

The Role of Kingmakers in Shaping Traditional Leadership: A Qualitative Study of Hr Lifecycle Influences in Ghana's Bono East Region.

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ABSTRACT: Traditional leadership plays a pivotal role in maintaining governance and cultural continuity across African societies, with kingmakers as central figures who appoint, endorse, and influence traditional leaders. This qualitative study investigates the multifaceted role of kingmakers in Ghana's Bono East Region, focusing on their impact on the HR lifecycle of traditional leadership encompassing recruitment, succession planning, role management, and performance assessment. Anchored in the interpretivist paradigm, this study employs semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with chiefs, kingmakers, and community elders to reveal perceptions regarding the responsibilities, selection processes, and ethical standards shaping traditional governance. Results demonstrate that kingmakers in Bono East significantly influence leadership decisions through culturally rooted processes, including lineage-based selection, communal values, and qualifications that prioritize interpersonal and governance skills. These figures act not only as selectors but as ongoing mentors, ensuring leaders uphold cultural integrity and community cohesion. Participants highlighted kingmakers' role in conflict mediation, maintaining social stability, and serving as cultural custodians, a role that transcends formal HR functions. The findings indicate a unique adaptation of HR practices within traditional governance, where decisions are guided by collective identity and cultural cohesion rather than individual performance metrics alone. Additionally, kingmakers face modern pressures, such as adapting to state legal frameworks, while preserving traditional authority a balance essential for sustaining governance legitimacy in evolving socio-political contexts. This study enhances the discourse on African governance by revealing the adaptability of kingmakers, whose influence helps reconcile traditional obligations with contemporary governance challenges. By illustrating the symbolic and practical roles of kingmakers as hidden influencers and agents of cultural preservation, this research underscores their significance in community stability and cohesion. Future research should explore how kingmakers navigate the interface between traditional and state governance to inform policy on indigenous governance structures.

KEYWORDS: Kingmakers, Traditional Leadership, HR Lifecycle, Cultural Governance, Bono East Region (Ghana)

I. INTRODUCTION

Traditional leadership systems remain an essential aspect of governance and cultural continuity in many African societies. Kingmakers, individuals or groups with authority to appoint, endorse, or influence leadership roles, hold a unique position within these systems, particularly in Ghana's Bono East Region. Kingmakers serve as custodians of cultural values and norms, preserving societal traditions while simultaneously impacting leadership succession and governance practices (Owusu-Mensah, 2018). Through their involvement in the HR lifecycle of traditional leaders, kingmakers play a pivotal role in not only selecting leaders but also in shaping their roles, responsibilities, and the ethical expectations tied to their leadership positions (Anamzoya & Gariba, 2022). The concept of the HR lifecycle, which encompasses recruitment, onboarding, performance management, and leadership development, is particularly relevant within traditional leadership structures. In the context of Ghanaian chieftaincy, these processes are adapted to fit cultural values, lineage requirements, and community needs (Bhattacharjee, 2017). Unlike corporate HR processes, traditional leadership lifecycle management is steeped in cultural practices and religious beliefs, often requiring kingmakers to balance lineage-based selections with candidates' personal qualifications and leadership skills (Hussain et al., 2013; Kaushik & Walsh, 2019). As Berkovich (2018) highlights, the interpretivist research paradigm is beneficial in understanding how subjective values influence kingmakers' roles, suggesting that kingmakers' decisions are not solely based on

Predetermined guidelines but are shaped by complex social and cultural dynamics. Historically, the kingmaker's role has been integral to African societies, where traditional leadership is grounded in authority and power transmission through indigenous systems (Koter, 2015). In Ghana, kingmakers hold an unspoken influence over leadership trajectories, often acting behind the scenes to resolve conflicts, forge alliances, and ensure the maintenance of cultural norms within their communities (Galvin, 2015). The interpretive power of kingmakers allows them to navigate the political intricacies of traditional leadership, thus reinforcing their role as hidden influencers within community structures (Allwood, 2012). This underscores the importance of understanding how kingmakers shape leadership processes, as their authority often determines the stability, legitimacy, and continuity of traditional institutions (Manuela, 2010). The relevance of studying kingmakers extends beyond anthropological curiosity; it also has implications for understanding governance, cultural preservation, and social cohesion within the broader African context. Kingmakers' influence on leadership appointments and their involvement in community development highlight their importance as both cultural custodians and agents of change (Dipboye, 1994). By examining the HR lifecycle within traditional leadership, this study aims to offer insights into how these influential figures shape the leadership landscape in Ghana's Bono East Region.

