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**Perceptions of Local and Traditional Government Leaders for Enhancing Community
Development**

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Abstract

Purpose: There are two key governance forms in Ghana, specifically traditional governance and democratic governance. Accelerating development in the local communities requires effective collaboration and the fusion of the two governances divide to harness the unique capabilities and opportunities embedded within each paradigm. The perceptions hold by local and traditional leaders about each other is fundamental to collaborative efforts. Such perceptions speak to the psychosocial, convictional and behaviour of local leaders.

Methodology: This study through a field survey samples the views of two leadership divide about each other in terms of their ability to drive positive change in the community to drive accelerated community development. The study was conducted among three select districts specifically, the Accra Metropolis, Kumasi Metropolis and the Tamale Metropolis using key informant interviews, and focus group discussions to gather the data. The data was analysed using thematic analysis.

Findings: The findings of the study indicated that there are shared perceptions of strengths of both systems of governance for developing local communities. The traditional leaders are seen to be strong on cultural legitimacy, moral authority, communication competence, and historical knowledge, all of which helps in social mobilization within the local communities. The local government leaders were found to exercise strength in the areas of access to money and resources, legal authority, and enforcement authority.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: We conclude that there are opportunities to harness each of these strengths such that a successful fusion of local and traditional systems of government will lead transformative leadership for sustainable local development.

Keywords: *Perceptions, Local government, Traditional Government, Leadership, Fusion, Authority, Metropolis*

JEL Codes of Classification: *I28, P16, P39, R50*

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INTRODUCTION

Development at the community level is a synchronization of the individual goals and aspirations of governance leaders driven by the shared drive of the entire community. This thought is supported by Mayombe (2018) and Van Lierop & Roy (2018) who say development within the community is a product of collective management and allocation of group resources. Local communities can express their hopes and aspirations when supported by individuals within their midst. Such persons lend their voice and action to champion group aspirations and also effectively manage and expand the potential of collective resources. In this light Mayombe (2018) argue the articulation and promotion of the community development agenda can only be transmitted through effective governance.

Recent discourse on accelerating the growth of the community is often set within the framework of the governance structure in the community. Governance structures are demarcated into traditional governance and modern democratic governance (Nketsia, 2013; Nukunya, 2003). These two governance systems has legal and constitutional backing within the Ghanaian leadership space as given by the local governance Act, 2016, Act 936, and the chieftaincy Act, 2008, Act 769. Central to governance is development (Holzinger, Kern & Kromrey, 2016), therefore the effectiveness of governance in driving the goals of community development depends on the structural model of governance (Adekola & Nwogu, 2015).

There is varying discourse for and against the effectiveness of the two system of governance in fostering effective community engagement for growth. Some school of thought, as espoused by Panyin (2010) believe the very presence of community leaders within the community as given by the chief and the shared common welfare, ensures that the needs of the community are better facilitated when traditional leadership dominates policy for community development. Logan (2013) also presents evidence to the fact that traditional leaders play an important symbolic role as representatives of community cultural identity, unity, continuity, and stability.

Other scholars hold contrary view by presenting arguments to the fact that the moral of democratic leadership which seeks to encourage and enlarge participation in both the selection of leadership and the decision-making processes to development would better achieve community development ideals. The United National Development Program (UNDP, 2014) believes democratic governance is 'central to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)' by providing the environment for the elimination of poverty. Baldwin & Mvukiyeh (2015) intimate elections have the capacity to improve collective action, because elected leaders are generally more effective than unelected leaders in organizing collective action.

According to Mahama (2009), local government leaders are typically perceived as having greater formal power and resources, while traditional leaders are seen as having more cultural and social capital. The resource and role divide has resulted in both collaboration and conflict between the two groups, with some research suggesting that their perceptions of one other can impact the effectiveness of local governance (Boateng, 2013). Local government leaders see traditional leaders as lacking in modern governance skills, while traditional leaders see local government leaders as out of touch with the local community and culture (Jackson et al., 2009).

This misperception can lead to a lack of trust and cooperation, potentially impeding the two groups' ability to collaborate to address local issues. Other research, however, has shown that local and

traditional leaders can more successfully collaborate to achieve shared objectives when they are aware of each other's respective responsibilities and capabilities (Maak & Pless, 2006). This emphasizes how crucial it is for the two groups to continue dialoging and working together in order to build mutual respect and trust.

