides, one should look at resources as a key area that determines the actual location of power or the need for power. Power conflicts can occur between individuals, groups or nations, when one or both sides choose to take a power approach to the relationship and wish to maintain or maximise the amount of influence that they exert in the relationship and the social setting. It is impossible for one side to be stronger without the other being weaker, at least in terms of direct influence over each other. Thus, a power struggle ensues which usually ends in victory for one side and defeat for the other, or in a ‘stand-off’ with a continuing state of tension.

Power can be either hard (coercive) or soft (persuasive). Hard power consists of the ability to command and enforce while soft power comprises of the ability to bring about cooperation, provide legitimacy and inspire. In violent conflict situations, hard power dominates, as armies and militias grapple for victory. On the other hand, soft power is essential for peacemaking and peace-building. Power should necessarily be accompanied by accountability; otherwise it tends to give rise to more conflicts. Being accountable would mean finding ways to report to others and being open to be questioned by others.

Gandhi had a very different notion of power- one that is humane and constructive- and “that can transform and not destroy.” He was keenly aware of the difference between power-over and power-with, and his own conceptions of society and conflict were firmly rooted in the latter.

Governance Governance relates to decisions that define expectations, grant power or verify performance. It is concerned with the way in which society is governed, the distribution of authority and resources within it, and the legitimacy of these in the eyes of the members of society. Governance, basically, is a process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented or (not implemented). In simple terms, ‘governance’ is what a ‘government’ does. Politics provides the means by which the governance process operates.

‘Good governance’ is an indeterminate term used in development literature to describe how public institutions conduct public affairs and manage public resources in order to guarantee the realisation of human rights. According to the United Nations, good governance has eight characteristics: consensus-oriented, participatory, following Rule of Law, effective and efficient, accountable, transparent, responsive, equitable and inclusive.

Good governance is considered to be integral to economic growth, the eradication of poverty and hunger, and sustainable development. It makes violent conflict less likely. If governments reflect the values and satisfy the needs of those over whom they exercise authority, they will be legitimised. When the legitimacy is lacking or there is a doubt about 56 Gandian Approach to

Peace and Conflict Relationship its existence, the demands for social change can result in political turmoil and social unrest. If these demands are suppressed or ignored, violent conflict may arise. In contemporary times, the major governance issues relate to greater autonomy (political, economic and/or cultural), representative forms of government and equitable distribution of resources.

Rights Denial or violation of rights and the struggle for elimination of these violat are at the heart of many conflicts. Civil and political rights are often called ‘first generation rights’ and include rights of the individual in society to life, liberty and freedom of opinion and expression. Gandhi had always stressed on the centrality of the individual and felt that society could not be built on a denial of individual freedom. Economic, social and cultural rights are known as ‘second generation rights’ that comprise of rights to basic necessities such as food, shelter, health and education. The ‘third generation rights’ refers to collective rights like those of minorities and marginalised groups. Human rights are thus necessary for individuals to lead a dignified life. Some of the major Human Rights Conventions are the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948; Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1966; Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1966; Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women, 1979; Convention Against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, 1984; Convention on Rights of the Child, 1989. Rights may theoretically be guaranteed by the constitution of a state but in practice may not be accessible to the marginalised or they may be intimidated by powerful people from claiming their rights. Ultimately, the repeated denial of rights may lead to violent conflict. Thus while analysing conflicts, it is necessary to look at structural violence and explore the position and perception of stakeholders with regard to rights and freedoms

Culture Culture is an important factor in social conflict. It is learnt from the family, community, school, and media; it is not something human beings are born with. Culture determines the way individuals and groups act, the manner in which they relate to others and the way they think about and perceive events happening around them. Thus it is necessary to understand the cultural contexts of the individuals and groups involved in a conflict especially in situations where the contending sides are from different cultures. In fact, Marc Ross argues that there is a ‘culture of conflict’, which he defines as “a society’s configuration of norms, practices and institutions that affect what people enter into disputes about, with whom they fight, how disputes evolve, and how they are likely to end.” **Ideology** Ideology is mostly used in reference to the public world of politics. Political ideologies such as Fascism, Nazism, and Marxism

involve a set of fundamental beliefs about economic organisation or governance of society. One of the most famous ideological conflicts of the 20th century was the one between the Capitalist Bloc and the Communist Bloc popularly termed as the Cold War, which manifested in ways such as the formation of economic and military blocs, and proxy wars between client-states at the regional and local level. The Cold War ended with the disintegration of the former Soviet Union and withering away of the Communist Bloc.