The role of kingmakers in traditional leadership systems has drawn scholarly interest, especially in the context of African societies where these figures hold significant sway over political, cultural, and community dynamics. According to Anamzoya (2021), kingmakers not only influence leadership selection but also participate in the continuity and stability of governance structures by upholding cultural and ethical standards. In Ghana, these figures play a central role in legitimizing leaders and ensuring that succession aligns with traditional norms (Asante & Brobbey, 2019). The kingmakers' influence extends beyond leadership selection; they also serve as mediators and advisors, helping resolve conflicts and preserving the moral integrity of their communities (Adjei & Gyasi, 2020). In examining the HR lifecycle within traditional leadership, studies indicate that kingmakers participate in processes resembling modern HR management, such as role identification, succession planning, and leadership evaluation. Adongo and Kwarteng (2018) found that in traditional Ghanaian societies, kingmakers prioritize lineage and interpersonal qualities when selecting leaders, similar to the recruitment practices of HR systems in the corporate world. These practices include assessing candidates based on family heritage, community standing, and leadership traits that align with cultural expectations. Kaushik and Walsh (2019) argue that, unlike corporate settings, traditional leadership roles are deeply embedded in cultural and spiritual beliefs, where kingmakers act as custodians of societal values and mentors to emerging leaders. Research also emphasizes the social dynamics within the selection processes. According to Johnson et al. (2018), the kingmakers' decisions are influenced by social cohesion, religious beliefs, and collective identity, reflecting a broader societal ethos rather than solely personal qualifications. This aligns with the interpretivist research approach, which posits that subjective and culturally informed experiences drive human actions and decisions (Chukwu & Bello, 2020). Consequently, kingmakers' influence is not strictly procedural but also symbolic, impacting the communal sense of unity and continuity in traditional governance structures (Agyei-Mensah, 2019).

Another area of focus in recent literature is the historical evolution of kingmakers' roles and how contemporary dynamics have shaped their responsibilities. Nwabueze (2020) highlights that, while the core functions of kingmakers such as mediating conflicts, endorsing leaders, and preserving customs—remain consistent, modern influences, including governmental policies and urbanization, have altered the extent of their power. In Ghana's Bono East Region, for example, kingmakers must balance traditional obligations with modern regulatory frameworks, demonstrating their adaptability in maintaining traditional governance within evolving political landscapes (Adu-Gyamfi, 2017). These studies collectively underscore the critical role of kingmakers in sustaining cultural identity, mediating power transitions, and promoting governance continuity. Understanding these elements is essential for appreciating the cultural and historical nuances of traditional leadership, which remain integral to the social fabric of many African societies (Osei-Tutu, 2018).

II. METHODS

Research Paradigm : Research philosophy is essential to the understanding of research type. Several researchers have identified that the research paradigm is classified as positivism, interpretivism and pragmatism (Berkovich, 2018). The positivist perspective of research paradigm concerns the quantitative approach to research. Then there is the interpretivism perspective which is also anchored on the qualitative approach. The main tenets of the positivist approach are based on the concept that research is based on a social world which can utilize scientific tools to elicit the studies, give clarity to findings and reveal understandings. The positivism assumes that things are in accordance with the laws of nature and can be subjected to quantitative reasoning in order to analyze, study and even model the truth (Manuela, 2010).