Afful (2015) points out countries that smoothly incorporate traditional leaders into their newly established governments are better able to transition toward a more stable government.

The believe that democratic leadership which espouses greater participation in governance through elected leadership will drive inclusive growth has become almost a mirage in Ghana. This study thereby seeks to identify how these two leadership canons can effectively leverage on their individual strength and capabilities to drive community development. As much as literature has put forward the need for traditional and democratic governance systems to work together for community development, literature so far has not been prescriptive on the key markers needed for this to happen. This research will seek to draw strengths out of the varying perceptions to support collaborative governance by prescribing ways to overcome the potential biases. The contribution of this work will stem out of the method of attaining precriptive solutions to local governance in Ghana. The prescribed strategies to sustained community development will come from the governance actors sampled for this research. We believe findings from this study will support local government development outcomes in Ghana.

The rest of this study will proceed as follows, a review of relevant literature follows this introduction, subsequently we present the methodology. The finding from the field follows and finally dicussions and conclusions are presented.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Community Development

As a field of discipline, community development is defined by the International Association for Community Development (IACD) as a field of practice and academic discipline dedicated to promoting “participative democracy, sustainable development, rights, economic opportunity, equality, and social justice, through the organization, education, and empowerment of people within their communities (McConnell, Muia, & Clarke, 2022).

The pivotal role of community development in the democratic society is summarized by Adekola and Nwogu (2015) and propounded by the Cabinet Office in 2001. The development of communities increases people’s confidence and ability to seek solutions and take action themselves. It helps people within communities to marshal the evidence and shift the competing priorities. Furthermore, community development raises people’s expectations of all aspects of their quality of life and supports the transformation of public services. Then also community development contributes to cultural change within organizations and fosters trust, transparency, and accountability, improving decision-making processes.

The development of community development has always been a part and parcel of African culture. ‘One of the enduring and flourishing heritages of traditional societies in Africa is their involvement in community development. It has been the indigenous mechanism and technique developed and employed by the people to identify their felt needs, choose what they want, and take cooperative action to satisfy their needs (Adekola & Nwogu, 2015, p.457).

In Ghana, there is a growing research interest in traditional governance systems (Akateeba et al., 2018; Fuseini, 2021; Mahama, 2009). For instance, Mahama (2009) investigated the challenges facing Ghana's decentralization, within the context of a partnership between local government and traditional authorities. Data was gathered using stakeholder interviews from both traditional leaders and local governance actors, as well as focus group discussions with community leaders. The findings showed that in localities where an effective relationship existed, the individuals involved have been responsible for peace and harmony, rather than structural provisions (Mahama, 2009).

In many parts of Ghana, the two systems of leadership struggle at the local levels. For instance, Honyenuga and Wutoh (2018) investigated the extent to which Chiefs are involved in Ghana's decentralization process and assess the benefits and challenges associated with the formal inclusion of Chiefs in local governance in Ghana. It was a qualitative study that specifically used interviews and focus group discussions to collect data from selected traditional areas within the Volta Region. Findings from the study show that conflicting roles being performed by Chiefs and local government actors lead to role conflicts. What this means is that leadership at the local level is not harmonized but runs in hybrids between traditional leaders and local government actors.

Owusu-Mensah (2014) has conducted a historical analysis of the leadership tensions in the relationship between politics and chieftaincy in local communities in Ghana. The study puts forward that chieftaincy institution occupies the vacuum created by democratic partisan politics. The study also found that inter-ethnic conflicts during the pre-colonial era, resulted from attempts to extend the territories of one ethnic group at the expense of another. Consequently, the National House of Chiefs with the support of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and the United Nations Development Program has undertaken several projects to ensure that the appropriate lines of succession are well-defined to forestall the litigations that have been bedeviling the revered institution, as the death of a chief usher in the opportunity for a chieftaincy dispute.

Adjei et al. (2017) have also investigated 'the effects of decentralization reforms on the roles of traditional authorities in local governance and development in selected districts in Ghana' from August 2013 to June 2015. The researchers adopted the case study approach where they mainly used a qualitative, ethnographic approach but then they used descriptive statistics to support the process where necessary. The findings of the study revealed that traditional authorities used to be icons of local governance. However, the pivotal roles of chiefs and traditional authorities, in the pre-colonial and colonial periods, have been relegated to the background in the name of constitutional and decentralized political reforms.