Identity The oft-asked question of the Cold War era, ‘what is your ideology’ has been replaced in the post-Cold War era by the question ‘who are you’. People are increasingly conscious of ‘who they are’ and asserting their cultural and social identity. They are realigning themselves on the basis of ancestry, religion, language, values and institutions, and are rejecting distant and alien rule. This is an indication of the growing importance of identity consciousness in the post-Cold War era. Identity is used to describe a person’s sense of self and the relation of the self to the world. It is a basic human need that provides meaning and a sense of security as well as predictability for the individual and the group within a given social context. Without a strong sense of “who we are” and how we can “be” and continue to exist and feel safe in our surroundings, our relationship of the self or group to the world is threatened. Personal identity and dignity were very important to Gandhi. He argued that the loss of self-respect had to be avoided because without self-respect and inner security one cannot reach the road leading to self-realisation or start on the road to nonviolence. There are multiple identities- as broad as ‘woman’ or ‘man’ or a member of collectives such as ethnic, religious, or racial groups or as narrow as a member of one particular family. Identities concern people’s existential needs and values. They can be inclusive as well as exclusive; they can endure for generations or change with shifting situations (in response to threats, which may be either real or perceived, forcing people to adopt labels because identity markers such as ethnicity and religion may be exploited for selfish ends). Some identities are more important than others depending on how one perceives one’s identity but also depending on place, times and circumstances. Some identities are nested within each other, usually compatibly, for example, an individual can identify with both Rajasthan (one’s state) and India (one’s country). However, some identities may compete with each other, as in the case of former Yugoslavia. In the 1950s and 1960s of the former Yugoslavia, many people felt pride in having stood up to the Soviet Union in 1948 and creating a new economic system. But the scenario changed in the 1990s, when most people in the former Yugoslavia started 58 Gandian Approach to Peace and Conflict Relationship feeling that their identities as Serbs,

Croats, Slovenes, Muslims, or Bosnians were much more important than their Yugoslav identity. The process of disintegration of the former Yugoslavia into several small states (such as Serbia and Montenegro, Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina) was precipitated apart from other reasons due to large-scale ethnic killings and ‘ethnic cleansing’. With the rise in identity consciousness, religion, language and ethnicity are increasingly serving as faultlines for conflict. In contemporary times, ethnicity is seen as one of the most important elements of identity and the underlying cause of most ongoing conflicts. However, it must be clarified that many conflicts that are labeled as ‘ethnic’, suggesting that ethnicity is the cause. In reality ethnicity has been used there as a ‘method’ by which people have been mobilised in support of a particular leader or movement. This happens when a group or community first feels insecure or afraid and is then persuaded that a particular group or leader can offer them safety.

Values Values are dear to individuals and groups – these are the beliefs that shape their identity and faith perspectives that give meaning to their lives. Incompatibility in ways of life and ideologies such as preferences, principles and practices that people believe in can lead to value conflicts. When states, groups and individuals assert the rightness and superiority of their way of life and their political-economic system vis-à-vis other states, groups and individuals, values can then become a major component in such conflicts. Values are often seen as a part of one’s identity; and thus, challenge to values is often seen as a threat to identity, resulting in defensive reactions by individuals and groups since they assume that resolution of the conflict will require a change in values

CHAPTER THREE

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This part deals with the research methodology which is appropriate to the study., the research design data collection tools, sampling and participants, data analysis procedures and ethical considerations in a research are include.

3.1 Description of the study area

Wejerat Were located in South–East Tigray, Ethiopia.. It used to constitute twenty embas (villages) termed as ‘Isra-Adi’ (Abrha, 2005; Degafi, 2001 E.C; Hiluf, 2001). Wereda Wejerat are set into eight ‘kebeles/tabias’ namely: Sebebera, Gonka, Sen’ale, Genti, Adi-keyh, Tsehafty, Adi-mesno and Bahri –Hatsey (the capital of Wejerat). The land area of Wejerat measures above 46,287 hectares and its elevation ranges from 800 to 3500 m above sea level. In terms of topography, the land lies in three ecological zones: quolla (low land), Woina Dega (intermediate), and Dega (high land). The mean annual rain fall ranges from 700 to 1200 mm (Abrha, 2005; Tarekegn, 2005). The region is characterized by varied topography, much of it rugged terrain intersected by valleys, rivers and ravines (Abrha, 2005; Degafi, 2001; Tarekegn, 2005). Regarding the demographic features of Wejerat, the population projection of 2005 indicates that the total population is 45,377 of which 22,496 are males and 22,881 are females. However, some researches claim that the total population of Wejerat is estimated to be above 70,000 (Abrha, 2005; Degafi 2001).