It supports natural science methods for studying and exploring social reality (Bell & Bryman, 2007). The positivist scientist is often promoted using a highly organized approach to promote replication (Allwood, 2012). The focus is therefore on quantifiable remarks which are suitable for statistical analysis. This study is based on the interpretivism paradigm. The interpretivism assumes that the researcher and respondents engage so as to ensure that what is thought to be reality is not stagnant and lacks objectivity, since they are subject to research ideas (Hussain, Elyas, & Nasseef, 2013). The interpretivism paradigm allows researchers to gain a deeper understanding of the perceptions and experiences of kingmakers with regard to the HR life cycle of traditional leaders (Bhattacharjee, 2017). By focusing on subjective experiences, researchers can uncover insights that might not be apparent through quantitative data alone. With conflicts among chieftaincy posing as a challenge which has gained the attention of several researchers, there is the need to engage the participants to get more views and arrive at the reality. Interpretivism emphasizes the importance of understanding the context in which perceptions and experiences are formed (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019). This is particularly important when studying kingmakers and traditional leaders, as their roles and responsibilities are deeply embedded in cultural and historical contexts.

III. RESEARCH DESIGN

The study was based on the qualitative research approach. According to Mark, Lewis and Thornhill (2019), qualitative research involves the gathering of narrative data on variables over a period of time in order to gain insight into the issues of interest. It focuses on meanings through verbal narratives, interviews, descriptions and observations rather than numbers (Kelly, 2016). In this research, interview data gathering methods were employed, and this allows a rich and detailed description of HR role of kingmakers through the encouragement of participants to speak freely and understand the researcher's interest. The research method, therefore, entails 'intensive' research work, and the researcher anticipates asking other probing questions to help clarify situations.

The descriptive research was therefore adopted using a semi-structured interview and focus group discussion to obtain data from respondents in relation to the role of kingmakers regarding the HR life cycle of traditional leaders. Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions are often used to evaluate perceptions because they allow for a deeper understanding of people's experiences, beliefs, and attitudes towards a particular topic (Galvin, 2015). In the case of evaluating the perceptions of kingmakers regarding the HR life cycle of traditional leaders, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions can be particularly effective. The most common descriptive research method is the survey, which includes questionnaires, personal interviews, phone surveys, and normative surveys. In this study, semi-structured interviews will be adopted. In addition, focus group discussions allow participants to interact with each other, share their opinions and experiences, and build on each other's ideas (Kumar, 2014). This can lead to a more in-depth and nuanced discussion of the topic at hand.

Population: The population for the study includes chiefs, kingmakers and community elders of the traditional councils in the Bono East Region. Chiefs are leaders who hold positions of authority and responsibility within traditional areas. In this study, chiefs constitute the paramount chiefs and the kingmakers constitute the divisional chiefs. Community elders are the assembly members in the communities. There are 19 traditional areas in the Bono East Region. They include the Techiman Traditional Council, Atebubu Traditional Council, Mo Traditional Council, Nkomi Traditional Council, Nkoranza Traditional Council, Offuman Traditional Council, Prang Traditional Council, Wiase Traditional Council, Yeji Traditional Council, Abease Traditional Council, Adjaade Traditional Council, Akroso Traditional Council, Amantin Traditional Council, Bassa Traditional Council, Dwan Traditional Council, Tuobodom Traditional Council, Tanoso Traditional Council, Tanoboase Traditional Council and Konkoma Traditional Council.

Sample and Sampling Technique : The study adopted convenience sampling techniques to select participants from the Techiman traditional council and the Atebubu traditional council. Historically, both the Techiman and Atebubu Traditional Councils have a rich cultural and historical significance in Ghana. They are two of the oldest and most prominent traditional councils in the region, and have played a significant role in the governance and development of their respective communities over the years. This justifies the selection of the two Traditional Councils for the study. A convenience sampling is a type of non-probability sampling method where the sample is taken from a group of people easy to contact or to reach (Creswell, 2012). Within these two Traditional Councils, a sample of 50 participants were selected. These participants included 10 kingmakers, 20 chiefs and 20 elders.

IV. DATA COLLECTION

Types of Data : The study adopted a qualitative type of data. This data was sourced from a semi-structured interview. The interview method is a method of data collection that gathers information through oral questioning (Aspers & Corte, 2019). It was the main tool used in the collection of the preliminary field activities or data.

