The Competing Relationship between Traditional Leaders and Elected Councillors in Lesotho: A Case of Maseru District Council

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Abstract

The study has explored the perceptions of chiefs, elected councillors and community members concerning the reasons for competing relationship between traditional leaders and elected councillors in Maseru District Council of Lesotho. A qualitative case study research design was adopted to attain the aim of this study. In this regard, the data collection methods used were interviews and document analysis. Further, a sample of twenty-four (24) participants was chosen to participate in interviews using both purposive and convenience sampling methods. Data collected through interviews were analysed using thematic analysis while data collected through document study were analysed using content analysis. The major findings reveal that the competing relationship between traditional leaders and elected councillors was due to the following aspects: contestation for power and legitimacy; personal attributes of traditional leaders and elected councillors; absence of legislation on the role of the central government pertaining to particular issues at the local government; political affiliations of traditional leaders and elected councillors. Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were put forward: improved communication between traditional leaders, elected councillors and the communities through stakeholder engagement processes; provision of training to traditional leaders and elected councillors for the enhancement of their leadership and interpersonal skills. The study concluded that the central government of Lesotho should prioritise addressing the ongoing hostile relationship between traditional leaders as this may tend to negatively affect the provisions of services to the communities.

Keywords: *Chieftaincy; Competing Relationship; Elected Councillors; Local Government; Traditional Leadership*

Introduction

Joint governance between the traditional leadership and local government councils is not a new phenomenon in Africa. Most Southern African countries such as Botswana, Malawi, Namibia and South

Africa (see Afrobarometer studies by Gay, 2006; Logan 2008) and West African countries such as Sierra Leone (see Clayton, Noveck and Levi, 2015) have instituted decentralisation that accommodate the two institutions. The implementation of decentralised governance that is ideally premised on cooperation between the traditional authorities and elected local government councillors is not without its challenges. One of the challenges, as cited by Clayton et al. (2015:2), is that decentralisation has created new institutions that serve as a platform for the accumulation of political power for elected local elites, leading to a potential for conflict between the newly elected elites and the traditional leaders or chiefs.

Moran, Wolfson, Tangney, Sello, Tsoele and Lerotholi (2009:9) state that "as in many other African countries, the system of traditional authorities and chieftainship in Lesotho is firmly entrenched." In line with this view, Kapa (2013) asserts that despite the call to dismantle chieftainship and the unjustified belief that chieftainship is opposed to democratic principles, the institution continues to command legitimacy in Lesotho, not only among the general populace but among the politicians and academics. This indicates that traditional leadership has become an essential cog in the governance in Lesotho. Additionally, Matlanyane (2013) points out that traditional leaders rule their communities with authority in overseeing governance over matters of interest to the society, including welfare and judicial cases within the villages under their jurisdiction. In that regard, Quinlan and Wallis (2003) mention that chieftaincy resembles the centre of societal life in Lesotho through which Basotho self-identify both as a country and a nation. This implies that the entrenched trust in traditional leaders makes them an important component of the system of governance.

Although Gay (2006) notes that there has been progress in instituting a functional local government system in Lesotho that is elected by people while also ensuring that it is insulated from the chieftainship and the central government, Quinlan and Wallis (2003) point out that traditional leadership is viewed by some people to be opposed to the principles of a democratic system of local governance in the modern and contemporary world. Moreover, chiefs and elected councillors are embroiled in a constant power struggle (Moran et al., 2009). The reasons for the ongoing unsavoury relationship between the traditional leaders and the elected councillors in Maseru District Council of Lesotho are unknown. In other words, there is limited empirical evidence of reasons for hostile relations between traditional leaders and elected councillors. Therefore, the primary aim of this article is to explore the perceptions of chiefs, elected councillors and community members concerning the reasons for competing relationship between traditional leaders and elected councillors in Maseru District Council of Lesotho.