My research focus areas are senale, sebebera, gonka and bahri tseba

3.2 Research approach and design

There are three types of research methodologies in any research. These are quantitative, qualitative and both quantitative and qualitative research methods. Among the three, this study was employed qualitative research approach. The research used explanatory but without ignoring descriptive and exploratory design too. Explanatory design is relevant to explain the actual situation according to Status and Corbin (1998). Therefore, explanatory design supplemented by descriptive and exploratory were used to assess indigenous conflict resolution mechanism’s usage and future prospects in wejerat woreda.

Regarding the study approach, qualitative research approach was used primarily focusing on

first-hand information from the primary sources. As explained by different scholars, qualitative research is chosen to carry out an in depth study in order to search out important information. Qualitative research is an inquiry process understanding based on methodological traditions of inquiry that explore as social or human problem (Creswell, 1998). The basic instruments employees for this study were key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and non-participant observation.

3.3 Sources of data

In order to accomplish the required objective, the study used qualitative type of data which were drawn from primary and secondary sources. The primary data was obtained using an in depth interview, focus group discussion and observation, on the other hand secondary source like books, newspaper, magazine and other published and unpublished materials were also used to complement the data collected from primary sources.

3.4 Sample and sampling Techniques

As (Kruger and Newman,2006) explained in purposive sampling, the researcher selected a purposive sample in mind because usually there are one or more specific selected groups the researcher have seeking and to get the acknowledge elders in the community by solving conflicts, so this study employ non probability purposive sampling techniques. The research site wejerat woreda has 8 tabeyas. Among 8 tabetas of the woreda 4 tabeyas has been selected for the study for as a sample

3.5 Target population

The target population of the study was four *tabeyas* of the wejerat woreda. These *tabeyas* are *bahri tseba*, *senale*, *gonka* and *sebebera*,. The selection criteria for these kebeles in the study was done in the reference to the presence of higher rate of conflicts in the areas compared to the other tabeyas (woreda police office) The total number of target population for this study was 30.

3.6 Instruments of data collection

To get the required data for successful completion of this MA thesis study, the following methods of data collection were used.

3.6.1 Interview:

interview is the major method of data collection techniques in qualitative research. It is very helpful to elicit first-hand information from informants. Interview leads to more extensive

process that enables participants to construct more sophisticated and detailed account of their situation. Enabling them to see interaction and activities within which problematic events are played out (Stinger, 2007)

In- depth Interview In ethnographic research key informants interview is an important method. It helps the researcher gather sufficient information concerning issues under study. Therefore, in this study, in depth interview was conducted with key informants. Key informants were selected for the interview with the help of the society, on the bases of their level of understanding and knowledge about the people of wejerat culture in general and the cymatia mechanism in particular. Key informants were from different category of population and they were diverse in terms of their social status and authority.

3.7 Method of data analysis

In order to assesses the indigenous conflict resolution mechanism of the people in the study area, qualitative data analysis method is used in this thesis. It is true that a given research, data collection is indispensable. However, mere collection of data does not make a research unless the collected data is analyzed and interpreted. Therefore the researcher analyzed and interpreted the raw data that was gathered through all design tools and other secondary sources to answer the research questions and to meet stated objects by describing through the contextualization of the concepts based on the intention of the research participants step by step.