Despite the leadership tensions between traditional authorities and local government actors at the local levels, some studies provide evidence of the persistent critical roles that traditional authorities play in the development of local communities (Fuseini, 2021; Odoom, 2017). For instance, Dapilah et al. (2013) have examined the Wechiau Community Hippopotamus Sanctuary (WCHS) and the role of the traditional authorities in the Wechau Traditional Area in bringing local level development. The researchers employed a qualitative research approach where they specifically used in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and observation. The findings of the study report that traditional authorities play an important role in the development of education, employment creation, preservation of cultural heritage, and environmental sustainability in the Wecheau Traditional Area.

Yaro (2013) has also presented evidence regarding how the transformation of local traditional governance and institutions led to processes of accumulation for a few privileged ones while the majority are excluded through dispossession. Myers and Fridy (2017) have also examined how Ghanaians navigate the constellation of local institutions, both formal and traditional, to solve an array of common problems in local communities. The researchers indicated that the hybrid nature of the local government has implications for democratization and decentralization.

From the discussions, it is evident that local governance has been central to Ghana's historical and socio-economic development and is present at all levels in the community and national life. However, we ask, how has that reflected in our developmental journey? Why is our socio-economic development capacity low? This research believes overcoming bias held by the differing factions about the other side of the divide in governance will support collaborative leadership which is key to unearthing Ghana's development. The bias can be overcome when they are effectively identified with solutions proffered from the actors themselves.

Structuration Theory of Community Development

Community development scholars such as Hustedde and Ganowicz (2002) argue that community development as a field of study is theoretically poor. This is because even though the field of community development is in terms of research and practice, theoretical development has lagged (Arnold & Stillman, 2013). Research in the area tends to focus more on content and process but limited focus on theory (Arnold & Stillman, 2013). Researchers and practitioners within the field of community development draw on theories from different disciplines including sociology, community psychology, anthropology, and economics for theories. This creates a sort of balkanization of theories where various theories are not able to communicate with themselves to develop into single coherent theories within community development (Hustedde & Ganowicz, 2002).

In the last decade, community development scholars have focused on developing coherent theories to guide the research and practice of community development. The community development theory is a product of that effort to integrate various assumptions of theories from different disciplines into a coherent framework to explain community development (Hustedde & Ganowicz, 2002; Tural, 2017). Within community development theory, three key factors (structure, power, and shared meaning) are argued to be the fundamental basis of community development (Arnold & Stillman, 2013; Hustedde & Ganowicz, 2002). These three factors lead to three theoretical dimensions – functionalism theory, conflict theory, and symbolic interaction theory (Arnold & Stillman, 2013; Hustedde & Ganowicz, 2002).

The functionalism theory explains the structure dimension, the conflict theory explains the power dimension and the symbolic interaction theory explains the shared meaning dimension (Turpin, 2017). However, each of these three theories has been criticized for focusing on only single elements of community development, and therefore unable to provide holistic explanations (Hustedde & Ganowicz, 2002). A fourth theory – structuration theory, was therefore developed to integrate all three elements into a single framework for analysing community development (Hustedde & Ganowicz, 2002; Turpin, 2017). The structuration theory is therefore used as the framework for explaining the community development element of this study.

The fundamental assumption of the structuration theory of community development is that three elements of structure, power, and shared meaning shape community development (Arnold & Stillman, 2013; Hustedde & Ganowicz, 2002). In the development of the structuration theory, Giddens argued that societies and communities have their particular cultural traditions, beliefs, and norms which guide how they organize their everyday life (Giddens, 1991). Thus, when applied to community development, the structuration theory proposes that each community has its structures, power dynamics, and shared meanings that impact its development trajectory (Turpin, 2017).

Structure refers to the social practices or to organizations and groups that have a role to play in solidarity and capacity building and their relationship with one another (Giddens, 1991). Thus, when applied to community development, all communities possess unique interdependent forms of structures, each of which has functions they perform in maintaining the community (Hustedde & Ganowicz, 2002). Elements of structures include institutions, organizations, and groups within a community with specific purpose or missions which forms the basis of social systems within the communities (Tural, 2017). Structures are argued to have a double edge, in that while they work to maintain order and stability, it is not always that the good of the community is their primary concern but rather their relevance and continuous existence (Turpin, 2017). In the context of this study examines perceived capabilities of traditional leaders and central government officials within these communities and their role in developing context-relevant local governance in the communities.