Theoretical Framework: Conflict Theory

The theory that was utilised to understand why there is continued competing relationship between traditional leaders and elected councillors in Maseru District Council is conflict theory. It was developed by Karl Marx, a German philosopher and sociologist and it was used to study class conflict, particularly between the rich and the poor (Brown, 2021; Hayes, 2022). The primary assumptions of conflict theory are as follows: individuals are constantly involved in competition; perpetual conflict among individuals leads to rebellion; inequality is the inherent part of the social structures; and conflicts have the potential of uniting societies (Brown, 2021). As applied to this study, this theory holds that rebellion or hostility can be influenced by competition that prevails among individuals because one class of people may seek to dominate another group thereby creating unequal power structures. According to Hayes (2022), competition among individuals is not only limited to scarce resources such as money, property and more, but it extends to intangible resources such as power and dominance. Furthermore, Hayes (2022) argues that change in power dynamics between groups occurs as a result of conflict between groups instead of gradual and evolutionary adaptation. At the same time, conflict theory shows that inequalities in terms of power can occur in human relationships as well as social structures in which case one group of individuals can tend to enjoy exercising more power than the other group. In this regard, Hayes (2022)

mentions that a group of individuals that benefit from existing societal structures may constantly seek to sustain those structures with a view to preserving and increasing the power. Based on the above assumptions of the conflict theory, three arguments can be made in the context of the study: firstly, hostilities between traditional leaders and elected councillors can emerge due to competition for tangible and intangible resources. Secondly, any possible shift of power from traditional leaders to elected councillors could be a potential source of major conflicts and rebellion. Lastly, any one of the two groups between traditional leaders and elected councillors that enjoys benefits of existing structures may try to maintain the status quo.

Literature Review on Traditional Leadership in Lesotho

Based on the review of scholarly and non-scholarly documents, this section reflects on the interface between functions of traditional leadership and local authorities as well as the battle for recognition and legitimacy between traditional leaders and local authorities in Lesotho.

The Interface between Functions of Traditional Leadership and Local Authorities in Lesotho

Traditionally, chiefs in Lesotho play a prominent role in local governance matters, overseeing, *inter alia,* the administration of local affairs, preservation of culture and ensuring security of their subjects (Shale, 2004). According to Gay (2006), further functions of the chiefs include the allocation of agricultural land, control of grazing land, licensing of livestock ownership, control of the use of natural resources, allocation of housing sites and presiding over villagers' disputes. Chiefs are additionally mandated with the duties to maintain justice, to mobilise communities through village committees to enhance participation, to protect areas of local and national interests and to preserve communities' cultural values (Kapa, 2013). The *Chieftainship Act No. 22 of 1968* (Government of Lesotho, 1968) detailed their roles. In terms of section 6.1 of the above legislation, the chiefs have the following powers:

> Supporting, acting and maintaining the king in his government of Lesotho according to the Constitution and other laws of Lesotho, and subject to their authority and direction; to serve the people in the area of his authority; to promote the welfare and lawful interests of people within his jurisdiction; to maintain public safety and public order; and to perform all lawful duties of his office impartially, efficiently and quickly according to the law. Apart from the powers outlined in section 6.1, the Act grants chiefs additional powers through section 7.1, which included adjudicating local disputes; calling public gatherings *(lipitso)* for the dispersal of public information; the identification and registration of livestock; keeping records of the birth, death and marriages of people within their areas of jurisdiction; writing letters of reference for people living in their areas of jurisdiction – these include letters of reference in the passport application process and certain banking services; village protocol also demands that all visitors, particularly those who are coming by way of business, report themselves to the chief of the local area or the village and alert them of their presence and nature of their activities.

With regard to the local authorities, the purpose for their establishment was to promote citizen participation in the local governance matters for residents to partake in needs identification and prioritisation in their own areas (Tsikoane, Mothibe, Ntho and Maleleka, 2007). The *Local Government Act of 1997* mandates local authorities with functions such as the control of natural resources, overseeing and regulating public health, allocation of sites, control of pastures, allocation of burial sites, control of building permits and preservation of forests (Shale, 2004). It is, however, clear that some of the roles of traditional leaders have been usurped by the local authorities. According to Daemane (2015), traditional leaders are incorporated into the elected local authorities for the purposes of acting in advisory capacities and for maintaining stability and tranquillity locally and nationally. Despite the fact that traditional

authorities having been subjugated under local authorities in recent times, they still play a pivotal role in development activities that are implemented in their areas of jurisdiction (Matlanyane, 2013). Matlanyane (2013 contends further that chiefs maintained their role of exercising similar functions in the newly established system of local government except for the role of land allocation, which has been placed in the hands of local authorities. This implies that overlapping in terms of roles exists between some of the functions undertaken by traditional leaders and local authorities. Despite some of the chiefs' traditional powers having been transferred to the local authorities through legislation, chiefs have been hesitant to relinquish their functions to the local authorities as they continue to perform such duties albeit illegally (Daemane, 2011). In its strategic plan for 2015-2019, the Ministry of Local Government and Chieftainship (2014) conceded that the overlapping functions between the chiefs and the local councils had not yet been resolved and this was a recipe for conflict between the two institutions.