2 Focus group discussion (FGD) on some specific issues different people may have different concerns. Thus, to look at concerns of different individuals and even to assess their level of understanding on some issues FGD was employed as one method of collecting data and FGD was conducted from different target groups such as elders from different) religious elders. Four FGD were conducted. These are religious FGD, and the numbers of participants were 8, in elders FGD the number of participant were 8, in kebele social court FGD the number of participants are

3.8 Ethical considerations

Ethical consideration is essential aspects in the process of conducting research. In this regard, the researcher needs to consider ethical standards of the host community on which research have conduct. Therefore the researcher has considered the social and cultural norms of the host community on whom the research was carryout. With that goal, the researcher went out to the data collection after he secured the ethical approval and clearance from school of law and

governance and department of civics and ethics in Mekelle University. Moreover, beforehand objective and purpose of the research have clearly communicated to participants. On top that the researcher also noted informants as they have right to withdraw if they get discomfort in the process of their participation. While writing the report, the researcher has refrained from using unnecessary terminologies that might disappoint the participants of the study and the researcher avoid personal biases. be note informants as they have right to withdraw if they get discomfort in the process of their participation .Informants will not that all the information they provide in this study, depending on its sensitivity as well as their demands, will be kept confidential. Besides, as per the informants request and also the researchers judgment the require informants, name also kept anonym.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. DATA PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION

This chapter deals with the presentation and interpretation of the data gathered from the respondents of the study area.

4.1 .Cause of Conflict

To know their level of understanding the researcher questioned several different informants about the essence of conflict. One of the in depths interviewees informants aged 46 explains to the question, what does conflict mean? The informant responded that “Conflict is a clash of ideas between or among friends, neighbors, family. It can also be among or between people. The source of this conflict might be difference of interests.” Similarly, another respondent aged 68 illuminates conflict as follows:

Although conflict in different areas has varying sources by different people, there is one thing that makes common for all sources, that is the root of many conflicts is benefit. The resources in this world are very limited, however our wants are unlimited. Therefore, to fulfill our needs, we human beings want to have better advantage than other people. On the other hand, the other people will not all their resources to be taken away. So these differences lead to conflict. Then, the conflict can have a devastating role in the socio-economic and cultural context.

This extract implies that although conflict may be caused by various factors, there is one thing that many people may agree with, that is the source of many conflicts that are taking advantage of other people, divergences of interests or obtaining varying perceptions and thoughts or feelings. The respondents explained the term conflict in the way they understand. However there is one thing that makes common for what the above informants said. That is the source of many conflict centers at or revolves around benefits or interests. This implies the common understanding about the sources of conflict in general, but the sources and consequences of conflicts in Wejerat community is one important question that the study attempted to answer.

Like in other areas there are also different sources of conflict in Wejerat community. The research questioned some informants about what could be the main sources of conflict in Wejerat community? One informant aged 80 tells as follows:

To me, there are many sources of conflict in wejerat community. The following are some among others. Firstly, one of the major sources of conflict is farmland can be source of conflict between two neighbors. Secondly, hizaeti (grazing land) is the cause of conflict in Wejerat community or it can also be the cause of conflict between Wejerat communities.

Similarly, another informant from the focus group discussion took place at *senale* said “the main causes of conflict in Wejerat community are farmland is one of the main causes of the conflict because the question of land is a matter of life and death.”

As determined by the above respondents, it seems the causes of conflict lie in both the economy and power. The farmland and the *Hizaiti* are categorized under the source of economy as they both show scarcity of resources.

However, the natural resources of conflict appear to dominate in the community. As Desalegn (2005) explains, natural resources-based conflicts are part of the fabric of local communities as individuals compete for scarce resources: social groups perceive themselves as having incompatible interests.

According to some informants, interpersonal and role conflict seems common in this community. However inter group conflict are not. This is so,as is mentioned below by an interviewee:

I can absolutely say intergroup conflict in the Wejerat is not common, because this type of conflict occurs between or among societies where they do have different ethnic group. However the Wejerat community is from the same ethnic groups and the community has similar cultures and lifestyle alike. In fact, there

Are cases of intergroup conflict between the Wejerat and the Afar community since both communities are from dissimilar ethnic groups.

One can possibly grasp from the above text that intergroup conflict usually occurs in societies where different ethnicities are observed. Fisher (2000) illuminates that inter group conflict Occurs between collections of people such as ethnic or racial groups, departments or

levels of decision making in the same organization, and union and management. However, interpersonal can happen in a community with identical norms and backgrounds.