Power, on the other hand, is defined as the relationships that exist within and among the structures that control resources (Giddens, 1991). Thus, power is about who has access to and controls resources within the communities. Hustedde and Ganowicz, (2002) argue that “if community development is about building the capacity for social and economic change, the concept of power is essential” (p.6). In the current study power is examined as the relationships that exist between individuals at the helm of affairs (traditional leaders and government leaders) and local community members, in making development decisions for the communities.

Shared meaning is defined as the social meanings that communities attach to the things that matter to them, such as objects, deeds, and matters (Giddens, 1991). Hustedde and Ganowicz, (2002) opine that “*if community development is about building or strengthening solidarity, then practitioners must be concerned about the meaning that people give to places, people, and events*” (p.10). The meanings attached to things in communities are not fixed but constructed as participants interact on daily basis. Shared meaning brings about solidarity and a common vision that all parties involved can contribute to (Hustedde & Ganowicz, 2002). Within the context, the study shared meaning is explored as social meanings co-constructed by traditional leaders, government officials, and local community interest groups regarding local governance and community development.

METHODOLOGY

Study Setting

The current study was conducted among three select districts in the Accra, Kumasi and the Tamale Metropolis. The three districts have strong representations of traditional and democratic systems of governance that work hand in hand in making developmental decisions within the districts.

Data Source

The current study is extracted from doctoral project that used mixed-method approach to explore Fusion of Modern Democratic and Traditional Governance System in Promoting Community Development in Ghana. The study specifically used policy document review, key informant interviews, and focus group discussions to gather its data. We first of all gathered data on participants demographics, to elicit information about their background. We then gathered the main data using key informant interviews.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The participants of the study were selected from various stakeholders within each of the three districts. These stakeholders were made up of key stakeholders from local governance and traditional rulership. For local governance, the population included leadership of the Metropolitan Assembly, assemblymen and assemblywomen, and unit committee members of each of the electoral areas. In terms of traditional governance, the population included the leadership of the Ga-Adangbe Kingdom, Ashanti Kingdom and Tamale Kingdom, local chiefs, queen mothers, and palace elders from each local town. The total sample for the study was 140 consisting of 51 respondents from Kumasi, 46 from Tamale and 43 from Accra as given in table 1.

Table 1: Respondent Data

Data	District	Local Governance	Traditional Governance	Total
Interviews	KMA	18	33	51
	TMA	13	33	46
	AMA	12	31	43
	Total	43	97	140

A non-probability-sampling technique was used in selecting the participants for the present study. The study specifically employed purposive sampling strategy to select the key informants based on the purpose of their roles, which are directly relevant to the problem under investigation.

Ethical Issues

Ethical considerations were duly followed in the data-collection process. The application for ethical clearance was made to the Ethical Review Board of the College of Humanities, University of Ghana, and was obtained before the commencement of the study. The participants were guaranteed their confidentiality and privacy of the information they would provide. We made sure participants went through informed consent processes before they were included in the current study. We also ensured respondents' anonymity when storing and processing data.

Data Analysis

The data was analysed using thematic analysis following the procedures Creswell & Clark (2017) provided for analysing interview data. The scholars proposed a stage approach when analysing qualitative data thematically. We used the first stage of the thematic analysis to transcribe the audio data into transcripts. The next stage involved thoroughly reading and coding the transcripts. The third stage involved grouping the codes into minor themes. The last stage involved grouping the minor themes into major themes in ways that provided insight into the research question under study. We then presented the qualitative findings using themes, codes, and quotes from participants' narratives.

FINDINGS

Background Characteristics of the Respondents

The demographic profiles of all participants are presented in table 2. The majority of the participants were from focus group discussions (77.1%) with 22.9% being individual interviews with selected stakeholders. It is important to point out that for a qualitative study, even though the focus group consisted of 108 participants, it was conducted under 6 groups on account of the fact that majority of the chiefs interviewed opted for discussion including all the council of elders in the palace. Such discussions were mostly scheduled to meet their usual council meetings, which had average 18 members in council per meeting.