The Battle for Recognition and Legitimacy between Traditional Leaders and Local Authorities

The advent of decentralisation brought new institutions that created new political structures, which in turn established a new political elite that came into contact with an already pre-existing system of local government, culminating in disputes between the traditional and the elected local authorities (Clayton et al. 2015). Local authorities that emerge from decentralisation are perceived to have curtailed the powers and authority relative to traditional leaders in Lesotho (Moran et al. 2009). In this sense, chiefs' powers are constantly viewed in contrast to those of elected councillors. Based on the negative point of view, chiefs represent an archaic institution confined to overseeing governance matters at the local level while the positive point of view seeks to suggest that chiefs are authoritative beings commanding respect and legitimacy in society to govern over it and enhance its welfare. Interestingly, Moran et al. (2009) notes that some commentators in Lesotho were of the view that traditional leadership is opposed to principles of democratic governance such as accountability, transparency and public participation. Despite Moran et al.'s (2009) view above, Basotho perceive the role of traditional leaders as pivotal in their societies. In Lesotho, the chieftainship institution continues to command legitimacy despite some scholars' contention that it operates contrary to democratic rule (Kapa, 2013). In support of this view, approximately 62 per cent of Basotho mentioned that they would consult chiefs over any other form of authority for guidance towards resolving their challenges (Logan, 2008), accentuating their trust in the system of traditional leadership.

In Logan's (2008) view, chiefs and elected councillors compete for political dominance at the local level. Nevertheless, a major concern for traditional leaders is to protect their economic interests in relation to, among others, the allocation of land and control of grazing lands because from overseeing these roles, chiefs are able to collect charges for the sustenance of their livelihoods (Shale, 2004). Chiefs tend to feel that through decentralisation, they are being relegated to secondary stakeholders in the running of the daily governance of the areas over which they rule (Moran et al. 2009). The transfer of some of the functions that were traditionally performed by the chiefs to local authorities is a root cause of the conflict between the traditional and elected local authorities as this translates to loss of power on the part of chiefs (Shale, 2004).

The position of central governments on the chieftaincy institution has ranged from latent to full blown hostility in terms of the ideologies of the Basotho National Party (BNP), the Marematlou Freedom Party (MFP) and the Basotho Congress Party (BCP) (Coplan and Quinlan 1997; Kapa, 2010; Leduka, 2006). Coplan and Quinlan (1997:51) argue: "in practice, all the post-independence governments have wished to abandon, suborn, or at least marginalise, the chieftaincy. Despite their efforts, important segments of the rural population continue to support their chiefs as a means of withstanding interventions that threaten to destroy their, albeit changing, relationship with the land." The struggle for legitimacy and survival of the traditional authorities persists primarily due to the support afforded to the traditional

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authorities by the community members at the grassroots level in Lesotho despite facing competition for survival from the modern local government authorities that are backed by the central government.

On the other hand, local government authorities' quest for survival does not stem from their competition with traditional leaders only. Local authorities in Lesotho resemble those favoured by unitary states and are characterised by direct control by their central government ('Nyane, 2020). Community councils in Lesotho lack independence and do not report to their communities; instead they report to the central government that supports all their functions and, by so doing, perpetuate their dependence on central govenrment (Kabi, Kompi and Twala, 2014). The greatest challenge, as noted by 'Nyane (2016), is that the decentralisation of fiscal responsibilities to the local authorities to collect and manage their funds leaves them prone to interference from the central government which is the main funder of all operations at the local government level in Lesotho.

Research Design and Methodology

This study was conducted in the Maseru District Council of Lesotho, in particular, Qiloane A01 and Manonyane A04 Community Councils. A qualitative case study was adopted as research design for the study. Further, the study used a qualitative research methodology in order to explore the perceptions of chiefs, elected councillors and community members regarding the reasons for hostile relationship between traditional leaders and elected councillors in the aforementioned district. For the purpose of this study, data was collected through semi-structured interviews and document analysis. In selecting interview sample, purposive and convenience sampling strategies were applied to ensure that suitable individuals with in-depth knowledge concerning the subject matter were selected.