Although many of the conflicts are resolved as quickly as possible, there are conflicts which are delayed in the settlement. One of the interviewees from *bahry tseba* locality and the person says as follows:

Our community is much known for resolving conflict before it causes damage. The elders have a great position in solving them. However there are some conflicts which are not resolved as quickly as possible. If the conflicts are not resolved as quickly as possible, they might have a shocking position in social, cultural and economic. For instance, this may lead to losses of human lives and property destruction.

To summarize, the major sources of conflict in Wejerat are *hizaeti* (grazing land), farm land. In this community, intergroup conflict is not common, as society is from similar cultures and one ethnic background. Nevertheless, intergroup conflict is very common in communities with different ethnic groups.

Normally, in wejerat community, conflicts are resolved as quickly as possible, but if they are delayed, they main cause damage in human lives and property.

According to one FGD informant, conducted at *bahri tseba* locality, the approach of conflict resolution which is very common in Wejerat community is compromise approach. He further enlightens it as follows:

In many conflict resolution approaches, when elders solve the conflict, the focal point is not who wins or who loses. However the conflict is resolved in the way that comforts both conflicting parties. This is so because it helps both parties to live peacefully. However if the conflict is resolved by the court, for sure there are a winner and a loser. Therefore, this may lead them to another quarrel. That is why conflict resolution is preferred by the traditional conflict ways, to the current ones or to the court, as it favors the win- win approach.

Another respondent to the question”, do people prefer to go to the modern court for conflict resolution? She said, “in fact there are happenings that some people prefer the court or the modern ways of conflict resolution to the traditional ones. However, she says going to the court has its own demerits.” One loses his/her precious time or going to court may be costly in money. Moreover, the people in conflict may not create long_ lasting peace.

To conclude, usually, the elders prefer the compromise approach or the “principled negotiation” as Fisher (2000) explained. The elders do so, since the approach disappoints none of the persons in conflict. Rather, the conflicting parties enjoy it and it, builds peace between or among them.

- **The role of Indigenous conflict resolution Institutions values promoted peace in wejerat community**

4.2.1The Church

There are many indigenous communication systems in Wejerat community which are used in conflict resolution and peace building. According to some parish priests the church plays a key role in conflict resolution and promoting democracy. In the church, the ‘*Abat Nebsi*’ (God father) has a great role in conflict resolution. a priest, from the first FGD conducted at *Senale* locality, notes that:

The main thing is that the society is in the hand of the priest. If there are any people who are quarreled with each other, a priest tells them to reconcile or to make peace among them. However, if the conflicting parties are not willing to make peace, the priest tells them that he or she or they are not his sons or daughters. If the conflicting parties plan to change their *Abat nebsi*, the *Abat Nebsi* they ask to be their father, he asks why they were dismissed from the other *Abat nebsi* .in addition their former *Abat nebsi* tells the other *Abat Nebsi* that he refused to make peace with his enemy and he refused to give service for the church. Therefore, the only choice the conflicting parties have is to make peace among them.

This extract shows that refusing to make peace is unpopular opinion which leads the individual to isolation or excommunication .This may imply that the church threatens deviant individuals with isolation and which may create intimidation. However, the church does this for the sake of peace. In addition, from the above extract one can notice that the church is the main and the most important indigenous communication way in settling and solving a conflict. In other words, one can perceive how great role the priest or *Abat Nebsi* has in conflict resolution. *Melake selam* adds that the preaching held in the church help to the followers to solve conflicts peacefully. Another respondent from focus group discussion conducted at *Adi keyh* kebele supports the above informant idea as explained below:

The church has a principal role in conflict resolution; the people obey to what the *Abat nebsi* (literally means God father) says, if the conflict is not so harmful, it is not very common to beg using the church cross. So if the conflicting parties are begged by using the church cross, they should immediately say ok for the reconciliation. Nobody opposes the reconciliation held by using the church cross since the people die or are sacrificed for their religion. Above the law, above his household, and above everything the Wejerat people really prefer their religion.

Therefore, from the above extract the researcher can deduce, religion, that is, the Orthodox Church in Wejerat people has got a crucial contribution in conflict resolution, peace building and uniting the people.