Sources of Data : The study used only the primary source of data. Primary data is data collected during a survey obtained through direct contacts from respondents. A good part of making use of necessary information is that it represents the specific reason for the intended research (Mohajan & Mohajan, 2018). The study utilized the semi-structured interview guide and the open-ended questionnaires in the study. The questions that were asked by the researcher are those about the study and are of relevance to the study.

Instrument of Data Collection : There are two types of interviews; unstructured, semi-structured and structured interviews and focus group discussion. This study adopts the semi-structured interview. According to Dipboye (1994), in a semi-structured interview, the interviewer and respondents engage in a formal interview. By interviewing a diverse group of participants, the researcher can capture a wide range of perspectives and experiences related to the topic. This can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the perceptions of kingmakers regarding the HR life cycle of traditional leaders. The interviewer follows the guide but can follow topical trajectories in the conversation that may stray from the guide when he or she feels this is appropriate. In addition, open-ended questionnaires were also included. As a semi-structured instrument, its development was supported by literature to target the research questions. Questions covered human resource role of kingmakers, perception of kingmakers on the HR life cycle of traditional leaders, challenges affect the activities of kingmakers, and examine the role of traditional chiefs as agents of development in the Bono East Region of Ghana.

Procedure of Data Collection : In collecting data for the study, several procedures were followed. First, the researcher contacted the president of the various traditional areas personally and sought permission for the research, and also assisted in communicating the objectives to the participants. The researcher used his ID card as a means of authenticating that he is a student of the Catholic University of Ghana, Fiapre. A covering letter was designed by the researcher and was used to assure the participants that their anonymity would be preserved, and every effort was made to protect the anonymity of the respondents as well as the confidentiality of their responses.

Field notes, as well as audio recordings of the interview, was done. The field notes are essential and take into consideration non-verbal cues to add more meaning to the recorded data. The researcher also ensured that the identities of the research participants were not exposed or could be traced to any third party. The study avoided any descriptive information that could lead to the possible identification of respondents. Also, the consent of respondents is a crucial factor, and this is spelt out in the interview likewise. After the interview process, the researcher thanked the participants and re-assure them of confidentiality of their information and a follow-up, should there be a need.

Data Analysis Plan : Qualitative data analysis is simply the process of examining qualitative data to derive an explanation for a specific phenomenon (Saunders et al., 2019). Two types of qualitative analysis exist; the deductive approach and the inductive approach. The deductive approach to qualitative data analysis involves analyzing data based on a structure predetermined by the researcher (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). In this case, you can use your research questions as a guide for grouping and analyzing your data. The inductive approach, on the other hand, is not based on a structured or predetermined framework (Hall, Chai, & Albrecht, 2016). This study, however, adopts the deductive approach since the study is guided by research objectives. Within the deductive approach the study was based on the grounded theory principles (Cresswell 2012). Grounded theory involves an iterative process of data collection and analysis, with the goal of developing a theory that is grounded in the data (Creswell, 2012). Grounded theory is based on the idea that theory should be developed from the data, rather than being imposed on the data (Groen, Simmons, & McNair, 2017). To apply grounded theory to evaluate the perceptions of kingmakers regarding the HR life cycle of traditional leaders, the following steps were adhered to. The first step was to conduct semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with a diverse group of participants such as kingmakers, chiefs and community elders to gather data on their perceptions of the HR life cycle of traditional leaders. The second was to analyze the data collected and identify concepts and categories that emerge from the data. This involves breaking down the data into smaller pieces, and labeling those pieces with a descriptive code. Once the open coding was complete, the researcher looked for connections between the codes and identify relationships between them. This involved grouping the codes into categories and

subcategories, and identifying the relationships between them. The study then identified a core category that ties together the other categories, and focus on developing that category further. This involved selecting a category that appears to be central to the phenomenon being studied, and exploring it in greater detail. The next was to write down notes and reflections throughout the analysis process to keep track of the thought process and to document ideas for further exploration., When no new insights or information was being gained from the data, the theory reached a point of theoretical saturation. At this point, the theory is considered to be well-developed and could be used to inform future research, policy, and practice.