A total sample of 24 participants was drawn from the abovementioned community councils within the Maseru District Council. The sample was constituted as follows: six (6) were traditional leaders or chiefs, two (2) community council secretaries while the elected councillors were also six (6) and lastly, ten (10) community members. An informed consent to participate in the study was given by all participants shortly after the object of the study was explained. Data collected through interviews were analysed after conducting each individual interview to identify regular and constant themes. Equally important, data collected through document analysis were analysed using qualitative content analysis. In this sense, research data were analysed in the context of interpretive methodological paradigm in which case emergent themes, clusters and categories were identified while ensuring the that richness of data was maintained, as argued by Adullah (2009).

Findings and Discussion

The current section presents and discusses the views of the participants pertaining to the reasons for competing relationship between traditional leaders and elected councillors. Several themes emerged from analysis of data but only four are reported hereunder.

Contest for Power and Legitimacy

While the institutions of traditional leadership and local government are important, it is imperative to clearly demarcate their powers and functions. The challenge concerning the issue of unclearly demarcated powers is evidenced by contest for power and legitimacy as one of the factors perceived to be contributing to the hostile relationship between traditional leaders and elected councillors. In some instances, two groups do make efforts to eclipse one another in pursuit of power. One of the participants expressed the following view:

"I think that between the councillors and the chiefs, there is a feeling that one group should be superior to the other and should have more power and prestige. This escalates until the community can see that there is a conflict between them" (Community Member 2).

This finding confirms Logan's (2008) view that chiefs and elected councillors contested for political dominance at the local level. At the same time, the contest was perceived as a means for protecting the prospects of the chiefs' economic interests as well as to sustain their livelihoods (Shale, 2004). This finding is in consonant with the conflict theory which indicates that competition among the people is not only restricted to limited resources such as property, money and other things, but it expands to nonphysical resources such as power and dominance (Hayes, 2022),

Some of the participants indicated that the elected councillors believed that they were established so that they could replace the institution of traditional leadership and take over its role as was feared by the traditional leaders. This was furthermore exacerbated by the fact that the roles of the traditional leaders and local authorities were interconnected, with blurred boundaries that resulted in the conflicts observed. The participants expressed their opinions about the issue as follows:

"The councillors are youthful, so it seems that their mandate is to get rid of the chieftaincy completely and drive the country towards full democratisation. So it seems that when they campaign for elections they canvass with the idea that they are going to take over from the chiefs" (Chief 6).

"Councillors initially thought that they were empowered to take over some of the roles mandated to chiefs and chiefs felt that councillors were there to replace them with their powers being given to councillors" (Community Council Secretary 1).

"You will hear reports of councillors and chiefs engaging in conflicts, and when you investigate you find that the root cause of the conflict is that they do not understand their responsibilities" (Councillor 1).

In order to preserve the existence of the institution of traditional leadership, the chiefs continued to fight for their recognition by refusing to relinquish their powers to the local authorities. Chiefs snubbed attempts to integrate them into local authorities, thereby continuing to carry out their responsibilities as observed by Daemane (2015). This culminated in the councillors feeling as though their positions were placed under threat by the non-relenting chiefs.

The absence of cooperation between traditional leaders and elected councillors is regarded by some of the participants as another source of the conflict.

"Sometimes the councillor calls public gatherings without informing me and once I become aware of such a gathering I stop the gathering...if the councillor calls a public gathering without my prior knowledge and consent, I stop that and inform the councillor to first start by involving me" (Chief 2).

"Most conflicts emanate from the allocation of sites with the chiefs being reluctant to involve the councillors in this process. On the other hand the councillors also allocate sites without involving the chiefs and this culminates in conflicts that are not easy to resolve and the conflicts affect the provision of services to the communities" (Community Member 7).

The findings reveal that the power to allocate land is among key issues contributing to problematic relationships between traditional leaders and elected councillors. In this regard, some participants echoed their sentiments by explaining:

> *"Secondly, it was not clear that for sites allocation the chief's role would be that of recommending his/her subject for allocation and the councillor would argue that it was his role to allocate sites. The misunderstanding was caused by the act (Local Government Act of 1997) because we did not understand it clearly"* (Chief 3).