Table 2: Demographic Profiles of Qualitative Participants

Characteristics	Categories	Frequencies	Percentages
Data type	Individual interviews	32	22.9%
	Focus group discussants	108	77.1%
Region	Ashanti Region	51	36.4%
	Greater Accra Region	43	30.7%
	Northern Region	46	32.9%
Government Type	Local Government	48	43.3%
	Traditional Government	92	65.7%
Gender	Male	123	87.9%
	Female	17	12.1%
Age	20 - 29 years	3	2.1%
	30 - 39 years	13	9.3%
	40 - 49 years	21	15.0%
	50 - 59 years	42	30.0%
	60+ years	61	43.6%
Education	No Education	19	13.6%
	Basic Education	45	32.1%
	High School	18	12.9%
	Diploma/HND	12	8.6%
	Bachelor's Degree	40	28.6%
	Master's Degree	6	4.3%

Source: Field Data (2022)

In terms of regional distribution, there was a good representation of participants from all the three selected districts in the three regions – Ashanti region (36.4%), Greater Accra region (30.7%) and Northern region (32.9%). With regards to the type of government, majority of the participants were from the traditional government (65.7%) with 34.3% from the local government.

In terms of gender distribution, the sample was dominated by male participants (87.9%) with the remaining 12.1% being females. The ages of the respondents ranged between 29 years to 73 years; 43.6% were above 60 years, 30.0% were between 50–59 years, 15.0% were between 40 – 49 years, 9.3% of them were between 30 – 39 years, with 2.1% being in their late twenties.

In terms of educational level, 13.6% indicated having no education, 32.1% had basic education, 12.9% had high school education, 8.6% had Diploma qualifications, 28.6% had bachelor's degree and 4.3% had graduate degree.

Perceptions of the Governance Systems

The work seeks to assess the perceptions of governance participants both local government and traditional authorities for enhancing local governance. In the first place, the participants were asked to discuss what they considered as strengths and weaknesses of the two governance systems. The findings are presented in terms of the perceptions of traditional governance and local governance in that order.

Strength of the Traditional Governance

When it comes to strength of the traditional governance systems, the narratives of the traditional leaders themselves showed four thematic strengths, which bothered on cultural legitimacy, moral authority, communication competence, and historical knowledge.

Cultural Legitimacy

Cultural legitimisation emerged a strong theme in terms of leadership strengths of traditional leaders within the districts. The participants from both the local assemblies and the traditional leaders alluded to the fact that traditional leadership is the cultural system of organising and managing the community before the democratic system was imported. Therefore, the traditional government system is deemed culturally legitimate within their communities.

For example, one council member in the Northern region indicated that;

Our system is all the people know. It is our history. That is how we have always organised as a people. The other one [local governance] came because of colonization so it is not ours. The traditional government is what we know as the right way of leading our communities. All the allegiance of our communities is to this place [referring to the palace] (Council of Elder, Tamale)

One of the chiefs indicated that the Local Assembly need to partner with them so that they can draw strength from their cultural legitimization in order to become stronger within the communities:

The assembly, the assembly. They will be very strong if they had linked up with the chiefs. Okay. Because, um, we have cultural backing of the people to be able to push local development. They go in with the people who allow them. But if you come and consult with the chiefs here, the chiefs, you work with the chiefs. Even the police do that before the people cooperate with them (Traditional Chief, Tamale)

Some of the participants from the district assemblies also indicated that;

When it comes to festivals, the traditional leaders especially the chief decides the activities to do. The date, time, and the main activities to be done (Assembly Member, AMA, Accra).

The government appointee's functions in the community are limited because the people accord the traditional leaders with respect as compared with the local government (Assembly Member, TMA, Tamale).

Most of the times when we have issues in the community, they are resolved in the chief palace and make sure is well settled for peace to reign (Assembly Member, TMA, Tamale).

One participant from the local assembly for instance indicated that the culture grants the traditional leaders the legitimacy over land and its resources.

The traditional leaders have power over lands, I remember some individuals were given license by the government to operate on a mining concession in our area but the traditional leaders stepped in stopped them from mining in the community (Assembly Member, KMA, Kumasi).

Moral Authority

Linked to cultural legitimacy is the idea of moral authority which also came up strongly as a strength of the traditional governance system. The participants indicated that since their traditional leaders represent the essence of the people, they command a strong moral authority among their communities that ensures that the communities listen to them.

Some of the narratives from the traditional leaders themselves on their strength in moral authority are provided below.

The traditional leaders have the moral authority. You see, when you are chosen as a chief, it is not a joke. It means that your people, both those who are living and those who have passed [our ancestors] have agreed to for you to lead them. Therefore, we have moral authority among our people (Divisional Chief, Accra)

The participants from the district assemblies also agreed strongly on the moral authority as the strength of the traditional leaders within their local assemblies.