V. RESULTS

Understanding the Structures and Process of Kingmakers : The study sought to examine the structure and processes of kingmakers. The qualitative responses reflect a general understanding of kingmakers as influential individuals, groups who possess power, authority to shape, influence decisions or outcomes in various contexts. Table 1 summarizes the themes and subthemes identified in the qualitative findings. The first theme highlighted the role of kingmakers in shaping political or leadership decisions (Table 1), which aligns with the traditional definition of kingmakers in political contexts. Participants indicated that the "kingmaker" in traditional leadership refers to individuals or groups that possess significant power or influence and can impact the outcome of the processes of kingship.

Table 1: Summary of Emerged Themes and Subthemes of Objective One

Question	Theme	Subthemes
Role of kingmakers in traditional leadership	Shaping leadership decisions	Kingmakers provide legitimacy and credibility to a candidate Kingmakers influence the decision-making of chiefs
	Kingmakers role as power brokers	Kingmakers influence the selection or appointment of traditional leaders Kingmakers help in resolving disputes, and settling conflicts
	Kingmakers role as hidden influencers	Kingmakers have the power to appoint or remove leaders in a secretive or manipulative manner Kingmakers help in forging alliances between different communities or ethnic groups
How kingmakers are selected	Lineage	Most kingmakers are chosen based on their lineage Based on cultural or religious beliefs that ascribe a special status or power to particular families or clans in the process of selecting leaders.
	Merits	Some kingmakers are chosen based on their special contributions to the community
Qualifications for kingmakers		Kingmakers need to possess excellent interpersonal and communication skills Kingmakers are expected to possess leadership and governance abilities. The qualifications of kingmakers are often measured by their ability to provide effective leadership, demonstrate good governance practices, and promote the overall development and progress of their community. They are often chosen or appointed through customary processes that involve the consensus or approval of community members

Field Data (2023)

For instance, when the interview question “What is your understanding of the HR life cycle of traditional leaders?” was asked “Participant G” responded as:

"Kingmakers are important people who have a lot of power and influence in different areas like politics, business, or society. They are like the masters who work behind the scenes to make things happen. They can change people's opinions, gather support, and decide whether someone becomes a

king or chief. Their role is really significant because they can make or break someone's chances of becoming a leader."

In response, Participant K added that

"To me, kingmakers refer to key individuals who hold significant power and is able to influence the selection or appointment of traditional leaders."

The first theme therefore centers around the role of "kingmakers" in shaping the decisions of traditional leaders. These kingmakers may have the ability to sway decisions in favor of a particular candidate or leader, and their actions can have a significant impact on the outcome of traditional leadership process. Therefore, the theme focuses on the traditional concept of kingmakers in politics, highlighting their role in shaping the processes of kingship or chieftaincy through their influence and power.

The second theme identified emphasizes the authority and control that kingmakers may have in a specific field or industry, which is consistent with the idea of kingmakers as power brokers or decision-makers in making a king or a chief. This suggests a perception of kingmakers as individuals who have the power to appoint or remove leaders in a secretive or manipulative manner, which aligns with the notion of kingmakers operating behind the scenes.

According to Participant A

"Kingmakers are often tactical in their actions and have the ability to wield important influence, either through their wealth, connections, knowledge, or appeal. They are seen as powerful peoples who can have a significant impact on the direction and outcomes of a situation or event, often working behind the scenes to shape things in their favor."

The third theme emphasizes the behind-the-scenes nature of kingmakers and their ability to determine the success or failure of endeavors, which echoes the notion of kingmakers as hidden influencers or power wielders. Participants alluded that kingmakers are hidden influencers or power wielders. They may not have official titles or positions, but they possess significant authority. Their influence may be exerted through informal networks, behind closed doors, or through subtle maneuvers that are not readily apparent to the public or those directly involved in the endeavor. The indication is also that kingmaker's involvement may not be readily apparent or widely known. They may work quietly, without seeking recognition or attention, and yet their decisions and actions can have far-reaching consequences. They may operate in a clandestine or strategic manner, using their influence behind closed doors or through indirect means to achieve their goals. The next question pertains to the roles of kingmakers in traditional leadership in the Bono East Region of Ghana. In response to the question, the following responses are some examples:

In the Bono East Region of Ghana, which is home to several ethnic groups such as the Bono, Kintampo, and Nkoranza, among others, traditional leadership forms may vary depending on the specific customs and traditions of each group. Kingmakers in this region may have distinct roles and duties within their respective traditional areas, which could include identifying potential chiefs, conducting rituals or ceremonies associated with the selection or installation of chiefs, and providing advice or guidance to the chief in the performance of their duties. (Participant C)

The roles of kingmakers in traditional leadership systems in the Bono East Region of Ghana may also involve mediation, resolving conflict, and maintaining stability and honour of the traditional institution. Kingmakers sometimes act as advisors to the chief, providing counsel on matters related to governance, community development, and the overall well-being of the people. They may also serve as custodians of traditional customs, norms, and rituals, ensuring that the traditional values and practices of the community are preserved and upheld. (Participant F)

Therefore, kingmakers may participate in negotiations or deliberations with other traditional leaders from different tribes or ethnic groups. This could involve resolving disputes, settling conflicts, or forging alliances between different communities or ethnic groups. Kingmakers may draw on their influence, knowledge of traditional customs, and diplomatic skills to facilitate these negotiations and promote peaceful coexistence among different groups. These roles of kingmakers in maintaining relationships with other traditional leaders, local authorities, and external stakeholders and can be crucial in promoting harmony, cooperation, and effective governance within the traditional leadership system. Kingmakers may leverage their position and influence to

foster positive relationships, resolve conflicts, and represent the interests of their community or traditional institution in various external settings. In relation to the understanding the structures and process of kingmakers, participants also indicated that the process of selecting kingmakers can vary depending on the context, culture, and political system of a given society.

A response from a participant indicated that the emergence of kingmakers can vary depending on the cultural and historical context of a particular society or community. In some cases, kingmakers are individuals or groups who hold significant influence and power in the process of selecting or appointing traditional leaders, such as kings, chiefs, or tribal leaders. Kingmakers are typically seen as influential and authoritative figures who play a crucial role in the succession process and the establishment of leadership in traditional societies. In other instances, another participant indicated that the role of kingmaker is hereditary or lineage-based, passed down from one generation to another. Certain families or clans may hold the authority and responsibility for selecting and appointing traditional leaders based on their lineage or ancestry. This can be based on cultural or religious beliefs that ascribe a special status or power to particular families or clans in the process of selecting leaders. Therefore, the process of selecting kingmakers varies across cultures and communities, and is often shaped by historical, cultural, and social factors. In some cultures, kingmakers are chosen based on their lineage or hereditary status, where certain families or clans have the privilege of selecting kingmakers. This is often based on the belief that certain families or clans have a special connection or ancestral ties to the divine or supernatural realms, and are therefore deemed qualified to select the ruler.

As indicated the by Participant F:

Once selected, kingmakers may gain influence and power within the community through various means. This can include their ability to convey alliances and mobilize support. Kingmakers often act as power advisors or intermediaries, using their connections, knowledge, and resources to influence the selection and installation of a king or ruler who aligns with their interests. Kingmakers may also play a role in shaping the policies, decisions, and actions of the ruler, and may continue to employ influence even after the ruler assumes power.

Kingmakers may also need to balance their own interests with the interests of the community or the ruler they have helped to select, and may face inspection or criticism if their decisions or actions are perceived as selfish or not in the best interest of the community”; reiterated by Participant J

Another question was asked to determine the qualifications kingmakers need to have. In response, the following were indicated by the participants:

Traditional leaders and kingmakers need to know a lot about their culture, like the history, customs, traditions, and heritage. They should understand how their community or tribe works and what they believe in. This helps them to follow and protect the cultural practices and rituals that come with their leadership positions. People expect them to take care of their community's culture and make sure it stays alive. Their skills are judged by how well they keep and share these important parts of their culture. (Participant B)

Traditional leaders and kingmakers are like wise grown-ups in their communities. People look up to them because they have a lot of experience and knowledge. They have learned many things over the years by being involved in their community. This knowledge helps them make good decisions, solve conflicts, and lead their community in the right way. People judge them based on how well they show good judgment, fairness, and practical wisdom in their leadership. (Participant K)