> *"We still have disputes here and there because chiefs are not happy that the responsibility for allocation of land has been transferred to the community councils"* (Councillor 5).

> *"...On issues of land allocation, the second schedule of the Local Government Act of 1997 clearly outlines the responsibilities of the community councils even though chiefs still feel that they should play a major part in the identification and allocation of sites. Chiefs should identify sites and then the community councils should carry out planning of such sites and open them for occupation by the public. But in practice, chiefs refer their subjects to the community council having already identified the land proposed for occupation by the subject without having involved the community council first"* (Community Council Secretary 1).

It is evident that the power to allocate land is of strategic importance for the survival of the institution of traditional leadership in Lesotho because it helps to emphasize the importance of traditional rulers, and also help to consolidate their economic interests as suggested by Shale (2004). The comments above present the conflicting perspectives of chiefs and councillors about the responsibility of land allocation. At the same time, the comments provide an account of what should be happening as dictated by the legislation, and the actual practice, which shows that the chiefs continue to defy the dictates of the legislation thereby discharging their duties in the customary fashion. This contributes to the competition that continues to exist between traditional leaders and local authorities for control of land, a powerful tool in the consolidation of power at the community level in Lesotho.

Political Affiliations of Traditional Leaders and Elected Councillors

Political affiliations of both chiefs and councillors have been identified as another factor contributing towards the observed competing relationship between chiefs and councillors. This finding shows that when traditional leaders and elected councillors are affiliated to different political parties, tensions tend to be on the rise. This suggests that there is lack of political tolerance among the key stakeholders. When asked about some of the reasons for the fractious relationship between traditional leaders and elected councillors, some participants replied as follows:

> *"The fact that councillors are appointed politically through elections and not through merit also results in skewed service delivery because some councillors serve those aligned to them politically"* (Chief 3).

> *"They (chiefs and councillors) have the potential to work well together but the challenge emanates from politics. Politics have proven to bring divisions in the communities… you may find that the councillor and the chief are on opposing sides politically and this causes power struggles within the community"* (Community Member 4).

> *"...But in our community, it seems like the councillor wants to dominate over the chiefs. The councillor has those people aligned to him/her, and those who do not align with the councillor are perceived to be aligned to the chief. To be direct, it seems that local authorities divide the public between the councillors and the chief"* (Chief 3).

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Historically, chiefs in Lesotho were known to be aligned to the Basotho National Party (BNP) (Juma, 2011; Leduka, 2006) while the commoners were affiliated with the Basotho Congress Party (BCP) which commanded the most support at the local level (Mofuoa, 2005). This remains the case even in the current political environment in Lesotho whereby commoners are aligned to the splinter parties of Basotho Congress Party and the chiefs predominantly remain loyal to the Basotho National Party. This was found to be contributing towards awkward relations between chiefs and councillors.

When asked whether political affiliations prevented chiefs and councillors from working together, community member 5 replied as follows:

> *"Yes, they affect how they work together... this brings trouble because service delivery gets carried out along political party lines. One punishes those affiliated with the other by not serving them" (Community Member 5).*

This finding shows that objectivity, fairness, and impartiality will be difficult to achieve because chiefs who are expected to be impartial in the performance of their functions are still affiliated to certain political parties. Similarly, the elected councillors are expected to serve not just those who voted for them but all the people, after being sworn in as councillors. However, it is clear from the above comments that personal feelings and allegiances still play a part when services are provided. The discriminatory provision of services that is based on political affiliations contributes to the incessant rift between traditional leaders and elected councillors.