To the question, at what time does the church perform the conflict resolution? One interviewee reported, “The conflict resolution by the church is not always held at any time and at any place. Rather, there is a specific time and a specific place when the reconciliation or making peace is performed. The reconciliations are mostly done in the holidays, and the usual venue is the church.” According to the respondents, to solve a conflict or to reconcile persons in conflict the elders usually use quotes from the religious books like the Holy Bible. This is because the communities obey their religion and their religious leaders as one respondent said. Another interviewee from locality makes clear that:

The Orthodox Church reconciles quarreled people in holidays like ‘*Selassie*’ (the holy trinity), Gabriel, Michael, ‘Medhanialem’ (the savior) and other holidays. The reconciliation or *Shinglina* is performed on Sundays. For the church permits no work to do on Sundays, but it is the day for reconciliation and peace building.

Another informant who was asked about the meaning of *Debarte* illustrated that

I don’t exactly know the meaning of *Dibarte*. However it is linked with objection or begging. . For instance if it is said, the women went out for begging for those who fought each other. On top of that, when the ‘*Isra Adi*’ (literally means the twenty kebelles or localities) declare about something the ‘*Dibarte*’ used to object or oppose, or if a person is murdered or else if a battle broke out between the Wajjarat community and the *Akeitot* (is nearly equivalent to government appointed officials).

This informant also argued about the presence of this institution at this time. He said *Dibarte* totally stopped, because the participants in *Dibarte* institution should have been totally females. In murder cases, *Dibarte* plays a big role. For if a father of children is murdered by another man. The *Dibarte* members decide that the murderer should bring up the murdered children as his children if he has got.

To sum up, although *Dibarte* (females' institution) seems weak, or not as strong as the earlier times, it is possible to conclude that it is still playing an essential role in conflict resolution. It also contributes to promoting democracy and peace building, as it involves females in decision making.

4.2.2 .Wedding and Tezkar

The other conflict resolution is marriage and *tezkar* (literally means a ceremony prepared for the remembrance or commemoration of a dead person). On this topic, one interviewee has the following to say:

If one person plans to perform *tezkar* or wedding, there is one thing that he /she needs to consider, that is he/she needs to excuse his /her enemy if he /her has got. if he/she doesn't do like this, or he/she planned to perform his/her *tezkar* without making peace with his/her enemy it is said the person performed his/her affair violating our culture. Therefore, so that he/she will not be excommunicated or condemned the person need to celebrate with his /her enemy after they made peace.

One can deduct from the above extract that, these two ceremonies, *Tezkar* and wedding, facilitate conflict resolution. Further they promote peace and socialization, because there are many people who are invited to the ceremony. So, this is a good media where many of friends, relatives, etc meet and it is a venue for creating peace and flourishing democracy. Furthermore, *Tsebel* (is equivalent to some sort of feast prepared in honor of saints like the Holy trinity, Gabriel, Michael, virgin saint Marry, etc), *Ikub* (saving and credit association), and *Idir* have no less part in conflict resolution than the other folk media have.

4.2.3 Appropriateness of Indigenous Conflict Resolution

According to the informants, indigenous conflict resolution is more preferable to the current institutions like the court, in conflict resolution and promoting democracy.

As the informants said the cultural conflict resolution approaches are more appropriate for the following three reasons.

- **Cultural Relevance**

Indigenous conflict resolution methods are deeply rooted in the cultural values, traditions, and worldviews of Indigenous communities. They reflect their understanding of justice, relationships, and social harmony. This cultural grounding makes these methods appropriate and effective within their specific social context.

- **Restorative Focus**

Many Indigenous approaches prioritize restoration of relationships and community cohesion rather than punishment. This contrasts with adversarial or punitive systems, making Indigenous methods more suitable for healing and long-term peace in their communities.

- **Community Participation**

Indigenous conflict resolution often involves the community or elders as mediators, ensuring collective involvement and shared responsibility in resolving disputes. This inclusiveness builds legitimacy and trust, which is appropriate for maintaining social order.

- **Holistic Approach**

These methods consider not just the immediate conflict but also the broader social, spiritual, and environmental relationships. The holistic nature ensures that resolutions address root causes and broader impacts.

- **Informal and Flexible**

Unlike formal legal systems, Indigenous conflict resolution tends to be informal and flexible,.

One respondent aged 78 from *Bahri Tseba* area reported:

We choose the indigenous for conflict resolution mechanisms since the conflict resolution by the court or in the court is not as good as conflict resolution by the indigenous conflict resolution mechanism. The indigenous conflict resolution don't hurt both parties or else they don't disappoint either of them. However, if conflict resolution by the court is happened, the conflicting parties hurt each other. Neither of them is happy. Furthermore, there might be fine which doesn't create everlasting peace.