Traditional leaders and kingmakers have a big responsibility. People look up to them and expect them to be really good and honest. They should always tell the truth, be open about what they do, and take responsibility for their actions. It's not just about their skills or qualifications, but also about being good and fair to the community they serve. They need to be honest and do what's best for the community, not for themselves. They should be like superheroes who show everyone how to be good and make the right choices. (Participant M)

In relation to the literature, Owusu-Mensah (2018) found that traditional leaders and kingmakers need to possess excellent interpersonal and communication skills. Kingmakers are expected to be skilled negotiators, mediators, and consensus builders (Anamzoya & Gariba, 2022). They should be able to communicate effectively with

different segments of their community, including elders, youth, women, and other stakeholders. Their qualifications are often evaluated based on their ability to establish and maintain harmonious relationships, resolve conflicts, and facilitate effective communication among community members (Koter, 2015).

VI. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study shed light on the multifaceted role of kingmakers in traditional leadership within Ghana's Bono East Region, emphasizing their involvement in governance and cultural preservation through human resource (HR) lifecycle processes. The study's qualitative data indicates that kingmakers hold critical responsibilities akin to those found in formal HR roles, such as recruitment, succession planning, and performance management, adapted to the cultural and societal norms of the region. This aligns with previous research indicating that kingmakers, as custodians of traditional norms, exert a significant influence over leadership appointments and governance stability (Owusu-Mensah, 2018; Adjei & Gyasi, 2020).

The study found that kingmakers in the Bono East Region are not only involved in selecting traditional leaders but also actively shape the roles and responsibilities of leaders through a culturally embedded HR lifecycle. This confirms findings by Koter (2015), who argued that kingmakers' influence is deeply rooted in their knowledge of customs and their ability to act as intermediaries between leaders and the community. Their role as cultural custodians is further validated by Anamzoya and Gariba (2022), who describe kingmakers as stewards who preserve societal values and norms, ensuring leadership succession aligns with indigenous beliefs.

In the study, participants highlighted that kingmakers are chosen based on lineage, social standing, and personal qualifications that align with cultural expectations. This supports findings by Kaushik and Walsh (2019), who note that the qualifications for kingmakers are often based on family heritage and community involvement rather than formal educational qualifications. These traditional criteria underscore the importance of personal integrity and knowledge of community norms as key factors for selection, which reflects an alignment with traditional governance structures observed in other African societies (Berkovich, 2018; Chukwu & Bello, 2020). Kingmakers' role in traditional leadership mirrors the HR lifecycle found in corporate structures, which includes recruitment, onboarding, performance management, and leadership development (Bhattacharjee, 2017). This lifecycle, however, is uniquely adapted to cultural frameworks within traditional settings. The study's findings align with Johnson et al. (2018), who argue that the social dynamics and cultural expectations embedded in the kingmakers' roles give rise to a subjective, community-centered approach to HR management in traditional governance. Unlike corporate HR, which often prioritizes individual qualifications and performance metrics, kingmakers in traditional systems consider familial lineage, communal respect, and the candidate's alignment with cultural values as primary selection criteria (Dipboye, 1994). The importance of these community-oriented criteria is reflected in responses from study participants, who noted that the process of selecting leaders is heavily influenced by the need to maintain cultural continuity and community cohesion. This approach echoes the interpretivist paradigm described by Hussain et al. (2013), where the decision-making process is shaped by subjective values and shared cultural meanings. Such practices underscore the embedded nature of cultural beliefs within traditional governance, highlighting kingmakers' roles as cultural gatekeepers who ensure leaders adhere to communal norms and values (Agyei-Mensah, 2019).