Quest for Personal Benefit and Self-Interests

The findings indicate that quest for personal gain and self-interest is among other reasons for ongoing conflicts between chiefs and councillors because they attempt to gain financially from the discharge of their functions. Although chiefs and councillors are paid wages for their services, they still charge for executing some of their functions by soliciting bribes from their subjects and clients respectively. In outlining what caused interference in the discharge of duties between councillors and chiefs, some participants replied as follows:

> *"It has become evident that in their undertaking of the allocation of sites, chiefs and councillors clash because they gain financially from that exercise; they charge the public for this service for their own personal gain" (Chief 3).*

> *"...For example when it comes to the allocation of sites, there is always a conflict between chiefs and councillors…this stems from interest between the two parties to make some personal financial gain from the allocation of sites... also, between the chief and the councillor, the dominant one will gain more in bribes from being the prime service provider" (Community Member 4).*

The decision to solicit bribes by both traditional leaders and elected councillors is a personal choice that portrays a person's characteristics and moral compass. Based on the statements above, it is evident that the practice of soliciting bribes is prevalent in the local government of Lesotho which affects the provision of services in an efficient manner while councillors and traditional leaders compete to extract more financial gain by abusing their positions as leaders in their communities. Matlanyane (2013) found that there is overlapping in terms of roles that exists between some of the functions undertaken by traditional leaders and local authorities in Lesotho. The chiefs are seemingly hesitant to relinquish their functions to the local authorities despite the fact that some of the chiefs' traditional powers have been transferred to the local authorities through legislation, as they continue to perform such duties albeit illegally (Daemane, 2011). This creates an opportunity for both traditional leaders and elected councillors to compete in extorting money from communities whom they ought to serve.

The findings also reveal that personal attributes of both councillors and traditional leaders also contribute to the competing relationship observed between the councillors and the traditional leaders. When asked about what could be done in order to promote collegiality between traditional leaders and elected councillors, one participant indicated that although it would be prudent to hold workshops to train chiefs and councillors, personal characters would still affect the success rate of these initiatives. Chief 3 contended that:

> *"The training workshops would help even though people's individual traits would also determine the success of the training workshops" (Chief 3).*

Legislation and the Role of the Central Government in Lesotho

Legislation is important in clarifying grey areas in formally instituted settings. The findings of this study indicate that legislation and the direct role of the central government through the Ministry of Local Government and Chieftainship Affairs have played a critical role in shaping the observed competing relationship between traditional leaders and elected councillors in Lesotho. When asked about the progress made in the institutionalisation of local government in Lesotho, Chief 6 indicated that conflict is sparked by discrepancies in the legislation and the practice on the ground. The sentiment was expressed as follows:

> *"Even in the allocation of land, the chief is the primary allocator because a person will make an application and as the chief I will show the person where I can allocate him/her the land and then write a letter for that applicant, requesting the community council to come and confirm the allocation and document it. This shows that there is a discrepancy in the legislation because what is written in the legislation is not consistent with the practice on the ground."*

As a matter of fact, the finding indicates inconsistencies concerning the codification of the *Local Government Act of 1997* as amended in 2004 regarding how the traditional leaders and local authorities should work together in discharging their duties and what is actually the practice on the ground. The *Local Government Act of 1997* transferred some of the roles of the traditional leaders to the local authorities, including the allocation of land and control of grazing lands (Daemane, 2015) but there is still confusion over the discharge of this function. This was also not addressed by the Ministry of Local Government and Chieftainship Affairs' casual approach to the resolution of conflicts emanating from the interpretation of the legislation when conflicts emerged. Commenting on how the abovementioned Act contributed to the emergence of conflicts between traditional leaders and councillors, some participants posited as follows:

> *"Yes, this is the part of this Local Government Act that needs to be revised to demarcate the boundaries because initially the chiefs were the ones allocating land. Now this role has been shifted to the councillors but it was not explained that the councillor ratifies the allocation while the custodian of the land is still the chief. There is confusion on the act that is centred on the allocation of land that needs to be revised" (Chief 4).*

> *"Initially there was friction between chiefs and councillors because their roles were blurred and they overlapped in carrying out their duties. It looks like when the local government councils were initiated, the Ministry (of Local Government and Chieftainship Affairs) did not outline the roles and boundaries of both chiefs and councillors to make councillors aware of their roles and boundaries, and to also sensitise the chiefs that they would no longer enjoy the authority and carry out all the duties they traditionally executed" (Community Member 3).*

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"Then when conflicts arise in the execution of these roles on the ground, the central government mediates by merely asking chiefs and councillors to work together" (Chief 6).