Honestly speaking, our Chiefs command enormous moral authority. They have moral authority because they are backed with tradition (Elected Assembly Member, AMA, Accra)

The communities respect rules and regulations that comes from the traditional leaders (chiefs) and make sure they are practiced. The traditional leaders also lead by example the norms in the community (Appointed Assembly Member, KMA, Kumasi).

The position of the chiefs is seen sacred, they see them to represent the living, death and the spiritual beings and for that matter the community members are very sensitive in terms of their actions towards them. They see them to play a mediation role between them and their forefathers in the community. That gives them the moral authority to lead the communities (Elected Assembly Member, KMA, Kumasi).

The Chiefs have moral obligation to fulfil. They are also seen as custodians and owners of the land and so whatever happens to the people are their responsibility to take care off (Assembly Member, TMA, Tamale).

Communication Competence

Communication competence also came up strongly as a strength of the traditional leadership system. The participants indicated that their local communities give a lot of importance to communications from their chiefs and the traditional leadership system. They contend that when there is a communication about sanitation programs and the traditional leaders do not come in, such programs fail. Thus, when they communicate to their communities, it goes into their hearts and therefore act on what is being communicated.

Some of the narratives from the traditional leaders themselves on their strengths in communicating to their people are provided below

You see, there are some things people don't pay attention to. When the government or its appointees speak, it goes to the ears of the people. But when the king speaks, it goes to the heart of his people. That is very important. People can hear you and not bother. But when your words enter people's heart, they cherish it and act on it (Chief, Kumasi)

The traditional leaders in the communities also have the communication skills and organization. They therefore know how best to reach to the communities and communicate to them in ways that make them act (Traditional Council Member, Accra)

Yes, like efficient cleaning or frontage so they come. If I'm coming at least every household, they have tools they have sanitation to see. But if you don't involve the traditional leaders, you will go and say it, but they will not listen (Traditional Council Member, Accra)

The participants from the district assemblies also referred to the fact that the traditional leaders are best communicators to the people in the local communities. The sample narratives from them are provided below

The position of the chiefs gives them the power to communicate with the people in the community and make them follow whatever they say (Assembly Member, TMA, Tamale)

The people respect the words of the traditional leaders especially the chief more than even the DCE or MCE. They are able to speak to the people to follow without using force as compared to the assembly where they sometimes involve taskforce and the police in their operations (Assembly Member, KMA, Kumasi)

Most of the times, the people in the community listen to the traditional leaders because of the local languages they use. Some of the issues discussed in their local languages gets to them and make them act positively towards it (Assembly Member, KMA, Kumasi)

The people are able to freely speak to their elders because they are easily accessible in the community and are met more often (Assembly Member, AMA, Accra)

They have the capacity to mobilize the people in the community (Social Mobilization)

The traditional leaders command respect in the community. They are able to communicate well with the people in the community (Assembly Member, AMA, Accra)

Historical Knowledge of Community

Historical knowledge of the community came up as another strength of the traditional leadership among the participants. They indicated that if you do not understand what the history of the communities have been, you will not understand their present. The traditional leaders for instance said that they traditional leaders evolve with their communities and therefore know where they have come from and there they are going.

Knowledge of the community and the people, all of that, the traditional leaders, we have it. We know our communities, our past and our future. Therefore, we can speak to what matters most to our communities (Divisional Chief, Accra)

We the chiefs are from this community. We have the indigenous knowledge of the community (Divisional Chief, Tamale)

The participants from the local assemblies also alluded to the traditional leaders as being the repository of indigenous knowledge:

The traditional leaders have in-depth knowledge about lands, rivers, cultural practices like naming ceremonies, marriage rite and festivals. Incantations and libations are poured for sacrifices (Assembly Member, KMA, Kumasi)

The traditional leaders are well established in the community and more grounded with community related issues. They have in-depth knowledge of the community they live in (Assembly Member, TMA, Tamale)

Perceptions of Local Government Leadership

We present the perceptions of the local government leadership. The perceived strengths are presented first, followed by the perception of the weaknesses.

Strengths of the Local Governance

When it comes to the strengths of the local government, three key themes emerged: access to money and resources, legal authority, and enforcement of authority.