The researcher also understands that it is also worth mentioning the appropriateness of the current media and he interviewed some informants from the sub-district court. Participants lawyer in Wejerat wereda. The researcher asked him whether the current indigenouse conflict resolution is more preferable in conflict resolution and promoting democracy. The interviewee replied the question as follows:

'*Shimglina*' (is equivalent to traditional reconciliation) or conflict resolution is more appropriate in society since conflict resolution by the court may lead to another court. For instance, recently, one person hit another one by *gozomo* (literally a kind of sharp metal bigger than knife which was used at battle fields in olden times). The offended informed the court that the case should be resolved by *shimglina*. From this, I understand the community prefers *shimglina* to the current court. However, such kinds of cases need to be solved by the court. Therefore, there are cases which should be observed by the court or not.

To sum up, as the elders and lawyers attempted to report in the above two extracts, the traditional conflict resolution seems more appropriate in the community. This is supported by Tarekegn (2005:144) as follows:

...sentiments of reprisals, which are deeply rooted in the culture of the society, couldn't easily be redressed merely by established codes of formal laws. Rather, such problems are effectively

resolved through customary conflict resolving mechanisms because they have strong social acceptance for, they are backed by social values and norms.

Because the indigenous conflict resolution uses the win - win approach on which no body is a loser, but problems are compromised for the sake of mutual or common benefit. However, the lawyer said although the indigenous media are more convenient in conflict resolution to the community, there are some cases which should be observed by the law. The researcher asked some elders in the community and they spoke.

Whether a problem is observed by the law or not, it should be settled by the traditional ones for the sake of sustainable peace.

4.2.4 Indigenous conflict resolution and Development of the Community

Other than in conflict resolution, have enormous role in democratization and development. This is because the indigenous conflict resolution systems belong to the people and they are for the people. Therefore, it seems to support the definitions of democracy, i.e. of the people, by the people for the people. According to the respondents' traditional media like the church, *Demer* and *Dibarte* appear to be principals in democratization. For instance, *Demer* paves a good way for democratization. As one informant said, "I can say *Demer* flourishes democracy. For one thing; it is participatory and doesn't single out sex. For the other thing, it is the indigenous conflict resolution system on which various ideas are discussed."

The above extract implies that females can also have a say in this indigenous conflict resolution. This assures females can have a position in decision making and there is equality. This appears to be supported by one of the rules of *gereb* that "women should have equal rights with men" (Abera, 2009). Besides, Mason, et al (1994:16) states that, "equality means that all individuals are valued equally, have equal opportunities

, and may not be discriminated against because of their race, religion, ethnic group, gender or sexual orientation." This is helpful for the promotion of democracy, because participation is one important principle of democracy.

Participation is the key role of citizens in democracy. It is not only their right, but it is their duty. Citizen participation may take many forms including standing for election, voting in elections

Becoming informed, debating issues, attending community or civic meetings, being members of private voluntary organizations, paying taxes, and even protesting. Participation builds a better democracy (ibid).

In this case, it is possible to observe participatory communication. The more the communication is participatory, the more conflicts are resolved easily. The more conflict resolution is quickened in a participatory manner, the better democracy and development are flourished.

The researcher had an opportunity to participate in a conflict resolution. The source of the conflict was land. The people in conflict are neighbors. The conflict was resolved by mediation. Mediation is a way of conflict resolution on which the mediators have not the mandate to decide but to tell options so that the conflict can be resolved. The mediators were relatives from both sides of the conflicting parties. The relatives were chosen because it was believed that they can run the conflict resolution smoothly.

In fact, the conflict was resolved effectively. The conflicting parties swore in the Ark (Saint Gabriel, Saint Michael, Saint George, or in other saints they believe in) and it was over.

The conflict was solved with the help of the “*Abo Selam*”. The researcher questioned one informant what the responsibility of abo selam is .The informant responded that:

The responsibility of *Abo selam* (being the fourth or the fifth of the elders or reconcilers) is to reconcile or to make peace between
or
among the people in conflict. Briefly, the key duty of *Abo selam* is settling disputes.