Furthermore, another participant put the blame for a conflictual relationship between chiefs and councillors on a lack of training of both chiefs and councillors on how they should co-exist and work well together. The participant indicated that the institutionalisation of local government had stagnated and affected both traditional leaders and local authorities negatively. Councillor 1 had the following to say on this issue:

"I can even mention a few scenarios where councillors were murdered after being in conflict with chiefs because they did not understand their responsibilities and boundaries. The chiefs and councillors still do not understand the division of their roles and responsibilities. Here in Thaba Bosiu (Qiloane Community Council), at least eight chiefs were inaugurated since I was elected into the community council but they were never given any induction workshops."

From the findings presented above, it can be seen that the central government's failure to fully support the establishment of local authorities has resulted in handicapped service delivery due to the relationship characterised by conflicts and mutual lack of trust between traditional leaders and elected councillors. However, there has been a notable gradual improvement in the relationship shared by the chieftainship and the local authorities recently because of relentless efforts by both institutions towards forging collegiality in their work. When asked about what was the turning point that prompted the chiefs and councillors to start working together, some participants replied as follows:

"Like I indicated earlier, adherence to laws, policies and regulations helped to unite chiefs and local authorities" (Chief 1).

"Initially there were conflicts due to blurred boundaries of responsibilities but as time went on, the conflicts were minimised and recently the conflicts have been emerging here and there but to a lesser extent because there is now understanding of the roles of both chiefs and councillors" (Community Council Secretary 1).

The commitment by both chiefs and councillors to adhere to legislation and policies as well as acceptance of local government in Lesotho has improved the relationship between chiefs and councillors, thereby marginally enhancing service delivery from the perspective of traditional leaders and local authorities. This, however, does not imply that further progress cannot be made towards instituting a better system of local government in Lesotho. The fledgling system still needs to be strengthened in order to reach its full potential and provide meaningful services to the communities. Most of the stakeholders pointed to the role that the central government should play in enhancing the functionality of local governance structures in Lesotho.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The empirical evidence as well as the extant research have shown that hostile relations between the traditional leaders and elected councillors in Maseru District Council of Lesotho are due to competition for power and legitimacy. In other words, the traditional leaders are constantly at loggerheads with elected councillors to be recognised as legitimate. This incessant struggle for power between traditional leaders and elected councillors confirms the assumptions of conflict theory which points out that competition is an unalienable feature of a society. In this sense, competition cannot be avoided in a society. The second reason perceived to be straining relations between the abovementioned stakeholders

is the issue of political affiliation. In this regard, once it is evident that chiefs and elected councillors are affiliated to different political parties, tensions become unavoidable. In this way, traditional leaders find themselves in a situation whereby they are marginalised by elected councillors due to the political affiliations. Another reason that has been flagged as propelling tensions between traditional leaders and elected councillors is the quest for personal benefit and self-interests. This is concerning because both elected councillors and traditional leaders extort money from members of the community in exchange for a service. Members of the community find themselves in a situation where they are being charged for a service for which they did not have to pay money. In essence, community members remain vulnerable to the callous and corrupt traditional leaders and elected councillors. Equally important, the Local Government Act of 1997 as amended in 2004 has created a situation where there is no clear demarcation of functions since power to allocate land has been transferred from traditional leaders to local authorities. Surprisingly, the central government of Lesotho has not been able to successfully deal with the matter as traditional leaders continue to exercise their original powers.

Given the various reasons highlighted above contributing to competing relationship between traditional leaders and elected councillors, the following recommendations are proposed: firstly, it important that the central government of Lesotho should device viable strategies and tactics to facilitate co-existence between traditional leaders and elected councillors. Secondly, there is a need for enhanced levels of communication between traditional Leaders, elected councillors and the communities through stakeholder engagement forums to deal with their own affairs. Thirdly, the central government of Lesotho needs to ensure that the current legislation pertaining to local government unequivocally clarifies the roles and responsibilities of traditional leaders and elected councillors to avoid overlapping in terms of functions. Importantly, traditional leaders and elected councillors should be subjected to extensive training on leadership as well as interpersonal skills so that they able to shift their focus from self-contentment to concentrate on serving the needs of the communities they serve. It is worth noting that the findings of this study cannot be generalized but can be transferred to other settings are based on a single case study of Maseru District Council in Lesotho where a qualitative research methodology was employed. For this reason, future research should be undertaken on a larger scale using quantitative research methodology to understand challenges facing traditional leaders and elected councillors in other areas of Lesotho.

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