Access to Money and Resources

Access to money and resources emerged as the dominant theme on the strength of local governments. This theme emerged predominantly from traditional leaders. The participants indicated that the local governments have access to enormous resources and money allocated to them by the central government. For this, they have more economic power:

They have their money. Every year, the government allocates huge amounts of money to them. They also collect several taxes from the traders and commercial drivers and other businesses within the Assembly. So, in terms of money, they have more power (Traditional Council Member, Accra)

They have their resources that they use to do their projects. All the resources for developing the communities are channeled to them so obviously that is what they have (Traditional Council Member, Kumasi)

Government gives them money base on their budget through the district assembly common fund (DACF) so they are most of the times able to manage the affairs of the community (Traditional Council Member, Tamale)

The participants from the district assemblies alluded to their access to material resources in the administration of the districts:

The assembly collect tax, which they normally called it internal generated fund from the store owners and market women. The most annoying part of it is that the money collected are not usually used as purported to be used (Assembly Member, AMA, Accra)

The local government supervises all central government projects. Example is the One district one factory (Assembly Member, KMA, Kumasi)

Truly, we have materials resources such as tax collection and revenue mobilization (Assembly Member, TMA, Tamale)

Legal Authority

The legal authority also emerged as a very strong theme of the strength of the local government authority. The participants alluded to the fact that the constitution has invested powers in the local government system in Ghana. For this reason, they have the power to exercise that authority within the assembly because they have the law backing them.

The constitution ok, so they have the law backing them. So, looking at the local government like I said earlier, they have the law in and funding (Secretary to Traditional Chief, Accra)

The Constitution has created the local governance system. Once the constitution has done that, they have legal authority within the assembly [Traditional Chief, Tamale]

They have the legal or law backing to their activities, so they are able to generate more money and use it to manage the communities under them (Traditional Elder, Kumasi)

Participants from the district assemblies also alluded to the legal authority that back their activities:

We have the legal authority arrest people who breach the law. Sometimes the law gives the assembly the authority to even seize people properties when they go contrary to rules and regulations of the assembly (Assembly Member, KMA, Kumasi)

The assembly has the power over where structures like container, kiosk, houses etc. are put, they are therefore responsible for DE conjunction exercise and traffic controls in their communities (Assembly Member, AMA, Accra)

Enforcement Authority

Related to the legal authority is the fact that the local government leaders have enforcement authority. Since the constitution allocates powers to them, they have the authority to enforce certain things within the communities:

The community and the government have the enforcement authority so that two must work together to able to implement development. The constitution gives them power. So, definitely they have the power to enforce (Divisional Chief, Accra)

Sample narratives from the local assembly members themselves are provided below.

The local government is responsible for the Control of transportation issues in the district, especially motor bikes control (Assembly Member, TMA, Tamale)

The assembly ensures the payment of property tax and other related revenues in the communities (Assembly Member, KMA, Kumasi)

They ensure proper sanitation in the communities through cleanup exercise. Example is the case of the AMA where cleanup exercises are done monthly for places to be clean (Assembly Member, AMA, Accra)

Discussion and Conclusion

The Governance leaders' perceptions about each other is fundamental to collaborative efforts. Such perceptions speak to the psychosocial convictional and behaviour of local leaders as argued by the collaborative government framework (Akaateba et al., 2018; Fuseini, 2021), and development of shared meaning as proposed by the structuration theory. The study findings are that the two systems of government recognize peculiar strengths of themselves as well as each other in terms of reach and development of local communities. For example, there were shared representations of the enormous strengths of the traditional system of leadership in reaching to the core of local communities for the purposes of mobilization and development. The narratives of both the local and traditional leaders point to the fact that traditional leadership exercises unparalleled strengths in the areas of cultural legitimacy, moral authority, communication competence, and historical knowledge of their communities.

Equally selling point of traditional leaders is that they have the moral authority to lead the community. While being morally enshrined to lead they also have the superior skill of effective.

When it comes to the peculiar strengths of the local governments, the two system of governance recognize identify local government strength to lie in their access to money and resources, legal authority and enforcement of authority.

The findings show that the strengths of the local assemblies are built around economic and legal power. They are able to mobilize resources and use legal means to enforce compliance with by-laws within the assemblies. For instance, traditional leaders in Accra mention that assembly member have more economic power. Also, in Tamale the traditional leader say local government is able to govern better because of their economic power. Further to having resources the constitution of the country gives power to the local government to function as leaders in the community which remain their key strength. This is echoed in this statement by an elder of council in Accra.