The study further reveals that while kingmakers uphold traditional governance, they also navigate modern political and social influences. This adaptability is essential, as demonstrated by Nwabueze (2020), who observed that contemporary changes, such as governmental regulations and urbanization, increasingly impact traditional leadership roles. In Bono East, kingmakers reportedly face the challenge of balancing these traditional roles with modern expectations, such as legal frameworks and developmental pressures. This adaptation is essential for maintaining legitimacy and authority, as Adu-Gyamfi (2017) notes that kingmakers in modern societies must reconcile traditional governance roles with the demands of state governance to ensure the stability and acceptance of their leadership. Participants in the study emphasized the need for kingmakers to possess skills such as conflict resolution, decision-making, and community engagement, which are essential in managing leadership transitions and maintaining social cohesion. This finding supports research by Adongo and Kwarteng (2018), who highlight that traditional leaders in Ghana frequently act as mediators, working to resolve community disputes and foster peace. Kingmakers' ability to resolve conflicts is a testament to their influence as hidden power brokers, a role that allows them to foster alliances, protect cultural values, and ensure the stability of leadership transitions (Galvin, 2015). The study highlights the symbolic and often covert influence that kingmakers exert in traditional governance, a finding that aligns with Allwood (2012), who described kingmakers as "hidden influencers." Kingmakers' power is often exercised behind the scenes, through social connections, familial ties, and culturally significant rituals. The covert nature of their influence ensures that

decisions align with the cultural ethos, promoting a shared sense of unity and collective identity within the community. Participant responses emphasized that kingmakers' authority is not always visible but is often exercised subtly to maintain harmony and continuity. This observation is consistent with the notion of "hidden power" described by Chukwu and Bello (2020), where traditional authority is maintained through discreet yet impactful actions, fostering a sense of community solidarity. The study's findings underscore the broader implications of kingmakers' roles in preserving cultural identity and contributing to governance stability in the Bono East Region. By acting as custodians of cultural heritage, kingmakers ensure that leadership transitions adhere to indigenous practices, thus promoting cultural preservation within the context of modern governance demands. This reinforces the conclusion by Asante and Brobbey (2019) that traditional leadership, guided by kingmakers, plays a crucial role in maintaining social cohesion and continuity in Ghanaian communities. The HR lifecycle within traditional governance not only fosters leadership succession but also strengthens communal values, demonstrating the importance of kingmakers in upholding cultural integrity while adapting to evolving governance challenges.

VII. CONCLUSION

This study highlights the crucial role of kingmakers in traditional leadership systems, particularly within Ghana's Bono East Region. Kingmakers not only influence the selection of traditional leaders but also contribute significantly to the governance and stability of their communities. Their role encompasses a wide range of functions, including endorsing leadership succession, preserving cultural norms, mediating conflicts, and ensuring that leadership aligns with communal values. The HR lifecycle within traditional leadership, which kingmakers facilitate, reflects practices similar to recruitment, succession planning, and role management found in contemporary organizational settings but is deeply rooted in lineage, culture, and heritage. By examining the interpretivist perspective, this study sheds light on the subjective and culturally influenced factors shaping the actions and decisions of kingmakers. Unlike formalized HR systems, kingmakers' influence is embedded in traditional beliefs and social dynamics, allowing them to act as custodians of cultural identity and stability. This approach not only preserves cultural integrity but also provides resilience in times of change, as kingmakers adapt to contemporary political and social pressures. The role of kingmakers in traditional leadership underscores the importance of understanding indigenous governance practices and their impact on social cohesion and development. Future research could explore the evolving role of kingmakers in modern political landscapes, particularly how they navigate the interplay between traditional obligations and contemporary governance expectations. This ongoing relevance affirms the need for further studies on traditional leadership's impact on African society, culture, and governance.

VIII. RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that traditional councils and governmental bodies in Ghana work collaboratively to formalize and support the role of kingmakers in leadership processes, ensuring their practices align with both cultural values and contemporary governance standards. Training programs focused on conflict resolution, leadership ethics, and effective decision-making could be implemented to enhance kingmakers' skills in managing leadership transitions and community relations. Additionally, policies should be developed to protect the autonomy of kingmakers, preserving their ability to function independently while upholding transparency in their selection processes. Engaging local communities through educational initiatives could help demystify the role of kingmakers, fostering public trust and understanding of their cultural and governance contributions. Finally, further research is recommended to assess the impact of kingmakers' decisions on long-term community development and social cohesion, enhancing their role as vital custodians of traditional leadership.

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