The researcher asked one of the conflicting parties whether there is interpersonal indigenous conflict resolution. In other words, the researcher questioned one interviewee if they could solve conflicts without involving a third body, that is a mediator or an arbitrator. One interviewee from the conflicting parties has the following to explain:

If the problem is very serious, like murder, knifing (to stab or cut somebody with a knife), beating using a stick, etc they are observed by the law. However, if the people in conflict agree, these cases can also be solved by *shimglina* (reconciliation by the elders) or by negotiation or by interpersonal communication.

The text implies that conflicts can be resolved by the modern court or by the traditional ones. Nevertheless, there is one thing that the elderly highlighted. This is whether conflicts are observed by the modern court or not, they should also be solved by the cultural conflict resolution ways for sustainable peace.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS and RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

The study is about the role of indigenous conflict resolution systems. To answer the basic research questions, a qualitative research methodology was employed.

The data collection tools used was participant observation, individual in depth interview and focus group discussion. The researcher employed the participant observation personally to observe the social, cultural and economic affairs. Focus group discussion was used to obtain ample information from a good number of people at a time. Other than these, the researcher opted the individual in-depth interview to get detailed data about the subject. The selection of the interviewees was based on their in -depth knowledge. In addition to these, some theoretical underpinnings concerning the role of indigenous conflict resolution and promoting democracy were raised.

5.2 CONCLUSION

Based on the major findings of the study the researcher has drawn the following conclusion.

1. According to the majority of the informants, the very common sources of conflict are Hizaeti (grazing land), farm land.
2. As the respondents informed, many elders are very interested in solving conflict before destruction is followed. However, if the conflicts are not resolved at the right time, they may have an upsetting role in the social, cultural and economic affairs.
3. As the study shows, approaches of conflict resolution employed is the win-win approach. In fact, some may prefer going to the modern court for solving conflicts and this is the win-lose approach as there is one loser and one winner. For fear of this, they prefer to solve it traditionally. Therefore, it seems the community like using the win -win approach.
4. There are some indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms which are to resolve conflict. These are the church, 'demer', 'dibarte', wedding ceremonies, Tezkar . It seems the church plays

a crucial role in conflict resolution. This is so, because the religion is everything for the Wejerat community.

5. According to the informants the role of indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms is not only confined to conflict settlement, but it also flourishes democratization.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the result, the following recommendations were made and forwarded:

- It would be better if the government gives due attention to the values and social assets of indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms like the modern legal system.
- It would be better if the government provides training on indigenous conflict Management system in the community.
- Initiate indigenous conflict handling strategies and formulate structures for policy implementation.
- It would be better if the media support indigenous conflict resolution mechanism for peace building strategies.

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Appendices

Appendix-I FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDES

• **Questions on the essence of conflict, sources of conflict and levels of conflict in the community**

- What are the most common sources of conflict in your community? Why?
- How do you deal with these conflicts? Are there any mechanisms to deal with these conflicts?
- What are the role indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms?

Appendix-II- Interview questions guide

Interview Questions Guide for the” Abo-Gereb” (“Gereb “ fathers)

- When and where does the” Demer”(general assembly) takes place?
- What your organization have any conflict resolution strategies for conflict resolution? What is the role of your organization in conflict resolution?
- What makes your organization more suitable compared to others in conflict resolution?
- What sections of the communities do you mostly consider? How do you reach them?
- Is your organization participatory?
- Is” demer” equivalent to the court in conflict resolution? Why?
- To what extent is the participation of females of in this general assembly?

Interview Questions Guide for the” Dibarte institution (females’ organization)

- When and where the “Dibarte” does takes place?
- What are the segments of the society you mostly consider? Why?
- To what extent is the contribution of females in conflict resolution?
- What are the mechanisms you use when you employ your conflict resolution strategies to reach the target communities?

Interview Questions for the lawyers in the community

- . How do you see the role of the court in conflict resolution?
- What is the role of the court in development and promoting democracy?

- How do you evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of your programs?

Interview Questions Guide for the parish priests

- What is the contribution of the church in conflict resolution and promoting democracy?
 - How do you communicate among yourselves concerning conflict resolution?
 - How keen are your parish members and the community on the intervention programs you employ?
 - Which occasions are conducive for you to address the conflict resolution messages to the parish members and to the community?
 - What do you suggest the degree of the community participation? What can you