From the above discussion, we find out that strengths of the traditional leaders are built around social mobilization and consensus, and therefore can rally people within their local communities to support and participate in development agenda. This point is emphasized by the Accra.

The abilities of the traditional leadership to mobilize the people as emphasized and found by this study also align with Owusu-Mensah's (2014) argument that Chieftaincy in Ghana is the custodian of customary values and norms, one of the few resilient institutions that have survived all the three phases of Ghana's political history. The discussion also point out clearly that the strengths of each of the systems of leadership works differently within the local and traditional areas.

For instance, the local assemblies have the legal backing to enforce bye-laws, however since they lack deliberative capacities their communications go to the minds of the people. The traditional leaders have the cultural legitimization and moral authority to lead the people, thus their communications go to the hearts of the people. However. They lack the resources to implement projects and programs and the legal backing to initiate critical policy changes. This lies with the local government, which creates opportunities to harness the opportunities that lie within each divide through a fusion of the two systems of governance for transformative local leadership and transformative local development.

This submission is supported by the community participation theory as discussed by Martiskainen (2017), that call for three levels of participation for community change. Participation as control, participation as involvement and participation as present as illustrated in figure 1 below, Traditional leaders are present confirmed by the data in which traditional leaders are said to possess historical knowledge of the community which is their strength. The position of the traditional leader and their moral authority commits them to seeking the interest of the people. Therefore, participation through higher social participation is more akin to the traditional leader. However, participation as control is in the hand of the local governance leader as they possess the constitutional right to govern the communities with economic resources. The three levels of community participation are necessary for the transformation of the community but can only be achieved with the collaboration of the two governance cannons in the community where individual advantage becomes a collective community advantage.

The study concludes by indicating that communities can transform through effective participation of community members and leaders in governance. Traditional leaders are present thus they participate by their very presence in the community. Local government leaders are present with the control of government resources. Total community transformation then requires participation and the involvement of both sides of the leadership, the sharing of goals, aspiration and the respect for individual capabilities. This is achievable when governance leaders are willing to acknowledge their unique difference and work together for the greater good of the community.

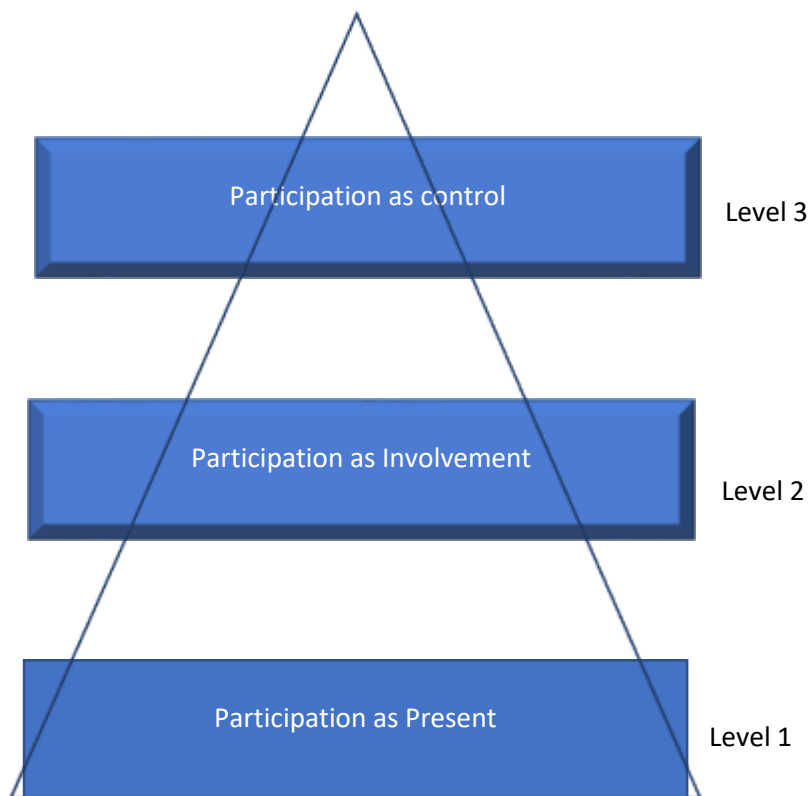


Figure 1: The 3 Levels of Effective Participation in Community Development

Source: Authors Illustration

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